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# **Investigating the Relationships Between Authentic Assessment and the Development of Learner Autonomy**

**Gillian Davison**

**PhD**

**2011**

# **Investigating the Relationships Between Authentic Assessment and the Development of Learner Autonomy**

**Gillian Davison**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements of the  
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Education Studies

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## **Abstract**

### **Investigating the relationships between authentic assessment and the development of learner autonomy**

The research is based within higher education, focusing on four undergraduate modules in a university in the north of England, United Kingdom. The research explores the relationships between authentic learning activities and the development of different 'types' of learner autonomy. Assessment for Learning provides a pedagogic framework for the research and positions and defines authenticity and autonomy within this perspective on learning and assessment. The research aimed to explore the (potential) relationships between authentic (formative and summative) assessment practices and the types of autonomy, learner behaviour or development which emerged from this type of approach. The research examined authentic learning activities developed within academic modules which were non-vocational in nature (curriculum which was not linked to any professional awarding body).

The 'authentic' learning activities were placed within a situated paradigm of learning and a constructivist view of knowledge. An interpretive, qualitative research design was employed, with twenty student and four tutor respondents. The research identified tutor and student constructions of authenticity and outlined the different types of learning autonomy which emerged from these constructions. Factors which inhibited and promoted development are discussed. When authentic learning activities were seen as relevant and meaningful by learners' and were framed and conceptualised within a pedagogic structure which supported student learning, a range of autonomous learning behaviours were observed. These behaviours were seen to develop in a complex 'layering' process, dependent for development on the presence of other 'types' of autonomy, to enable the 'building' of an overall autonomous learning capacity. The thesis presents two theoretical models which offer a contribution to the understanding of the ways in which authentic learning activities may contribute to the development of learner autonomy.

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My final thanks go to my partner, John, and our much-loved son, Maxwell. I thank them for their patience, their kindness and their unfailing support and love.

What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from.

(T. S. Eliot, 1974)

**Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis is entirely my own and has not been submitted for any other award.

Name: Gillian Davison

Signature:

Date:

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## Chapter One

Chapter One has been divided into eleven sections:

**Section 1.1** provides an introduction to the thesis

**Section 1.2** discusses the background to the research

**Section 1.3** provides the rationale for the research

**Section 1.4** examines the development of formative assessment

**Section 1.5** considers the role of autonomy in learning

**Section 1.6** outlines the role of authenticity in learning

**Section 1.7** relates learner development to the research

**Section 1.8** outlines the research question and the thesis contribution to knowledge

**Section 1.9** presents aims and objectives for the research

**Section 1.10** discusses the development of a conceptual framework for the research

**Section 1.11** provides a conclusion to the chapter

## **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an introduction to the thesis, outlining the main areas of inquiry relevant to the research. This includes the background and rationale for the research, a discussion of the relevance of formative assessment and Assessment for Learning approaches to the research and an introduction to the terms 'authenticity' and 'autonomy'. The chapter introduces theories of learner development and links this research area to the research question of the thesis. The section concludes with the aims and objectives of the research and the thesis' contribution to knowledge.

In outlining these areas for discussion, a conceptual framework for the research emerges which will guide, inform and connect all aspects of inquiry in the thesis. This includes: the development of the research question, the purpose and rationale for the research, the design of the literature review, the choice of research methodology and types of data collection and analysis.

## **1.2 Background to the research**

The research topic for this thesis has developed over a number of years, and is, in part, formed by my experiences and my value base. Whilst these experiences are recognised and made explicit in the thesis, the research is conceptualised within theoretical frameworks which are recognised in educational research as making valid contributions to knowledge within the field.

My professional background is in social work and community education. My interest in the development of learner autonomy and authentic assessment began when I worked in further education, working with learners who faced social and economic disadvantage. I worked predominantly for educational organisations that developed community-based educational programmes with the aim of promoting inclusion, empowerment and citizenship for learners and communities. These aims can all be described as including aspects of autonomy.

Entry level educational programmes in the late 1990s were becoming increasingly regulated; formal qualifications became part of the funding conditions of the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). This requirement raised (and still does) issues for curriculum design in prevocational education. In order to gain funding to run entry level programmes, community organisations had to develop assessment strategies which would not alienate new learners, but simultaneously engage learners in the learning process and 'fit' the requirements of the funding agencies. Formative assessment practices were used widely in community-based education, but were not formalised or articulated through formal assessment frameworks. Teaching approaches in community education would be referred to in a variety of terms, including: group learning, situated learning, collaborative learning and problem-based learning.

My interest in authentic assessment (Lombardi, 2007) began whilst working for a local authority adult education department. I developed partnerships with a range of agencies to provide educational programmes for Learning and Skills Council 'targeted' groups - learners who were deemed as being at risk of social and/or economic exclusion. Many learners who accessed community-based education programmes did not have previous work experiences. The organisations I worked with recognised that basing learning activities in learners' everyday lives and personal experiences could act as a mechanism to engage, motivate and sustain learning. Authentic learning activities seemed to help learners access the curriculum, gain confidence and maintain motivation, and were seen in both community and further education as integral elements of the curriculum.

This is the social and political environment in which I developed my interest in learner autonomy, and which informs the conceptual framework which is developed in this thesis. Subsequent teaching experience in further and higher education, teaching mainly on social work degree programmes, allowed me to develop my interest in authentic assessment. Authentic learning and assessment approaches in social work are linked to professional practice and the outcomes of such approaches are described in relation to a particular job, set of skills or subject area (e.g. the skills required

to work with children or to complete an assessment in relation to a service user). Authentic assessment activities are recognised in vocational curriculum areas as being effective teaching approaches in the development of learner engagement, and the development of learner autonomy (Ecclestone, 2002).

This thesis is interested in authentic assessment in non-vocational subject areas, where assessment is not directly related to employment outcomes and where research in relation to authenticity in learning has not been so extensive (Gulikers, 2006). The research is based in a teaching and learning centre in a post '92 university in the north of England, United Kingdom.

Teaching and learning activities in higher education are increasingly becoming the attention of policy-makers and funding agencies (Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, 2007). The next section looks at the social and political environment within which this research is placed.

### **1.3 Rationale for the research**

Higher education in the United Kingdom is currently undergoing significant challenges and pressures in relation to change. These changes can be related to what has been perceived as society's evolution into a 'knowledge-based society and economy' (Alheit & Dausien, 2002).

These 'changes' have provided justification for the need for students to develop new learning capacities that will enable them to not only survive, but prosper and grow, in this new, knowledge-based economy (Haggis, 2004). The successful learner is now not viewed as someone who can acquire knowledge and skills, but as someone who knows 'how to learn'. Communication, collaboration and problem-solving abilities are seen as positive qualities in the learner, and positive educational outcomes (Benson and Toogood, 2002).

These concerns are reflected in the national agenda to raise the standards of learning and, as such, have become an important national priority. The Higher Education Funding Council (2007) indicate that today's graduates need to be able to: apply knowledge when working with people, be able to

work independently, be efficient problem-solvers, engage in self evaluation, and be able to develop higher order skills to become 'lifelong learners' in an increasingly globalised, technological world. The Leitch Report (2005) has highlighted the role of Universities in developing 'Lifelong Learners'. Lifelong learners are described as: 'independent thinkers who are flexible, creative and good problem-solvers' (Leitch, 2005).

Assessment has been acknowledged to have a major effect on what, and how, people learn. Debates into the role of assessment, and what should and what should not be assessed have previously focused predominantly on 'generic performances', 'critical outcomes', 'skills' and 'employability' (Barnett & Coate, 2005). Research in higher education has acknowledged that a wider conception of learning and assessment needs to take place, and much current research, theorised from a constructivist paradigm, has focused on exploring the situatedness and complex nature and relationship of assessment and learning. Improvement in assessment was identified by Subject Review (QAA, 2004, p.27, cited in Broadfoot, 2007), as:

'The single intervention by universities and colleges that would improve the quality of the student experience'.

Higher Education has responded to these concerns with a range of initiatives including, in January 2005, the development of seventy four CETLs (Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning) across the United Kingdom. This research is based within one of these CETLs, which has a particular focus on 'Assessment for Learning'. Assessment for Learning can be described as a combination of teaching and assessment approaches and practices which aim to develop and improve the quality of learning experiences for students.

Assessment for Learning approaches use both formative and summative assessment, but particularly focus on formative assessment as a range of techniques, or approaches, which support learning. Authentic learning activities, in relation to this thesis, are viewed as a type of formative assessment, providing learning environments within which learners can receive ongoing feedback in relation to their progress. The literature review discusses Assessment for Learning in greater detail; a shorter review of the

development of formative assessment is outlined below, providing a framework and rationale for the study of authentic assessment in relation to the development of learner autonomy.

#### **1.4 Formative assessment**

Formative assessment has been identified as being an effective means through which to develop students' understandings and improve the learning experience. Formative assessment can be described as a learning and teaching approach which responds to student learning on an ongoing basis - it provides feedback which is timely and can be acted upon to improve learning and performance. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has advocated formative assessment as an effective learning strategy:

‘Teachers’ using formative assessment approaches guide students toward development of their own learning to learn skills that are increasingly necessary as knowledge is quickly outdated in the information society’.

(OECD, 2005, p.22)

Kennedy et al (2006) argue, however, that OECD, as an economic agency, is not concerned with educational outcomes but more the relationship between learning and economic growth and development. From an economic perspective, formative assessment can be linked to ‘the knowledge society’ and ‘lifelong learning’ as it talks about learning for both individuals and for society.

In 1998 Black & William published a review summarising the results from two hundred and fifty articles by researchers interested in assessment for learning strategies. This review identified a strong body of evidence to support a claim that formative assessment practices can raise standards (Black & William 1998b). This review was extremely significant – it provided evidence and an arena in which formative assessment practices were confirmed as fundamental to effective assessment and integral to the development of learners. Black and William’s research was regarded as the seminal work on formative assessment.

Current reform agendas show support for formative assessment (Curriculum Development Council, Learning and Teaching, Scotland, 2006; Department of Education and the Arts, 2005; in Kennedy et al, 2006). Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick (2006) proposed seven principles for formative assessment.

Formative assessment:

- Helps clarify criteria and standards
- Helps develop reflection and self-assessment
- Gives high quality information to learners about their learning
- Encourages teacher and peer discussion
- Encourages positive motivational beliefs
- Provides opportunities to 'close' the gap between current and desired performance
- Provides information to teachers that can be used to develop learning

These principles were subsequently developed to include four further principles (Nicol, 2009), these include:

- Capture sufficient study time in and out of class
- Distribute student effort evenly across topics and weeks
- Engage students in productive learning activity
- Communicate clear and high expectations to students

The eleven principles are supported by current educational research, including Black and Wiliam (1998b), Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) and Gibbs and Simpson (2004).

The increasing profile of formative assessment in higher education has led to debate in relation to its application and objectives. Pryor and Crossouard



(2007) argue that assessment involves conflicting purposes and processes, and involves issues of power; this power serves the form and the type of knowledge which is developed. The authors argue that a critical discussion needs to take place in relation to the 'deconstruction of these contextual issues' and argue for increased transparency in learning processes, advocating a socio-cultural theorisation of assessment where context and social processes are made visible to enable negotiation and collaboration between peers and the 'educator'. Authentic learning approaches are fundamentally about making learning activities 'transparent' within a context which learners find meaningful and relevant. Attention to context and social processes places authentic assessment and learning within the socio-cultural context which is described by Pryor and Crossourd.

This section represents a 'building' block towards the conceptual framework for the research, highlighting the contextual, situated nature of authentic learning activities. Pryor and Crossourd's commentary in relation to knowledge construction will be developed in the literature review and will form part of the conceptual framework for the research.

This section has outlined current research in relation to formative assessment approaches in higher education and placed the research in a social and political context. The next section looks at why the concept of learner autonomy is relevant in higher education today.

### **1.5 Autonomy and learning**

The concept of autonomy is a central theme in the philosophy of education and pedagogy. There are many misconceptions about the term, as it has been confused with 'distance learning', 'independent study', and 'self directed study'. Autonomy's core meaning is 'self government' (Mele, 1995), while further definitions include being 'master of oneself' (Boud, 1988) and having 'a mind of one's own' (Ecclestone, 2002). Candy (1987a, b) identified thirty different terms for autonomy:

'This proliferation of terms would be difficult enough if they were all exact synonyms, but the problem is made worse by the fact that different authors use the same term to mean different things, and sometimes they use different terms to mean the same thing,

and the only way to tell the difference is to delve beneath the surface to what is actually meant in any particular situation.'

(Candy, 1987a, p. 160).

Boud (1988) describes the rationale for developing autonomy in learning as 'practical'. Boud relates that people need 'autonomous' skills to survive and prosper in modern society. Boud talks about structuring activities to develop lifelong learning:

'assist students to develop the skills that they will need in order to exercise responsibility for learning effectively'.

(Boud, 1988, p. 8)

Boud, in his seminal book *Autonomy* (1981), argues that autonomy in teaching is not about transmission. Autonomy is about helping students take responsibility for their own learning. Boud states that there are a range of different terms used to describe autonomy, including: independent study, self-directed learning and project-oriented teaching. Boud recognises all these approaches as having elements of autonomy and recognises the common principle:

'The goal of developing independence and interdependence, self directedness, and responsibility for learning'.

(Boud, 1981, p. 7-8)

Boud describes various methods to assist in the development of autonomy, including: learning contracts, peer learning, student-directed projects, peer support and collaborative assessment between students and tutor. These aspects of teaching and learning can all be described as Assessment for Learning approaches to curriculum.

Boud states that autonomy is many-faceted, yet centred around three groups of ideas:

- 1) A goal of education
- 2) A term used to describe a particular approach which emphasises independence and responsibility

### 3) An integral part of any form of learning.

A goal of education can be described as individual autonomy – the purpose of education is viewed here as assisting people in being able to make their own decisions. This concept of autonomy links back to ancient Greece where it was used in relation to the state being self-ruling or governing. Boud comments on the modern day use of autonomy being about ‘self government’, where individual autonomy is seen as being shaped by context and environment.

A prominent theorist in student development, Baxter-Magolda (2004), discusses the concept of ‘self authorship’. The term is used to describe students’ feeling that they have control over the content and direction of their work. This term can also be used to describe autonomy. Baxter-Magolda outlines the conditions which can help promote this for learners – primarily through educational institutions modelling self authorship, but also through embedding assessment and teaching practices which validate learners’ capacity to know, situate learning in learners’ experience and mutually construct meaning. These strategies can be related to authentic learning activities through the development of relevant and meaningful learning activities. Authentic learning approaches are discussed in the following section.

#### **1.6 Authenticity and learning**

The rationale for studying teaching and assessment practices which are made ‘authentic’ and ‘meaningful’ in some way to students, either individually or collectively, is supported by both research in relation to formative assessment and the improvement of performance (Black & Williams, 1998b) and also research which looks at the impact of socio-cultural influences on learner motivation and participation. Bloomer (1997), for example, argues that dispositions towards learning and achievement are ‘socially and culturally grounded’ and profoundly affected by personal identities. It is important, therefore, that teaching and learning approaches take social differentiation into account, as well as individual attributes and attitudes to learning.

‘Motivation and approaches to learning cannot, therefore, be isolated from the unstable yet important contexts of learners own interests’.

(Ecclestone, 2001).

The concept of authentic learning became popular in learning theories such as situated learning and cognitive apprenticeship (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Collins, Brown and Newman, 1989) that focus on learning in meaningful contexts (i.e. work or culture). Authentic assessment was seen as increasingly important in competence-based assessment to measure whether the student was capable of functioning in the world of work. There was a perceived gap between what is taught and assessed in Higher Education and the skills required for work (Biemans, Nieuwenhuis, Poell, Mulder and Wesselink, 2004). Gulikers (2006) defines authentic assessment by relevance to the professional practice situation, describing authenticity as subjective and multi-dimensional. Gulikers proposes a ‘spectrum of authenticity’ rather than an authentic/non-authentic binary distinction. Gulikers proposes a five-dimensional model to describe authentic assessment.

These are:

- 1) The assessment task
- 2) The physical context
- 3) The social context
- 4) The assessment form
- 5) The assessment criteria

This framework is applied to authentic assessment with professional practice as the ‘starting point’. This research moves away from Guliker’s model and aims to develop a new explanatory model to gauge the development of autonomy through learner involvement in authentic assessment activities (formative and summative) in non-vocational subject areas. The model includes definitions of authenticity in relation to activities being: authentic to

an academic discipline, authentic to a professional context (but not ascribed to any professional awarding body or code of professional practice), authentic in relation to real life/world settings and authentic in relation to being meaningful to individual lives. This framework views authentic activities as having the potential to be placed along (four) 'continuum's of authenticity'; some activities may be placed at the 'high' end of authenticity whilst others could be placed at the 'lower' end of authenticity, or at some point mid-way along the continuum. This model is discussed further in the literature review and methodology chapter. This is a new area of research; the development of learner autonomy through authentic assessment activities within non-vocational subject areas is a practice that has not been extensively researched.

The following section introduces research in relation to student development. The section provides the basis for a rationale for choices made in relation to methodology for the research. These choices are discussed and developed further in the literature review and methodology chapter.

### **1.7 Learner development**

In relation to curriculum development and the rationale for studying models of student development, Yorke (2003) identifies that:

‘There is a need for further theoretical development in respect of formative assessment, which needs to take account of disciplinary epistemology, theories of intellectual and moral development and students’ stages of intellectual development’.

Yorke (2003) p. 477

Some of the most extensive work in the field of learner development relates to the influential work of Perry (1970) who conducted valuable fieldwork in the United States and found evidence of trends in intellectual and ethical development through a series of 'positions' or stages. Perry's work is relevant to the study of authenticity and autonomy because it addresses issues relating to context and knowledge construction.

Perry's research has been reviewed in the context of learning and knowledge by Entwistle and Walker (1999) who argue that if knowledge is presented as

a given, without opportunities for students to question, it is likely they will 'become stuck' in a particular frame of reference and become unable to move on. What is of particular relevance to this research is the view that if knowledge is presented as 'provisional' only, and students are given the means (through authentic learning activities) to test that knowledge, there is more likelihood that students will develop their thinking and critical capacities (Grantham 2002).

Research in relation to learner development by Candy (1991) is also relevant to the study of learner autonomy. Candy, in an influential early review and exploration of learner development and self-direction, defines self-direction as:

- 1) a personal attribute (personal autonomy)
- 2) the willingness and capacity to conduct ones' own education (self-management)
- 3) a mode of organising instruction in formal settings (learner control)
- 4) the individual, non-institutional pursuit of learning opportunities in the 'natural social setting' (autodidaxy).

Interest in developing what Candy describes as 'self-managing learners' may be linked to the broader concern to further adulthood or personal autonomy. These concepts will be developed further in the literature review.

The models of student development outlined here are developed further in the literature review and their relevance to the study of learner autonomy and authenticity evaluated.

### **1.8 Research question and thesis contribution to knowledge**

Higher Education is experiencing an increasingly diverse student population. Students bring a range of skills and experiences to their courses; they have different backgrounds and different needs (Northedge, 2003).

'With a diverse student body, no fixed start or end point can be assumed – consequently, no selection of items can be appropriate

to meet the needs of all. The challenges of diversity demand a more fluid conception of teaching.'

(Northedge, 2003, p. 47)

This fluidity requires an approach to teaching that encompasses the social aspects of learning. Socio-cultural theories of teaching and learning can assist in offering a perspective on learning which views learning as 'enabling participation in knowing' (Wenger, 1998). The highly influential work of Lave and Wenger (1991) provides a perspective on learning which offers a model of learning based on equity in that it invites partnership and the sharing of knowledge and ideas, rather than a transmission or acquisition view of knowledge and learning. This perspective views knowledge as constructed within a community of discourse, where participants are able to access the curriculum at different levels according to their experience. This curriculum is complex, multi-layered and provides opportunities for learners to become a participant at different levels. These levels of complexity are multi-faceted, very often with high levels of authenticity.

It has been acknowledged that further research in relation to formative assessment is required (Yorke, 2003). There is also recognition that tutors' views of the assessment process, their disciplinary epistemology, institutional policy and staff cultures will all have an impact on the ways in which assessment is constituted and experienced (Mcdowell & Harman, 2009).

This research aims to explore the relationships between authentic (formative and summative) assessment practices and the types of autonomy, learner behaviour or development which emerge from this type of approach. The research aims to identify contributing factors, limitations and potential obstacles to development. The research is interested in the meaning that students make from these assessment practices. This includes the type of relationships which may (or may not) develop and the role authentic learning and assessment has in relation to the development of learner autonomy.

The central research question for the thesis is:

**How do authentic learning activities, placed within an Assessment for Learning framework, assist in the development of learner autonomy?**

The research is interested in exploring the impact of curriculum which has been developed within a socio-cultural framework, where authentic learning activities are provided to assist the learner in their development. The research is concerned with the social context in which the learning takes place, the social rules, the learning cultures which develop and the dynamics of the learning group. The thesis evaluates the outcomes of pedagogic approaches which place the learner and their experiences at the centre of the curriculum. These approaches can be termed 'authentic' approaches to learning and are placed within a situated paradigm of learning and a social constructivist view of knowledge. Authentic practices constitute approaches which acknowledge that student interests and experience are intrinsically bound up with motivation and engagement and, as such, have a major influence on the ways in which learning is constituted and developed. In terms of the 'outcomes' of such an approach, the research is concerned with examining types of learning behaviour which have been termed 'autonomous learning behaviours'. All of these issues may affect the learner's abilities to engage with the learning process, and to develop aspects of autonomy within the learning environment.

Black and Wiliam state that:

'Beliefs about the goals of learning, about one's capacity to respond, about the risks involved in responding in various ways and about what learning should be like (all) affect the motivation to take action, the ability to choose action and commitment to it.'

(1998a: pp. 20-1 cited in Ecclestone 2002)

The next section outlines the specific aims and objectives of the research.

### **1.9 Research Aims and Objectives**

The research aims to take account of disciplinary cultures, epistemological knowledge and tutor and student constructions of 'authenticity'. These research aims constitute an 'original contribution to knowledge' in this research field.

The research **aims** are to identify:



- 1) Relationships between provision of authentic learning activities and the development of autonomous learning behaviours.
- 2) Factors which inhibit and encourage development of autonomous learning.
- 3) Types and variation of autonomous learning behaviours identified.

The **objectives** of the research are to:

- 1) Offer a model of student response to authentic learning activities within a particular social context. The authentic learning activities are situated within academic modules which use Assessment for Learning approaches in their curriculum.
- 2) Outline features of authentic learning activity, delivered within an Assessment for Learning framework, which support particular types of autonomous development.
- 3) Consider which factors may act as a barrier to the development of learner autonomy.

### **1.10 Conceptual framework for the research**

A conceptual framework is a term used in research to describe a particular approach, set of ideas or course of action. A conceptual framework acts as a guide for the research, linking and connecting the different areas of the research in a coherent framework. This framework sets out for the reader a 'road map' of the research, aligning the research question to the literature review, methodological choices, research techniques and data collection and analysis.

The conceptual framework 'sensitises' the researcher, providing guidance on 'what to look for' and 'how to look'. The conceptual framework is progressively refined during the research process and is used to justify research choices and to explain 'what happens next' in the research process.

The conceptual framework for this research begins with the key themes which have been identified in this chapter. The conceptual framework is

concerned with the relationships these themes (concepts) have to one another. The aim of this research is to make visible these relationships and linkages. In this respect, the conceptual framework has been developed throughout the thesis, from the literature review, through to the design of the research methodology and then to the analysis and discussion of the research data.

The conceptual framework of the research is placed within a socio-cultural perspective of teaching, assessment and learning. This perspective views knowledge as being co-constructed between tutors and students, and it acknowledges the social construction of knowledge and the view of assessment as a shared learning experience between tutors and students (Pryor and Crossouard, 2007). The framework incorporates a situated view of learning, and draws upon theories and models of autonomy and authenticity to inform and analyse data. Assessment for Learning provides a 'linking' pedagogic framework for the research and positions, whilst also defining authenticity and autonomy within this perspective on learning and assessment.

The main concepts are summarised below and constitute 'Stage 1' of the 'building process' of the conceptual framework. 'Stage 2' of the framework explains and justifies the design of the research and choice of methodology. 'Stage 3' links the literature review, the research design and the data analysis and provides a coherent theoretical framework for the critical discussion.

The main concepts include:

- Theories of authenticity
- Theories of autonomy
- Theories of student development
- An Assessment for Learning theoretical framework
- A situated learning perspective

- A social constructivist approach to knowledge

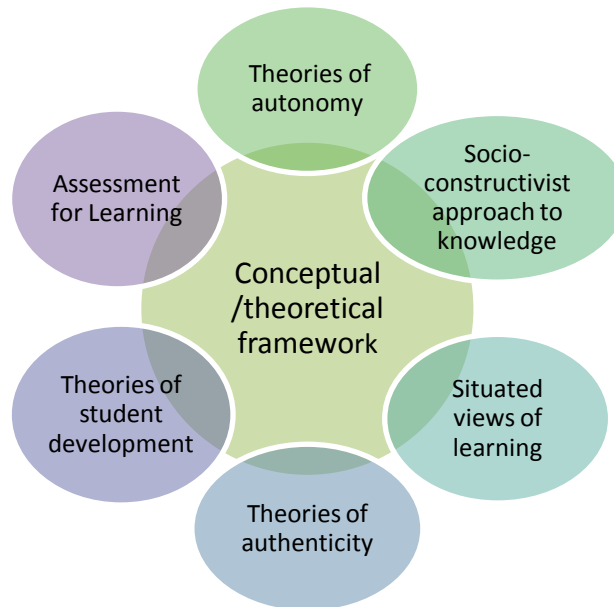


Figure 1: Stage 1. Conceptual framework

### 1.11 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the political, social and pedagogical context to the research. It has discussed the relationship of formative assessment to the study and presented the research questions and a rationale for the research. The chapter discussed research in relation to autonomy and authenticity in learning and linked these concepts to current concerns in relation to assessment in Higher Education. The chapter has placed the research within a conceptual framework and explained how this framework will link each section of the thesis, providing clarity and connection in relation to themes developed throughout the research.

The next chapter, chapter two, presents a literature review of research which is relevant to the research question and the research undertaken for this thesis.

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

The literature review has been divided into six sections:

**Section 2.1** provides an introduction and orientation to the review.

**Section 2.2** this section examines the concept of 'Assessment for Learning', places the research in a theoretical and epistemological framework and discusses Assessment for Learning's' relevance to the study of authenticity and autonomy.

**Section 2.3** considers interpretations and definitions of autonomy in relation to learning. The section links autonomy to views of knowledge and learning, theories of student development and student motivation and engagement.

**Section 2.4** examines the literature in relation to constructions of authenticity in learning and assessment. The section considers the ways in which different theoretical interpretations about learning and knowledge can lead to different interpretations of authenticity and autonomy.

**Section 2.5** provides a 'working definition' of the concepts of authenticity and autonomy used for this thesis. The section outlines key points from the literature review, discusses positive links between authenticity and autonomy and examines the ways in which the concepts link to the research.

**Section 2.6** provides a conclusion to the literature review and asks: What issues are raised when linking authenticity and autonomy in a pedagogic context?

## 2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the main areas of research which have informed and are relevant to this thesis. The review of the literature builds on chapter one, providing a rationale and context for the research.

The aim of the literature review is to:

- Introduce the study.
- Explain why the research is relevant.
- Present and critique relevant research.
- Place the research within a conceptual framework which links the literature to the research design, methodology and critical analysis.

The chapter will:

- Provide a selective evaluation and critique of relevant research.
- Link the research from this thesis to relevant literature and research.
- Outline the way in which this thesis can make an original contribution to the field.

The research aims are to explore and theorise the relationship(s) between formative assessment strategies, authentic learning activities and the development of learner autonomy. The literature review covers three main themes in relation to these relationships: Assessment for Learning, learner autonomy and authenticity in learning. The review also examines the different components which may impact on these relationships. These components include: theories of learning, views of knowledge, student development theories and typologies of motivation.

The review highlights the major questions which are prevalent in the area of learner autonomy and authenticity in learning. The review evaluates and critiques relevant theorists' research in relation to the research which has been carried out for this thesis. The review pays particular attention to a group of theorists who have influenced my thinking about authenticity and autonomy. These theorists are: Liz McDowell, Kay Sambell, Judith Gulikers,

David Boud, Kathryn Ecclestone, Sarah Mann, Catriona Mackenzie and Natalie Stoljar.

The literature review started three years ago when I began my PhD and has therefore informed my thinking in relation to the development of the conceptual framework for the research. The literature review began with a 'review' of key terms and phrases used in Assessment for Learning. This review was published as part of a wider paper and can act as an original contribution within the thesis (McDowell, Sambell & Davison, 2009, please see appendix for details). The literature review includes seminal work on student development and learning from the 1960s and 1970s, which established major breakthroughs in the understanding of student learning. These studies are contrasted with recent writing, within the context of new understandings about the nature of knowledge construction and learning processes.

The research for this thesis was based within the context of 'Assessment for Learning' and the literature review reflects this, focusing mainly on theorists who have written about authenticity and autonomy in relation to assessment. There is a large amount of research which is relevant to both the development of learner autonomy and the use of authenticity in learning. Theorists from wider disciplines are drawn on to discuss aspects of motivation, learning theories, views of knowledge and student development.

## **2.2 Assessment for Learning**

Assessment for Learning is interested in the ways in which organisational culture, pedagogic structures and social learning environments impact on student learning. Assessment for Learning is supported by a large body of pedagogic research. The area which is least researched, however, is the links between authenticity and autonomy, the focus of this thesis.

A fundamental aim of Assessment for Learning is to employ strategies which develop learner autonomy, where the learner is encouraged in a supportive environment to review and evaluate their own learning progress using a range of feedback derived from a variety of sources (McDowell, Sambell, et al, 2005; Montgomery, McDowell, 2008).

### 2.2.1 Linking Assessment for Learning, Authenticity and Autonomy

Assessment for Learning links the concepts of authenticity and autonomy by providing both a theoretical and pedagogical framework for practice. Researchers at Northumbria University have developed a model which outlines six specific core conditions for what is now termed 'Assessment for Learning' (McDowell and Sambell, 2005); namely assessment which:

1. Emphasises authenticity and complexity in the content and methods of assessment rather than reproduction of knowledge and reductive measurement.
2. Uses high stakes summative assessment rigorously but sparingly rather than as the main driver for learning.
3. Offers students extensive opportunities to engage in the kinds of tasks that develop and demonstrate their learning, thus building their confidence and capabilities before they are summatively assessed.
4. Is rich in feedback derived from formal mechanisms e.g. tutor comments on assignments and student self-review logs.
5. Is rich in informal feedback e.g. peer review of draft writing and collaborative project work which provide students with a continuous flow of feedback on 'how they are doing'.
6. Develops student's abilities to direct their own learning, evaluate their own progress and attainments and support the learning of others. This core condition can be used to describe the concept of learner autonomy.

Figure 2 illustrates the CETL Assessment for Learning model in a form that it is used to stimulate review and development of assessment practice.

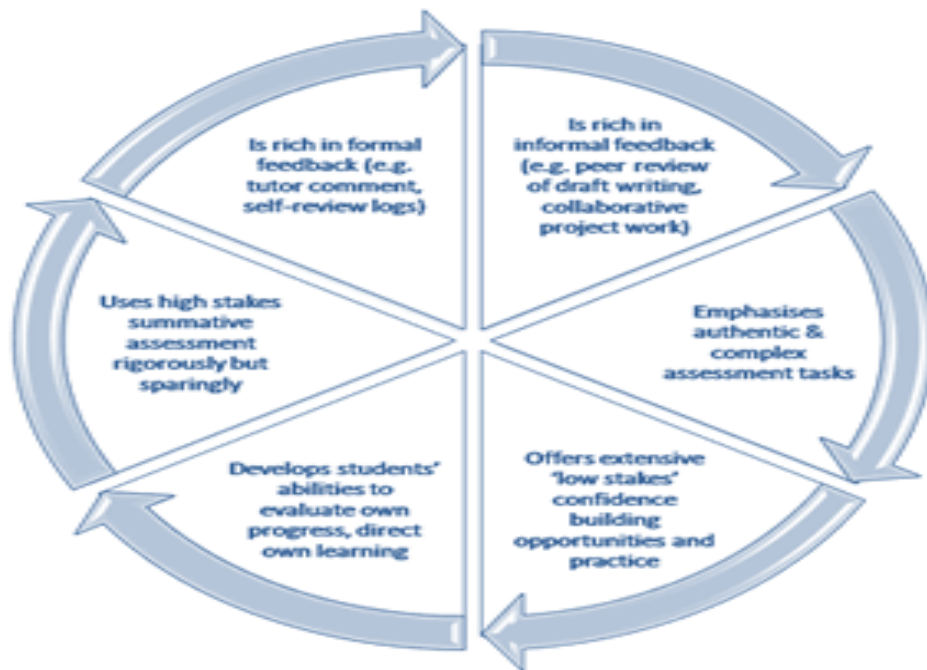


Figure 2: CETL Assessment for learning model

Assessment for Learning is concerned with developing curricular approaches which include the above six core conditions. The area which is least researched, however, is the links between authenticity and autonomy, the focus of this thesis.

### 2.2.2 Research and Assessment for Learning

The term Assessment for Learning (AfL) is used to describe a range of assessment strategies which are designed to improve learning. There are a range of other terms which are often used inter-relatedly, and in different contexts. These include assessment as learning, assessment for learning and learning-orientated assessment. Assessment for Learning has emerged through a shift in paradigms of assessment, moving more towards a philosophy of learning which takes account of the culture and social situatedness of learning (McDowell, Sambell & Davison, 2009).

Prominent theorists in the area of Assessment for Learning whose work is particularly relevant to the study of autonomy and authenticity, include Boud (2006), Gibbs and Simpson (2004), Keppell and Carles (2006) and Nicol and McFarlane-Dick (2006).



Boud discusses self assessment, peer assessment and 'sustainable assessment' (1988, 2000 & 2006) in relation to learners developing 'self direction' and 'learning for the long term'. These approaches highlight the need for learners to be involved in their own learning, to work with other students and to develop skills which will contribute to their future learning. Keppell and Carless (2006) also discuss the development of learner autonomy in relation to the development of skills for future learning, proposing the term 'learner orientated assessment'. This approach views assessment as having three main functions - assessment as certification, assessment as learning and assessment to foster lifelong learning. These last two definitions relate to learners capacity for learning through the process of assessment activities. In relation to the distinction between learning and lifelong learning, Boud and Falchikov (2006) propose a model of assessment which supports students learning beyond university and prepares them for a 'lifetime of learning in work and other social settings'. 'Lifelong learning' is viewed within this context as learning which can take place beyond the educational institution, into the work place and community life. Boud and Falchikov argue that assessment within universities should not just be about learning within the university, but should prepare students for 'learning for the long term', so that students can become effective 'assessors' of their own learning after university and throughout the life course (McDowell, Sambell & Davison, 2009).

Gibbs and Simpson (2004) propose a set of eleven conditions under which assessment supports learning. These 'conditions' can be described as factors which support the development of learner autonomy. The conditions focus on the role of assessment and feedback, emphasising the importance of assessments which allow students to 'allocate effort', 'engage in appropriate activity' and which give students time to 'act upon feedback'.

The research of Yorke (2003) and Biggs (2003) are relevant to the study of authenticity and autonomy in learning. Yorke discusses the problematic nature of formative assessment, emphasising Assessment for Learning's role in academic integration, which is about the development of a 'joined up', or authentic, approach to learning and curriculum development. Yorke argues

that Assessment for Learning approaches should be incorporated into the often diverse elements which make up an academic curriculum. Biggs (2003) discusses 'constructive alignment' where the teaching methods used and the assessment tasks are closely aligned to learning activities and the intended outcomes of the learning activity. The inclusion of authentic assessment in pedagogic design can be viewed as a means to both incorporate Assessment for Learning approaches into the curriculum and act as a means to 'constructively align' learning with learning outcomes.

Research in the area of Assessment for Learning which focuses on self and peer assessment (Bryan & Clegg, 2006) is primarily concerned with the development of learner autonomy. Nicol & Mcfarlane-Dick (2006) discuss self-regulation in learning (learner autonomy) and propose seven principles of good feedback; whilst Mok et al (2006) discuss the importance of 'knowing what to learn', a strategy which emphasises students meta cognition through systematic feedback at the beginning, during and end of a learning sequence. Higgins, Hartley and Skelton (2002) argue that formative feedback does support student learning and that the incorporation of detailed written feedback can provide students with opportunities to develop the type of 'higher order' critical skills which support the development of learner autonomy.

Sambell, Gibson and Montgomery (2007) suggest a model of feedback which involves the development of student autonomy. The authors argue that the term 'feedback' is problematic and 'contextually 'situated', and that a 'linear' approach to feedback (which can be viewed as a transmission mode from tutor to student) does not take into account the wide range of feedback mechanisms which are available to students. These mechanisms may include: self and peer assessment, relationships with friends and family and communities of practice with employers or other learners. Sambell et al offer an alternative viewpoint to feedback; a circuit board is used to illustrate the complex web of ideas and knowledge. When 'connections' are made in learning, 'light bulbs' are 'switched on', representing movement and the development of new understandings. The circuit board is viewed as being operated by a number of 'switches', which are the range of feedback

approaches available to the learner. The switch operated by the learner relates to the development of learner autonomy. The development of self-assessment skills relate to personal, relational and critical autonomy, in that students learn to 'self-assess' within a situated context of learning, where peers and community all act as an influence on learning.

### 2.2.3 Critiques of Assessment for Learning

There is often an assumption that Assessment for Learning is formative assessment (Assessment Reform Group, 2002). Opinions on definitions diverge, with Black (2006, p.11) suggesting that Assessment for Learning has become 'a free brand name to attach to any practice'.

Taras (2007) outlines a critique of Assessment for Learning, pointing out that it can be viewed as an often 'idealistic' approach, whilst also highlighting the conflicting, multiple purposes of assessment and the external drivers and constraints which impact on assessment practices. Taras also advises that because Assessment for Learning encompasses a broad view of assessment, everything 'turns into assessment' and this creates 'fuzziness.' It can be argued, however, that this 'fuzziness' relates to the lack of a consensus in relation to definitions of Assessment for Learning. Black and Wiliam (1998b) argue that there is 'no tightly defined' conceptual analysis of formative assessment – all teaching strategies are viewed as 'assessment' and there is no separation of the wide range of formative assessment practices for what is now termed 'Assessment for Learning' This raises the question of what *is* meant by Assessment for Learning - a clear distinction needs to be made between assessment *of* learning and assessment *for* learning Gipps (1994), the former concentrating on the measurement of learning, and the latter being more primarily concerned with using evaluation to feed into the teaching and learning process to improve learning.

Assessment for Learning has been questioned in terms of whether it can be always viewed in a positive light (Pryor & Crossouard, 2007). It can be argued that Assessment for Learning appears to promote empowerment and autonomy, but does not challenge fundamental political and structural features of assessment regimes at institutional, national and even

international level (Broadfoot, 2007). Broadfoot argues that Assessment for Learning approaches, whilst giving the appearance of progressive change for learners, focus on the micro-level of classroom interaction (McDowell, Sambell & Davison (2009). It can be argued, however, that Assessment for Learning approaches do challenge assessment regimes at a number of societal and political levels. The nature of this challenge perhaps lies in the ways in which Assessment for Learning is presented and conceptualised within institutions. These factors will have an impact on the opportunities which practitioners will have in relation to being able to challenge more 'traditional' measurement – type assessment practices within higher education.

Critiques of Assessment for Learning have argued that the importance placed on feedback has connotations with behaviourist approaches, and can be used to control behaviour through 'constructive alignment' of learning tasks. Ecclestone (1999) discusses assessment which is allegedly student-centred and says that the justification for change is 'a supportive, responsive alternative to the stressful competition of examination' but can be 'a way of seducing learners into self-disciplined conformity' (Ecclestone, 1999, p. 39). It can be argued that critiques of Assessment for Learning which focus on the emphasis on feedback, do not take account of the range and complexity of the types and effects of feedback which Assessment for Learning encompasses (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004). It is acknowledged that there are many different constructions of Assessment for Learning (Mcdowell, Sambell and Davison, 2009), with some models focusing on only one or two aspects', often with a focus on feedback, without mentioning the range of strategies which Assessment for Learning incorporates. It has been argued that a more holistic model of Assessment for learning is required, which does not present such a narrow, fragmented approach. Such a model has been proposed by Mcdowell and Sambell (1998) (the model reviewed earlier in this chapter) - the six specific core conditions outlined provide a model of practice which does offer a more holistic approach to 'Assessment for Learning'. It can also be argued that Assessment for Learning, with its emphasis on the development of learner autonomy, rather than 'seducing learners into self-

disciplined conformity' (Ecclestone, 1999, p. 39), actively promotes challenge, develops self assessment skills and criticality in learners.

Maclellan (2004) provides a critique of Assessment for Learning, highlighting the multiple purposes of assessment, and the political, economic and social aspects, stating that assessment is not just about being student-centred, but about wider social and economic drivers. Boud and Falchikov (2006) offer a challenge to this perspective moving the debate about Assessment for Learning into societal and economic arenas, arguing that Assessment for Learning approaches offer a wider conceptualisation of teaching and learning and provide strategies which enable learners to develop learning behaviours and skills which will equip them for 'learning in the long term' and for life beyond the university, into community and professional life. Carless (2007) adds to this debate, with his 'forward looking' view of assessment, which has been termed 'learning-orientated assessment' (Mcdowell, Sambell and Davison, 2009), whereby learning in university is viewed as having a broader focus, assessment is viewed as being about the development of the *learning* elements of assessment, rather than the measurement aspects.

Assessment for Learning is linked to the development of learner autonomy because it promotes the development of self-directed learning and self-assessment, which is the subject of the next section.

## 2.3 Autonomy and Learning

### 2.3.1 Definitions of the concept of autonomy in learning

Autonomy was studied by the ancient stoics - by philosophers such as Immanuel Kant and modern philosophers such as Spinoza (Paul et al, 2003, p. 8). Autonomy is regarded as a central feature and value in moral and political philosophy. Autonomy has been defined as self-regulation, self-governance, or self-direction. In relation to political theory, it is related to human rights. The concept of autonomy is related to freedom. It can be argued that different definitions have different implications for public policy. Theorists question that the concept of autonomy is based on the supposition that we have free will or whether autonomy has similarities with aspects of determinism.

Definitions in currency include the work of Ecclestone (2002) who discusses the research of Carr and Kemmis (1986), which proposed a typology of autonomy. Carr and Kemmis differentiate between the broader educational aims of autonomy and the structures and conditions which may help learners develop autonomous behaviour. The typology suggests that autonomy can be defined according to four different types. These are: procedural (technical skills, management skills), personal (practical), critical (critical thinking) and finally emancipatory, or relational, autonomy (working and learning from/with others). The model relates autonomy to models of teaching which can be defined as: transmission, transaction and transformation. Ecclestone relates that there can be movement back and forth between different types of autonomy, and that different teaching strategies may encourage the development of different types of autonomy. Ecclestone also suggests that a model based on categories is not perfect, but argues that it is a useful basis for the study of autonomy, motivation and assessment. Ecclestone (2002) defines these categories as: procedural autonomy, personal autonomy, critical autonomy and relational autonomy, which are discussed below:

1) Procedural autonomy:

‘The ability to determine some control over pace, timing and evaluation of work, to negotiate types of learning activities and ‘appropriate’ evidence of achievement, to become more pro-active within specific rules, outcomes and assessment criteria is a form of autonomy. This might develop independence in using techniques or processes, as well as confidence with a body of technical or specialist language.’

(Ecclestone, 2002, p. 36)

Ecclestone states that this type of autonomy relates to a transmission mode of teaching and assessment, with particular attention paid to surface learning focusing on outcome-based assessment. Procedural autonomy has been related to external or introjected motivation (Prenzel, 2002, in Ecclestone, 2002, p. 36), which in turn may result in surface learning. Ecclestone states, however, that the development of procedural autonomy may be an essential

'pre-requisite for the development of more sophisticated forms of personal and critical autonomy' (Ecclestone, p. 37). Ecclestone is supported in this view by Newton:

'Paradoxically, facility in self-regulation (of learning) can develop from external regulation. Success is when external support is removed and self-regulation stands alone.'

(Newton, 2000, p. 166, in Ecclestone, 2002, p. 37)

## 2) Personal (practical) autonomy

Personal autonomy is defined as based on self-knowledge of a person's own individual strengths and weaknesses. It is based on humanist notions of the self and self-actualisation (Rogers, 1983), where learning is seen as more student-directed and involves a transaction type of learning between tutor and student. Personal autonomy involves negotiation of outcomes, co-operation between learners, collaboration, problem-solving, review and reflection. Personal autonomy is about the development of social processes and is based on a constructivist view of learning.

## 3) Critical autonomy has been described as:

'For many educators, critical autonomy is the ultimate goal of education since notions of democratic citizenship based on critical intelligence enable students to free themselves from the constraints under which they are already thinking and acting.'

(Barnett, 1994, p. 191)

Ecclestone states that critical autonomy in higher education is thought to develop through subject knowledge. Critical autonomy is developed through transaction and transformation, and involves problem-solving, negotiation, diverse activities, openness and creativity. Critical autonomy relates to being able to make connections between ideas and relate these to the wider world (Law, 1992, p. 164).

## 4) Relational autonomy

The term relational autonomy is used explicitly by theorists Mackenzie and Stoljar (2000) to refer to autonomous learning in inter-personal terms. This term is used by other theorists who, whilst not using the term 'relational' explicitly, describe autonomy in terms of 'interdependence' (Boud, 1988). Little (1999) argues that our independence as learners is balanced by our interdependence on others; we are social beings and need others to develop our own independence.

Benson (2001) discusses autonomy in relation to language learning. Autonomy has been a main focus of research in language teaching, starting in the 1960s, and grows from the social and political movements of the time. In higher education, the notion of 'student power' (Benson, p. 16) was becoming prevalent. Radical political educational movements were highlighting the need to move away from the values of consumerism and materialism to a focus on human rights, personal freedom and shared values. Writers in this movement included Freire (1970), Illich (1971), and Rogers (1969). The notion of autonomy was seen as embracing the political and ideological values in the discussion of the meaning of adult education.

Benson (2001) states that throughout the 1970s and 1980s the concept of autonomy was related to the concept of individualism. Benson relates that individualism was concerned with meeting the needs of individual learners. Self-directed learning, practiced in language learning, was a form of individualisation. Self access resource centres for language learning grew, and this was associated with the functions of individualised learning. This individualisation was characterised by learners working their own way through activities prepared by tutors. Benson states that this association with autonomy and individualisation may account for the misconceptions and criticisms of autonomy as being about the learner working by himself, in isolation from others. Benson states that research in relation to autonomy is focused on the interdependent nature of autonomy. Benson cites Kohonen (1992, p. 19):

'Personal decisions are necessarily made with respect to social and moral norms, traditions and expectations. Autonomy thus



includes the notion of interdependence, that is being responsible for one's own conduct in the social context, being able to cooperate with others and solve conflicts in constructive ways.'

Candy's (1991) work has been a major influence on the development of learner autonomy, focusing on the field of learner self-directed learning to propose a multi-dimensional view of self-directed learning. In North American educational literature, self-directed learning is concerned with the learner being able to manage their own learning, while autonomy is viewed as the personal or moral attributes which accompany the ability to self direct. Recent research on autonomy has been based within the constructivist tradition, including the work of Kolb (1984), which has been particularly influential. Candy describes constructivism as a series of approaches which state that 'knowledge cannot be taught but must be constructed by the learner'. A number of researchers have offered profiles of learner characteristics which could constitute learner autonomy. Candy (1991) has developed a list of over one hundred characteristics of the autonomous learner, developed into thirteen categories. Candy states that the autonomous learner will:

- Be methodical and disciplined
- Be logical and analytical
- Be reflective and self aware
- Demonstrate curiosity, openness and motivation
- Be flexible
- Be interdependent and interpersonally competent
- Be persistent and responsible
- Be venturesome and creative
- Show confidence and have a positive self concept
- Be independent and self sufficient
- Have developed information seeking and retrieval skills
- Have knowledge about, and skill at, learning processes

- Develop and use criteria for evaluating

Candy's categories can be viewed not just as a list of criteria, and behaviour which is observable, but also refers to attitudes and aspects of personality as well as concrete examples of characteristics which could be viewed as autonomous learning behaviours. Similarly, Breen and Mann (1997, pp. 134-6) forward eight characteristics of the autonomous learner, including:

- Having a robust sense of self that is unlikely to be undermined by any actual or assumed negative assessment of themselves or their work
- Being alert to change and able to change in an adaptable, resourceful and opportunistic way
- Being able to make use of the environment they find themselves in strategically

Little (1999) talks about some assumptions people have in relation to autonomy. The first misconception is that autonomy is about self instruction, and:

'That there is an assumption that the teacher has to relinquish all initiative and control.'

(Little, p. 3, 1999)

Little argues that a further misconception relates to autonomy being characterised as something that 'teachers do to their learners' - that it is some form of new pedagogy, a new methodology of teaching and learning. Little states that this is not entirely untrue - a teacher is required to support learners - but he argues that autonomy is not something which can be 'slotted in' to a series of three or four sessions. A third misconception is that autonomy is one particular type or set of behaviours. Little contends that this is untrue; he argues that autonomy is multi-faceted and can be apparent in many different ways. The fourth misconception states that autonomy can be viewed as a developmental process - that once on a journey of autonomous behaviour this will develop into an all-encompassing autonomous learner. Little states that this is not true, as students can display autonomy in one

area and not another, making is fluid and changeable, being diminished or expanded upon according to circumstance.

Little argues that autonomy is fundamentally:

'A capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action.'

(Little, p. 4, 1999)

Little states that common usage of the word autonomy implies a large measure of freedom from the attention of others. Little, however, also says that the freedom arrived at through autonomous learning is never absolute; it is always conditional and constrained by other factors. Little argues that autonomy as an adult educational goal is concerned with developing responsibility in the learner:

'Because the learner sets the agenda, learning should be more focussed and more purposeful, and those more effective both immediately and in the long term.'

(Little, p. 8, 1999)

Little sees the development of learner autonomy as a route to the development of citizenship and people becoming more 'useful' members of society:

'If there are no barriers between learning and living, learners should have little difficulty in transferring their capacity for autonomous behaviours to all other areas of their lives, and this should make them more useful members of society and more effective participants in the democratic process.'

(Little, p. 8, 1999)

Rachlin (2003) offers a critique of the notion of responsibility in learning, arguing that:

'The social purpose of classifying some subset of a person's particular acts as autonomous is to give society a basis for

attributing responsibility for those acts to the person. Responsibility, in turn, is the rationale for society allocating rewards and punishments to its members.'

(Rachlin, in Paul, et al., 2003, p. 258)

Rachlin reveals the moral and ethical issue inherent in the development of autonomy in his discussion of 'responsibility' and it highlights the multi-dimensional and contested nature of the concept.

Littlewood (in Benson, 2007) argues that interdependence is an important aspect of autonomy, and distinguishes between 'reactive autonomy' (self-regulation of tasks set by others) and 'proactive autonomy' (about self-direction of tasks). Littlewood presents a conceptual model of the relationship between task design and the movement from reactive to proactive autonomy and what he terms 'autonomous interdependence'. Littlewood states that if autonomy is defined to be about communication, creativity and collaboration, you could then say that autonomy cannot just be described as an internal capacity of an individual but something that exists in the social individual, existing within social interaction with people involved in the learning process (Littlewood, 2002).

Boud defines the main characteristic of autonomous learning as:

'Students take some significant responsibility for their own learning over and above responding to instruction'.

(Boud, 1988, p. 23)

Boud (1988) identifies the following as activities which may involve developing autonomy in learning:

- Identifying learning needs
- Setting goals
- Planning learning activities
- Finding resources needed for learning

- Working collaboratively with others
- Creating 'problems' to tackle
- Using teachers as guides and counsellors rather than instructors
- Determining criteria to apply to their work
- Engaging in self-assessment
- Learning outside the confines of the educational institution, for example in a work setting
- Reflecting on their learning processes

Boud talks about a spectrum of approaches and states that most teaching approaches fall somewhere between these two extremes.



Figure 3: Spectrum of autonomous learning approaches

Boud argues that students will need different skills to engage in this range of teaching approaches. These skills may depend on: 1) what students bring with them to the educational experience 2) the values of teacher and 3) the organisational culture. Boud remarks that it may be unhelpful to develop courses which have too much student control when students' may have had little previous experience of developing their own leadership. Boud argues that this can be 'counterproductive' and give the appearance of the promotion autonomy when it actually inhibits development.

Boud outlines three main teaching approaches which may support the development of autonomy:

- 1) The individual-centred approach, which incorporates individual aims and goals and the use of learning contracts.
- 2) The group-centred approach, which involves groups of learners who support and develop their own learning goals within the group.

Democratic decision-making, group feedback and the peer learning community are central to this approach (Heron, 1974).

- 3) The project-centred approach. This approach concerns the development of a project whose outcome is of equal importance to that of the individual or group. Often practically-orientated, elements of the two previous approaches can be found here. This approach incorporates 'real life' problems, where students design the activity on an individual basis, or as a group project.

Boud discusses surface learning and deep learning as closely related to the concept of autonomy. Surface approaches rely superficially on aspects of a text, document, or learning programme, such as remembering dates, names and relying on memory to reintegrate information. A deep approach attempts to make meaning of the subject, to engage with the text and derive understandings and relationships between concepts.

Autonomy can also be viewed as being about both being free of influence from external drivers and also from your own internal drivers e.g. compulsions, anxieties, patterns of behaviour. Chene defines autonomy as:

'One's ability to be free in regard to established rules or norms, to set the goals of one's actions and to judge its value.'

(Chene, 1983, p. 38)

Ecclestone (2002), writing from a vocational educational background, presents a theoretical framework of learner autonomy which is related to the practice of formative assessment. Ecclestone states recent research challenges behaviourist perspectives which focused on extrinsic motives for learning, including short-term goals, external goals and reward-based performance. This theorist argues that behaviourist approaches stress short-term outcomes and encourage 'rote' and 'surface' learning, whilst humanistic perspectives are interested in the development of intrinsic motivation, which focuses on the development of creative, deep approaches to learning. This perspective views the concept of autonomy as being one with diverse meanings, with autonomy being seen as a general 'goal' of education,

although Ecclestone also acknowledges that there is much 'slippage' between terms, with the term autonomy being used interchangeably in different contexts.

The innovatory research of Brundage and Mackeracher (1980) is very relevant to the study of autonomy in learning. Brundage and Mackeracher conducted research which identified 'stages' of development in learning. These stages were identified as positions students pass through as they develop autonomy through taking part in a particular project. These 'stages' are similar to the research findings of this research and add support to the constructions of authenticity which are discussed in chapter eight.

Brundage and Mackeracher's positions were identified as:

- 1) Early Stage – the learner enters a new situation, which is new or unfamiliar, and involves stress. The student may appear dependent, not participate, and rely on past experience to try to make sense of the situation, which may not be effective.
- 2) Reactive Stage – the learner develops a sense of self as an individual and can act independently as well as often being involved in arguments and disagreements, and may say that the other learners involved in the group activity are 'disorganised'.
- 3) Proactive stage – the learner feels accepted within the group. The learner moves towards working interdependently with the group, and there are fewer individual activities and fewer arguments.
- 4) Integrative stage – the learner moves toward integrating others' perspectives with his own. The learner can balance individual and group tasks. The learner can interpret multiple perspectives and behaviours.

This theory suggests that adult learners may move from dependent-type behaviours to independent and then to inter-dependent throughout the course of a learning experience. The integrative stage discussed by

Brundgae and Maceracher (1980) has been called 'equilibrium' by Taylor (1986), and the peer learning community by Heron (1974).

### **2.3.2 Autonomy and culture**

Autonomy and its characteristics may differ in different contexts and cultures. Theorists have argued that definitions of autonomy based in western industrialised culture may not be appropriate in different countries and could be viewed as cultural imperialism. Littlewood, however, (1999) (in Benson, 2001) argues that discussions of autonomy being not valid in different cultures are based on cultural stereotypes. Kirtikara (1997) (in Benson) argues that 'the fundamental ideals of autonomy' are shared by diverse cultures. Ecclestone (2002) argues that the notion of autonomy has been challenged by post modernists and post-structuralist views which challenge the western traditions of individual agency, structure and identity, and that humanist conceptions of autonomy are still prevalent in the current, mainly European, literature on learner autonomy.

### **2.3.3 Autonomy and control**

The study of autonomy in learning raises the question of the value which is placed on students exhibiting autonomous learning behaviours. What level is 'an acceptable level' of autonomy? How do we make this judgement and whose judgment is it to make? Oshana (2003) discusses the potential outcome if the values of autonomy are regarded too highly:

'The worry is that, if we value autonomy too much, we might advocate the use of paternalistic measures to compel persons whom we identify as non autonomous, to become (more) self directed. Is it coherent to attempt to force autonomy in a person by means that deny autonomy?'

(Oshana, in Paul, et al, 2003, p. 100)

Oshana does not expand on what actions we can advocate as supporting another's autonomy, but does offer a consideration of the issues and the need to balance issues of autonomy with other values. Halliday (2000) states that learners may have to balance the development of critical autonomy with



acquiescence because of potential tensions of having to conform to norms and values within institutions.

#### **2.3.4 Autonomy and resistance**

Taplin (2000) states that students can often have difficulty in changing to self-directed learning when they have had previous experiences of dependent learning habits, and can become unhappy when support is withdrawn. Taplin argues that more independence in learning may result in students' feeling anxious or uncertain with regard to the new experience.

The literature in relation to autonomy has revealed that the student response to learning activities which are designed to promote learner autonomy can be varied; this variation may be dependent on a number of factors, including the ways in which the learning activity is constructed by the tutor and presented to students.

#### **2.3.5 Developmental models in relation to learning and their relationship to the development of learner autonomy**

Two theorists who have made significant contributions to understanding the nature of student change and development are Marcia Baxter-Magolda (1992b) and William Perry (1970). These theorists write from cognitive-structural perspectives, and have their foundations in the work of Jean Piaget (1964). Cognitive-structural theorists are concerned with the nature and processes of student change, concentrating on the epistemological structures individuals construct to give meaning to their worlds. Perry (1970) conducted a major study, interviewing undergraduate students at Harvard University, and found that students move through a series of nine positions in relation to their views of their own learning position. These learner positions included moving from views which were at polar opposites, to accepting diversity, accepting uncertainly and making a commitment to the learning activity. These positions can all be viewed as the learner developing different types of autonomy in learning.

Baxter-Magolda (1992b) conducted a five year qualitative study with one hundred and one students from Ohio University in 1986. Drawing on this research, Baxter-Magolda developed a model of epistemological reflection.

This model identified four ways in which students 'make meaning'. Baxter-Magolda avoids the rigid use of the term 'stages' as a hierarchical sequence of epistemological development. These four elements of the model are:

- 1) *Absolute knowing*: knowledge is viewed as absolute. Knowledge is based on a transmission mode. The tutor transmits, the student receives.
- 2) *Transitional knowing*: Alternative points of view can enable students to tentatively view some elements of knowledge as uncertain. Students become more active learners and reliance on tutors starts to recede.
- 3) *Independent knowing*: Learners start to view their own opinions about knowledge construction as legitimate. Relationships with peers and authority change as the student becomes more independent and starts to find their own 'voice'. Students can recognise others' opinions, but find it difficult to pay attention to others' voices at this point.
- 4) *Contextual knowing*: Independent thought is now inter-related with the thoughts and views of others. It becomes inter-dependent. Experts are considered a source of knowledge which can be incorporated into the viewpoint of the 'knower' and evaluated as evidence and the views of others.

Baxter-Magolda's model relates to autonomy in learning because, in making transparent the different levels of knowing, learners' development can be related to different types and levels of autonomy in learning.

#### **2.3.6 Theories of Engagement and their relationship to learner autonomy**

Ecclestone (2002) links theories of motivation and engagement to the development of learner autonomy, arguing that it is not possible to separate issues of motivation and engagement to learn from a wider socio-cultural context. Socio-cultural accounts of learner motivation acknowledge that learners' identities and sense of self are shaped by their community and their society, as well as individual characteristics and abilities. Ecclestone discusses the research of Prenzel et al (1999) which, from a cognitive

psychology perspective, forwards an account of the types of motivation learners may move through in their learning journey. They summarise motivation as:

- Amotivated: lacking any direction for motivation, from indifference to apathy
- External: learning takes place only 'in association with reinforcement, reward, or to avoid threat or punishment'
- Introjected: learning happens when learners 'internalise' or 'incorporate' 'an external supportive structure'. Although it is internal, it is not a self-determined form of motivation
- Identified: learning occurs as a result of accepting content or activities which for its sake holds no incentive (it may even be a burden) but it is recognised as necessary and important in attaining a goal the learner has set
- Intrinsic: learning results independently from external contingencies. Learners' perceive any incentives to be gained as being intrinsic to the context or activity
- Interested: learning does not merely recognise intrinsic value but takes place 'in accordance with subjective and meaningful attributes assigned to the object or object-specific skill'.

Prenzel relates that:

'From an educational point of view, motivation theories take on relevance if they empirically predict how the different motivational states impact (on) learning and teaching processes. On this basis, it is possible to systematically differentiate between motivation states as being either (more or less) questionable or desirable with respect to educational objectives.'

(Prenzel et al, 1999, pp. 1-2)

Bryson and Hand (2007) discuss the role of engagement in teaching and learning, arguing for an integrated, multi-faceted engagement strategy.

‘Engagement lies on a continuum from disengaged to engaged, and also exists at a number of levels within which the same student may exhibit different degrees of engagement.’

(Bryson & Hand, p. 349)

These authors argue that students are more likely to engage if they are supported by tutors who, in turn, engage with the students, the curriculum and the teaching process. Bryson and Hand define engagement as learners becoming actively involved in the learning process, contributing to learning activities and participating and collaborating with others. Engagement is seen here as existing at a range of levels and intensity and has similarities with the definitions of motivation referred to by Prenzel et al (1999). It could be argued that the term ‘motivation’ would be equally relevant in this context.

Mann’s (2001) study of student engagement and ‘alienation’ relates to the study of learner autonomy and authenticity in learning through Mann’s discussion of ‘meaning’ within the curriculum. Mann provides a theoretical exploration of student engagement, moving from a focus on surface/strategic/deep approaches to learning to a focus on alienated or engaged experiences of learning. Mann argues that if students are not presented with learning opportunities which they perceive as relevant and meaningful, they will not engage with the learning process at a deep level and will therefore have limited opportunities to develop learner autonomy. Mann outlines seven theoretical perspectives in understanding the students’ position as alienated:

- 1) The postmodern condition.
- 2) Student positioned as subject/object.
- 3) The student as outsider.
- 4) The student bereft of the capacity for creativity.
- 5) The student as exiled from the self.

- 6) The student 'disciplined' into docility.
- 7) 'Leave me alone' alienation as a strategy for self preservation.

Mann discusses the postmodern 'condition', arguing that higher education is 'fulfilling society's needs' in terms of economic competitiveness and 'performativity'. Mann argues that the students' experience of education is not engaging and thus promotes strategic and surface learning. Mann states that education's meaning in society relates to jobs and money, and this promotes strategic approaches. Mann states that young people may feel that they have no real choice in having to go to university in order to get a job; the life course is 'institutionalised' and thus is not viewed as engaging. This places the student as an 'outsider', creating barriers to learning. Mann states that students may find it easier not to engage, as being presented with new ideas may present a risk:

'Most students entering the world of the academy are in an equivalent position to those crossing the borders of a new country – they have to deal with the bureaucracy of checkpoints, or matriculation, they may have limited knowledge of the local language and customs, and are alone.'

(Mann, 2001, p. 11)

Mann argues that the organised nature of higher education suppresses creativity, which is the element which is actually needed to engage in learning. Mann also relates that the current emphasis in assessment is about outcome rather than process; systems of exams and assessment separate students from the possibility of being autonomous in assessment. Mann argues that if the institution and the lecturer decide on the content/pace of learning, the students do not own the learning process and there will be a sense of alienation and unequal distribution of power in the relationship. Mann also argues that assessment places your worth against others (which can be viewed as an alienating experience), stating that if the emphasis is taken off the assessment itself and placed on the process of learning this will encourage students to become involved in the learning process and to engage with learning in a deeper sense rather than in a strategic, surface

and alienated manner. In this instance, authentic learning activities, situated within an Assessment for Learning framework, may be able to provide the meaning and relevance which Mann describes as being essential for learner engagement.

The terms 'engagement' and 'motivation' have been used in educational contexts to describe learner reactions to the curriculum, and learner response over a particular period of time. Whilst a range of definitions of motivation and engagement have been suggested, this thesis will use the definition of motivation outlined by Ecclestone (2002), reviewed earlier in this section. Ecclestone links the development of different types of motivation to formative assessment strategies and the development of learner autonomy. Ecclestone's analysis places motivation within a constructivist theory of learning, arguing that formative assessment strategies promote intrinsic motivation and thus promotes the development of learner autonomy.

Definitions and constructions of authenticity in learning are discussed in the following section.

## **2.4 Constructions of Authenticity**

Authenticity can be viewed as a multi-dimensional concept. Authenticity is a contested subject – it is dependent on context, cultural norms and values. Authenticity can be viewed as subjective and is considered a relative term (Gulikers, 2006). The common denominator is learning undertaken to acquire and apply knowledge, skills and feelings in an immediate and relevant setting. Authenticity, in relation to assessment, has been described in a number of ways, including: authentic to a professional context, authentic to the particular academic discipline, authentic in relation to real life/world settings, and authentic in relation to being meaningful to individuals' lives. Gulikers (2008) completed a study of students' perceptions of authentic assessment in relation to the amount of previous experience they had. This previous experience included professional experience and experience of studying. Guilkers argued that the influence of authentic assessment on student learning was influenced by two major factors – the level of relevance students felt the task had in relation to professional life and the amount of

study experience the student had acquired. Gulikers argues that authenticity is multi-dimensional and is not an objective construct. Therefore students' perceptions of the authentic assessment will differ, not all students will see the assessment in the same way and this will, in turn, influence the assessment. Gulliker states that useful areas for future research might include:

'Contexts where learning and working 'are not so tightly integrated' or where the future work field is much broader and therefore less clear.'

(Gulikers, 2008, p. 184)

Gulikers argues that if assessment is viewed as authentic by students it would be an important factor in 'bridging the gap' between learning and working.

Cumming and Maxwell (1999) state that different theoretical interpretations in relation to learning and knowledge lead to different interpretations of authentic assessment. They acknowledge that learning is characterised by a complex range of interrelated socio-cultural, cognitive and affective factors. Assessment theory and practice is seen as developing new conceptions of learning and moving away from narrow definitions (Resnick, 1989). This changing focus of assessment has raised two major theoretical concerns: 1) conceptions of validity about the appropriateness of the assessment to achieve learning outcomes and 2) the need for learning and assessment to be contextualised and meaningful for learners. This comes from a general perception that motivation is based on learners' awareness of relevance and context. Cumming and Maxwell argue that the development of authentic assessment has emerged from these concerns and has common use but different interpretations and descriptions have led to 'confused theory and practice' (Cumming & Maxwell, 1999, p. 178).

#### **2.4.1 Interpretations of authentic assessment**

Cumming and Maxwell discuss four major interpretations of authentic achievement and authentic assessment in relation to constructions of authenticity, related to the following views of assessment:

- 1) Performance and performance assessment.
- 2) Situated learning and situated assessment.
- 3) Complexity of expertise and problem-based assessment.
- 4) Competence and competence-based assessment.

The first construction of authentic achievement and assessment relates to performance assessment. This is described by Cumming and Maxwell as the completion of a task or activity which is assessed through the learner demonstrating this ability, for example through the production of a report, or product. Maxwell and Cummings argue that this construction of authenticity is limited, as they argue it involves only 'direct observation of performance'. The authors also argue it is difficult to assess across diverse areas and make generalisations from this. The second construction flows from theories of learning that state that learning occurs in a context (Brown et al, 1989; Perkins & Salomon, 1989; Campione & Brown, 1990). These theories state that learning is situated and developed within a context. The type and level of 'situatedness' has been debated by Anderson et al (1996) who forward a continuum of 'situatedness' – where some theories of learning would say that transfer across contexts is possible, moving to the end of the spectrum, whereby assessment can only be completely authentic if it is performed within a specific context in which the statement about performance of standard is made. No generalisations would be possible. Complexity of expertise and problem-based assessment is the third construction of authentic assessment and recognises the layers of complexity within an open-ended problem-solving approach, where learners are given the opportunity to develop ideas, collaborate and negotiate to address the problem. The fourth construction of authentic assessment is based upon competence-based assessment. The vocational education and training area is a major proponent of authentic assessment. Competence is defined as the ability to satisfactorily perform a given task, particularly in relation to a professional area of work. The construction of authenticity does not derive from theories of learning but from the premise that vocational education should be directly related to the workplace and should therefore directly reflect the skills required in the area of work. This area can be divided into



two types of assessment: simulations of 'real world' situations, where tasks are copied to be as close to real life as possible within a controlled environment, and secondly tasks actually performed in the workplace in genuine employment situations.

Cumming and Maxwell argue that this understanding demands that educators using authentic assessment methods should pay attention to 1) what learning goals are wanted, 2) theories of learning and 3) theories of teaching and assessment. This review has argued that different learning theories underlie our different types, or 'constructions' of authenticity. These constructions, whilst emphasising using different aspects of learning, all pay attention to context and to higher order cognitive processes.

#### **2.4.2 Authenticity and Information Technology**

The internet and the growth of technology and simulation technologies have resulted in an interest and expansion of games and simulations linked to authentic learning activities. Authentic learning environments can be developed in both digital and real life settings (Lombardi, 2007). Authenticity has been viewed as a student-centred form of learning, where students 'solve ambiguous problems with real-world significance' (Lombardi, 2007; Maina, 2004; Rule, 2006).

These ambiguous problems can have a range of possible solutions (Bennett, Harper & Hedberg, 2002, in Herrington, 2002) and can be viewed as close comparisons to emulating the work of real-life experts. Digital simulations have grown in technology education as they are viewed as appropriate and 'safe' arenas in which to practice the development of skills. Squire and Jenkins (2003) and Oblinger and Hawkins (2006) suggest that on-line simulations are not enough by themselves, but must be incorporated into a course. They suggest that students will become motivated to look for information to support on-line learning and simulations from books, papers and other materials to support their performance in a game environment.

Messick (1994) discusses authentic learning tasks in relation to simulations and argues that there are two types of simulation: construct-centred and task-centred authenticity:

‘In the task centred approach to authentic assessment, credibility depends on the simulation of as much real-world complexity as can be provided... The construct centred approach (focuses) on constructs of knowledge and skill and the conditions of their realistic engagement in task performance. Aspects of the test situation can be controlled or standardised. Such simulated tasks are authentic in that they replicate the challenges and standards of real-world performances and are representative of the ways in which knowledge and skills are used in real-world contexts, even though they do not simulate all of the complexity of real world functioning. No situation can be exactly like the real world. Teachers would have to distinguish which aspects of knowledge they wanted to assess and incorporate this into the assessment activity.’

(Messick, 1994, p. 58)

Herrington, Oliver and Reeves (2002), discuss the use of authentic learning activities in on-line learning environments, and state that there are many benefits for learners. Their research is based upon constructivist philosophy and they discuss research in response to curriculum advances in technology. They argue that their methods have been successfully used in a range of disciplinary areas. They discuss patterns of engagement, and state that engagement involves a ‘suspension of belief’ on the part of the students. Herrington et al (2002) propose ten characteristics of authentic learning activities. These include activities based in real situations and activities which included development of conceptual skills such as critical thinking or problem solving:

- 1) Authentic activities have real-world relevance.
- 2) Authentic activities are ill-defined, requiring students to define the tasks and sub-tasks needed to complete the activity.
- 3) Authentic activities comprise complex tasks to be investigated by students over a sustained period of time.
- 4) Authentic activities provide the opportunity for students to examine the task from different perspectives, using a variety of resources.
- 5) Authentic activities provide the opportunity to collaborate.
- 6) Authentic activities provide the opportunity to reflect.

- 7) Authentic activities can be integrated and applied across different subject areas and led beyond domain-specific outcomes.
- 8) Authentic activities are seamlessly integrated with assessment.
- 9) Authentic activities create polished products valuable in their own right rather than as preparation for something else.
- 10) Authentic activities allow competing solutions and diversity of outcome.

Herrington and Oliver have used these ten principles to identify cases within their own institution to research. They state that identification of courses which have these characteristics as their core design is difficult, and research is ongoing. One strong emerging theme in their research is that the view of authenticity emerges from tutors' 'own imaginations' and views of learning. Petraglia (1998a, p. 53) has been critical of this phenomenon, calling it 'the real world on a short leash'.

#### **2.4.3 Theoretical interpretations of learning and knowledge and authentic assessment**

Views on whether we think authentic teaching and assessment methods can contribute to the development of learner autonomy depend on the ways in which we think knowledge is constructed and the way in which we think people learn.

'Our assessment system is shaped not simply by the educational values of our course team (values which themselves are shaped by individuals' own views and philosophical perspectives in their ideal assessment system) but also by university regulations, by cultural norms within higher education, and our own and students' expectations of what constitutes 'proper' assessment.'

(Russell et al, 2006, p. 470)

This section begins with a discussion of the situated perspective in relation to theories of knowledge. This perspective has been very influential in relation to understandings of the use of authenticity in student learning.

Knowledge or aspects of achievement in the situated perspective argue that engaged participation is seen as basic to a person's achievement. Students need to be involved in classroom activities which provide a necessary structure for successful learning and performance. Students must be involved in a literacy community, either inside or outside of college. Community membership is viewed as contributing to self perception and self identity which, in turn, influences individual values and standards in the domain of activity. The situated perspective discusses the construction of meaning through the application of models and theories, which are used to apply various assumptions and conventions. Within situative theory, knowledge is best assessed when it is used as a means to solve another problem, rather than being conceptualised and presented as an 'end unto itself'.

Lave and Wenger (1991) place the emphasis of learning through participation in authentic activities. This is known as 'legitimate peripheral participation', wherein the process of activity develops understanding and knowledge. This viewpoint on learning states that we are continually learning whether or not we are in a formal learning environment. Lave and Wenger discuss the ways in which being part of a learning community enables the 'novice' to become expert and a full member of a learning community. Peripheral participation is about being located in the social world, and becoming part of this social world through membership of the community. Lave and Wenger state that to gain knowledge and skills, people must fully enter and participate in their learning community, maintaining that involvement in community activity enables us to grow in understanding and knowledge.

Sfard's (1998) research is useful to consider in relation to constructions of autonomy and authenticity in learning. Sfard argues for two metaphors in the understanding of learning. These are known as the acquisition metaphor and the participation metaphor. Sfard states that the acquisition metaphor is evident if we think of knowledge as an object that can be developed or constructed. The participation metaphor replaces knowledge with knowing, it avoids referring to knowledge as an entity. Participation in activities is viewed

as important, rather than a 'possession' of knowledge. Longina and Hammonds (1990) argue for the incorporation of the two metaphors in their discussion about the nature of scientific knowledge. One side of the discussion attempts to represent the physical world through scientific laws and theories, but, conversely, the very fact that it is a human, and therefore a social enterprise, makes us realise that the situated perspective has to be considered as well.

Humanistic psychology has had a considerable impact on views of education in North America and has shaped views about the nature of autonomy. Rogers (1983) writes from a humanistic psychology perspective, which views people as intrinsically 'good' - people strive to become 'self-actualizing' human beings. This perspective incorporates a view of the person as integrated and autonomous. Rogers believes that people have an innate tendency towards growth and development and viewed the teacher as having to have a non-judgmental attitude to facilitate the growth of the learner within the classroom. The emphasis on individualised learning has been criticised by Candy (1991) who describes humanistic psychology as being concerned with the 'essential aloneness of the individual'.

'The corollary of this in the field of self direction has been that many adult educators have lost sight of the interdependent and socially determined nature of much of adult learning.'

(Candy, 1991, p. 420, cited in Benson)

The influential research of Kolb (1984) offers useful insights into the relationship between authentic learning, reflection and the development of learner autonomy. Kolb developed a model of learning, known as experiential learning, primarily based on the theories of Dewey (1966), Rogers (1983) and Kelly (1963). Experiential learning focuses on the learners' experience, providing meaning and context to the learning experience (authenticity). This personal meaning can be then applied to abstract concepts to provide a reference point for exploring and testing ideas in the learning process. Experiential learning proposes that learning is a cyclical process; this process incorporates the actual learning experience, reflection on the experience and theorisation about the ideas/concepts,

which then results in some form of action. The process of reflection is central to the premise that learners are in control of their learning (the development of autonomy). Schon (1983, 1987) has also completed seminal work in relation to 'the reflective practitioner'; a model of reflection based in professional practice. Both models have been influential in the design of teaching strategies in higher education (For example: Healey & Jenkins (2000); Harrison et al (2003)).

Race (2004) offers an alternative experiential learning model, which can be related to the development of learner autonomy. Race describes four processes, which, rather than progressing around a cycle, interact and overlap with each other. Race describes the first 'stage' as 'wanting' to learn, and this involves the motivation and desire to learn. The second element is 'doing' which is about learning by doing or becoming involved in the educational process. The third element is called 'digesting'. Race states that effective learning requires time for reflection and thinking. The final element involves principles of feedback. This is divided into two dominant types: intrinsic feedback, which is concerned with our own reflection on our learning, and extrinsic feedback, which is external feedback or feedback from others, such as tutors, peers and colleagues. This experiential model of learning is useful in the discussion of the development of learner autonomy. The model offers insight into the ways in which learners develop by becoming actively involved in the learning process, in particular, the ways in which the role of feedback, both intrinsic and extrinsic, impacts on learner development. This model links to social constructivist views of knowledge in that learners are involved in the active construction of knowledge, reflecting on progress and becoming involved in self assessment and peer review.

The following section develops this discussion, examining the development of constructivist theories of learning.

#### **2.4.4 Constructivist Theories of learning**

Autonomy is a feature of humanistic and constructivist traditions. Humanists are concerned with the quest for personal meaning while constructivists see the individual constructing knowledge as providing context and meaning.

Constructivism is the dominant hegemonic discourse in Higher Education research at the present time. Constructivism is a pedagogical approach that places the learners' beliefs, values, and experiences at the centre of the learning process. Therefore this approach would place emphasis on teaching and learning strategies which emphasised the experience of the learner, hence authentic learning experiences (as defined within an Assessment for Learning pedagogic framework) which place the learner 'at the centre' are recognised as an important pedagogic strategy.

A constructivist approach to learning states that knowledge and assessment standards cannot be transmitted passively to students. Students require tacit as well as explicit knowledge to negotiate and understand assessment. O'Donovan et al (2004) outline a social constructivist approach to learning. The authors state that students' must engage with the assessment at every stage of the learning process so that they understand the criteria and standards. Practical advice is given on ways to implement such an approach. This includes: peer assessment, self assessment and peer feedback. Other examples include: discussion, group feedback and feedback templates (engagement with feedback on first drafts which are then used to produce an improved version of essays or projects).

The term constructivism has been used to describe a group of theories of learning which argue that knowledge is produced through social interaction and socially-based interpretation. Paris and Byrnes (1989, p. 170) offer a distinction between constructivist approaches and structuralist and empiricist approaches. Structuralist approaches emphasise 'innate categories of knowing and concepts that are imposed by individuals on the world.' Empiricist approaches emphasis 'how experiences imprint the structure of the world into the minds of individuals'. Constructivist approaches, in contrast, 'describe how people transform and organise reality according to common intellectual principles as a result of interactions with the environment' (Benson, 2001, p. 36). Benson argues that participation by the learner is central to the learning process. If knowledge is produced in the individual through social interaction, Benson argues that learning will be most

effective when learners are involved in decision-making about how learning is organised and delivered.

Dewey's (1966) philosophy of education has been very influential in adult education and in the development and study of autonomy in learning. Dewey's philosophy is based on the ideals of pragmatism and saw the role of education as being about solving problems in everyday life. He was concerned with the concept of autonomy in three main areas: education and social participation, classroom structures and problem solving within education. Dewey's philosophy was based upon the moral and social obligation he believed people have to engage in their society and develop it for the good of all. Dewey believed that education was not about future goal-orientated strategies, but solving problems in everyday life, and as such should start with individuals' social and personal experiences. This view of learning is constructivist in that it is about an adaptive process; problems must be solved to meet the needs of learners. Dewey saw the teachers' role as sharing problems with the learner to assist and guide them through their own self-directed efforts.

#### **2.4.5 Theories of developmental psychology.**

Three influential theorists, writing in relation to developmental psychology, are relevant to the study of autonomy in learning; they are: Kelly (1963) Vygotsky (1978) and Knowles (1998). Working within developmental psychology, Kelly developed a model of learner development called personal construct theory. This had important influence on the earlier theories of learner autonomy. Kelly stated that learners develop meanings, or constructs, in a continual process of testing and revision. These constructs are based on shared values and belief systems, but are unique to the individual. Kelly states that these constructs are developed and maintained over significant time periods, and they act to shape our behaviour as we 'expect' certain things to happen because of the personal constructs we have developed.

Vygotsky (1978) developed a theory of learning which maintained that learning develops through a child's experience and interaction with the world



and is developed through social interaction. Vygotsky's theory of the 'Zone of Proximal Development' was defined as:

'The distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers.'

(Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)

Vygotsky maintained that children developed their learning and learning systems from adults or peers. Vygotsky's theory can be related to the study of autonomy in that it emphasises collaboration as central to the development of learner autonomy. Vygotskian theory would contend that group work is a means to develop autonomy.

Knowles (1998) builds on Vygotsian theory by proposing a theory of principally adult learning, which he called Androgogy and involved six principles of adult learning. These consisted of:

- 1) The learners need to know i.e. how the learning will be arranged.
- 2) Self directed learning or the ability to take control over the direction and pace of learning.
- 3) The prior experience of the learner.
- 4) Readiness to learn.
- 5) Orientation to learning. Knowles states that adults generally prefer a problem-based approach to learning, and learn best when knowledge is placed in a real life context.
- 6) Motivation to learn. Motivation is high when materials presented which can help learners solve problems in their own lives.

Assessment for Learning approaches incorporate all of the above principles of learning. These principles of adult learning are useful in highlighting the relevance of using an Assessment for Learning framework for this research.

This section concludes this part of literature review. The following section looks at how the literature review can be used to develop 'working definitions' of authenticity and autonomy for use in the research for this thesis.

## **2.5 Using the literature review to develop definitions of authenticity and autonomy**

The literature review has provided a conceptual framework within which it is now possible to outline a 'working definition' of authenticity and autonomy for the research for this thesis. This working definition constitutes the way in which I have conceptualised the terms, and how I have 'operationalised' the concepts in the research.

### **2.5.1 Authenticity: a working definition**

A summary of the main themes in the literature relating to authenticity in learning are as follows:

- Authenticity is seen as a multi-dimensional and subjective term
- Authenticity is viewed as a mechanism to develop skills and apply knowledge in a 'real' setting
- Authentic learning tasks are contextual and situated in peoples' experience
- Authentic learning provides activities which are personally relevant and meaningful to learners
- Authentic learning activities have relevance to the real world
- Authentic learning has relevance to the subject area

With these definitions in mind, authenticity, for the purpose of this research, is summarised in the diagram below, and expanded on in the following section.



Figure 4: Authenticity: A working definition

The 'working definition' of authenticity draws on the research of Cumming and Maxwell (1999) who argue that educators using authentic assessment methods should pay attention to a) learning goals b) theories of learning and c) theories of teaching and assessment. In relation to learning goals, authenticity is viewed as a teaching and learning approach which aims to provide a social/cultural context which is meaningful and relevant to learners. This definition recognises the established link between learners' perception of meaning and relevance to the development of learner motivation and autonomy. In relation to theories of learning, authenticity is viewed as being based upon a situated view of learning which pays attention to context and incorporates a social constructivist approach to knowledge. This perspective includes making links to the real world and incorporating student interests to make the subject matter relevant and meaningful.

In relation to theories of teaching and assessment, authentic approaches incorporate learning activities which are placed along a 'spectrum', or continuum, and broken down into activities which place authenticity in relation to the following: authentic to an academic discipline, authentic to a professional context (but not linked explicitly to any 'professional standards' or awarding body), authentic in relation to real life/world settings and

authentic in relation to being meaningful to individual lives (See fig. 4 above, the working definition which is used for this research). The reviewed literature in relation to authenticity suggests that authentic learning activities should provide complex tasks to allow students opportunities to: problem-solve, reflect on progress, collaborate with other students, relate learning to their own experience and apply knowledge in meaningful contexts. These definitions are discussed further in the following methodology chapter and linked to an overall conceptual framework for the research.

### **2.5.2 Autonomy: a working definition**

In identifying a 'typology of autonomy' for this research, I have drawn upon two theories outlined in this review: the research of Ecclestone (2002) (who has defined three of the four main pedagogical interpretations of autonomy: procedural, personal and critical autonomy) and the research of Mackenzie and Stoljar (2005) (who outline a relational view of autonomy). These four interpretations form the basis of my working definition of autonomy and provide a conceptual and theoretical framework for coding and analysing the data which is presented in the analysis and discussion chapters. Autonomy, for the purpose of this research, is summarised in the figure below, followed by a further appraisal of the main themes outlined in the literature review. A Venn Diagram has been used, to show the relationships between the different 'types' of autonomy. Learning autonomy can be viewed as occurring in a complex 'layering' manner, one type of autonomy may be required for the development, or building, of another type of autonomy. An example may include certain types of communication skills (defined in relation to aspects of personal autonomy) being required to develop skills in relation to working in groups (defined in relation to aspects of relational autonomy).

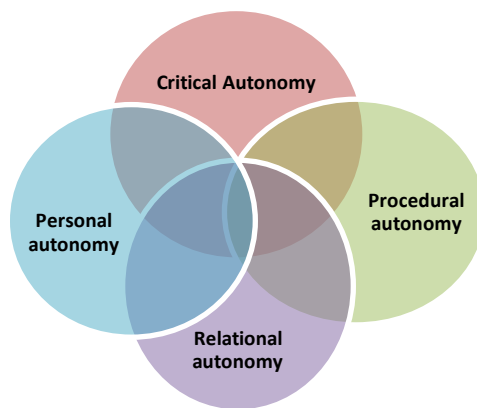


Figure 5: Autonomy: A working definition

Drawing on the literature relating to autonomy in learning, autonomy can be summarised as: assisting people in making their own decisions (to work independently), developing criticality, promoting responsibility in learning, applying knowledge when working with others (interdependence) and the development of self evaluation and self management.

An 'autonomous learner' therefore, would be seen as:

- Able to cope with the demands of a learning programme
- Be self reliant
- 'Critically engaged' with their subject matter
- An effective member of a learning community

A central concern for theorists discussing autonomy is that of the potential 'stages' students may go through when developing autonomy, and how these 'stages' can be best supported and developed through curricular approaches. There seems to be common agreement that students progress through a series of 'stages' when developing autonomous learning behaviours. These can be understood as 1) students initially entering a 'dependency' stage, where disorientation may occur when learners are presented with new information 2) a 'reactive' stage, where students may 'resist' or develop arguments against the new learning situation 3) a

'proactive' stage, where the student begins to assimilate the new learning experience, and 4) a final 'integrative' stage is reached where the student works interdependently and incorporates new knowledge and learning practices into autonomous learning behaviours. Whilst there is recognition that these general stages exist, there is also a consensus view that students may not proceed through these stages in a uniform manner. This would suggest that the development of autonomy could be referred to as a 'layering' process: occurring at different levels with students moving between stages while displaying autonomy in one particular area but not necessarily across all learning domains at the same time or with the same level of 'performance' or 'mastery' in each area. The development of autonomy can be viewed, therefore, as a complex, inter-related set of behaviours which are fluid and varying in complexity and application.

Active engagement and participation are well documented in the literature as central to the development of learner autonomy. 'Active engagement' could be viewed as the first 'level' of learner autonomy and, as such, is heavily reliant on the way in which the learning activity is 'set up' by the tutor. Further development of autonomous learning behaviours depend on the types of tasks and learning strategies which are employed by the tutor during the learning experience. This is fundamental to the discussion of autonomy and forms the basis for the rationale for the case studies used in this study.

### **2.5.3 Key points from the literature review and how they link to the research**

Authenticity and autonomy can both be viewed as multi-dimensional, fluid processes, dependent on context and situation. Understandings and constructions of authenticity and autonomy are dependent upon the views of knowledge and theories of teaching and learning used. This research is placed within a situated view of knowledge and a pedagogic framework of Assessment for Learning. Assessment for Learning is an appropriate pedagogic framework because it addresses the main themes which are relevant to the research question. These main themes are:

- The ways in which different constructions of knowledge and theories of learning impact on the development of learner autonomy

- The ways in which context affects learning
- The ways in which views of assessment influence students' motivation and willingness to engage with the learning process

Assessment for Learning addresses these concerns because the framework pays attention to:

- Assessment cultures
- Pedagogic structures
- Social learning environments

A central concern of Assessment for Learning is to promote the development of learner autonomy through a range of pedagogic approaches. Authenticity is included as one of the six core conditions of Assessment for Learning outlined by McDowell and Sambell (2005).

#### **2.5.4 Positive links identified between authenticity and autonomy, which can act as an original contribution to research**

The literature review has identified that authentic learning and assessment activities can provide a relevant, meaningful context through which learners can develop motivation. The authentic learning task provides opportunities to problem solve which can assist in the development of critical autonomy through learners having to work through varying levels of complexity to complete a task. Authentic learning tasks require learners to work together to negotiate and collaborate in joint research (the development of relational autonomy), to time manage (procedural autonomy) and to reflect on their own learning and gain feedback on their progress (the development of personal autonomy).

The literature review has highlighted that, whilst the concept of authentic assessment can be problematic in its interpretation, authentic assessment is consistently viewed as having a positive effect on student learning and can help in terms of assisting students to develop higher order skills or competencies which can be described as aspects of learner autonomy. (Boud, 2000, Birenbaum, 1996; Dochy and McDowell, 1998; Frederiksen, 1984; McDowell, 1995).

## 2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the literature which is relevant to the research for this thesis. The review has examined the area of Assessment for Learning, and definitions and conceptions of autonomy and authenticity in learning. The chapter has included a critical review of learning theories, views of knowledge and theories of learner development and motivation. The literature review has placed the research within a conceptual framework and has helped to identify areas where further empirical research is required, and to offer an 'original contribution' within this context.

### 2.6.1 What problems does the literature suggest in linking authenticity and autonomy in a pedagogic context?

One of the main problems in linking, or theorising, the relationship between authenticity and autonomy is that the two terms are multi-dimensional and subjective. It is not possible to talk of direct causal relationships and to state that assessment approach x leads to behaviour y due to the range of factors which are part of the assessment experience. The literature review indicates that a number of other factors need to be taken into account when trying to evaluate the 'success' of a particular authentic learning strategy in relation to the development of autonomy. These factors may include; levels of feedback, transparency of task, opportunities for group discussion and tutor presentation and management of the activity. A second issue is that of the approach taken in designing research which involves the evaluation of student learning. The research could focus either on individual student development, or on institutional characteristics which affect learning, known as 'college impact models' (Pascareli and Terenzini, 2005).

The research focus of this thesis relates to the institutional characteristics which affect learning. Theorists Pascareli and Terenzini make a distinction between development and change and their work forms part of the rationale for the choice of methodology for the study. The following chapter presents the methodology for the thesis and links the literature review to the research design and the research process.



## Chapter Three

### Methodology

The chapter is divided into seven sections:

**Section 3.1** introduces the chapter and examines the rationale for the choice of method in relation to the study of learner development – ‘psychological stage’ theories or ‘college impact’ models?

**Section 3.2** outlines the research design and places the methodology within a theoretical and conceptual framework.

**Section 3.3** provides details of the research methodology.

**Section 3.4** describes the process of negotiating access for the research.

**Section 3.5** gives details of methods of data collection.

**Section 3.6** outlines the stages and methods of data analysis.

**Section 3.7** concludes the chapter, providing a summary of the research methodology.

### **3.1 Introduction - rationale for the choice of study - individual student development or institutional curriculum characteristics?**

This chapter introduces the research methodology for the thesis. The research design is outlined, giving a rationale for the choice of methodology, data collection and analysis. The chapter outlines the theoretical basis of the research, placing the methodology in a conceptual framework, whilst also linking the research question and the aims and objectives of the research to the research design in a coherent analytical framework.

The research for this thesis is based in a post '92 university in the North East of England, UK. The research data was drawn from undergraduate students and tutors within the University. The research aims are to explore the relationships between authentic (formative and summative) assessment practices and the types of autonomy, learner behaviour or development which emerge from this type of approach.

Research by Pascarelli and Terenzini (2005), who have undertaken research on the impacts of college on students, provide a rationale and framework for the methodology employed for the research. In 1991 they published a synthesis of more than 2,600 studies on college students. This major work has now been updated (2005) to include new research, incorporating a broader view of how students learn, including the use of new innovative teaching approaches and a 'comprehensive set of policy concerns'. Pascarella and Terenzini make a distinction between development and change. Theoretical constructs of development have been the subject of considerable philosophical debate. The authors state that the concept of development involves changes such as physical maturation and potential growth towards maturity through integration. Developmental growth is viewed as 'a desirable psychological or educational end, perhaps even as a moral end' (Perry, 1970). Change, however is described in terms of changes in students' cognitive skills, attitudes, values or behaviours.

Pascarell and Terenzini group theories and models of student development into two 'families'. The first area is concerned with developmental theories or models which examine the nature and structure of human growth. These

models usually consist of stages, phases, or movement along a spectrum or dimension, and are dominated by psychological 'stage' theories. The second group are not so concerned with individual development, but with change initiated by the institutions the students attend, for example through the curriculum, cultural, social and political environment the students engage with. These have been termed college impact models of change. The main difference between the two families are that developmental models concentrate on the nature of student change, for example moral or cognitive development, whereas college impact models are interested in the origins of any such changes, such as curriculum characteristics, student experiences, interactions with other students and college staff. The authors make the point that whilst the two families of theories differ in structure and position it is important to understand the constraints on using any one approach to understand student change and growth:

'Each approach may be necessary to the study of student change and stability during college, but none of them is sufficient.'

(Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 21).

Pascarella & Terenzini (2005, p. 52) discuss the two groups of theories in relation to implications for educational research:

'The two orientations are neither completely distinct nor incompatible; the important lesson is to understand what the constraints are on any approach and to bear in mind that relying solely on developmental or sociological models may lead to misstatements concerning the origins of student change and growth.'

In addition, Kaufman and Feldman (2004) comment that each approach may be necessary to critically evaluate student change, but neither perspective should be applied uncritically. It will be important, therefore, to ensure that the research takes account of these different models and theories of student

learning to avoid presenting a biased or narrow account of learners' experiences. This research focuses predominantly on the college impact model of change outlined by Pascarelli and Terenzini, examining changes in students' cognitive skills, attitudes and behaviour in relation to curriculum initiatives, student experiences and interactions. The research does, however also take account of Pascarelli and Terenzini's developmental perspective on human growth and change. Although this research has not completed a longitudinal study which examines psychological 'stages', the psychological stage model has influenced the ways in which autonomy has been conceptualised within the research, within a smaller time scale. This relates to the way in which autonomy can be viewed as a multi-dimensional concept – potentially developing within a 'layering' process, where one 'type' of autonomy needs to be in place to allow a more 'sophisticated' 'type' of autonomy to develop. This may include the initial development of more 'procedural' types of autonomy, such as organisational skills, as a pre-cursor to the development of, for example, relational autonomy, which requires students to negotiate and work with others.

This research was concerned with the impact learning environments had on student development. Therefore the research design focused on the institutional characteristics which may have affected student development. The theoretical framework which the research is placed within, Assessment for Learning, is concerned with student development and change, in relation to teaching, learning and assessment environments. The research undertaken for this thesis can therefore be viewed as falling predominantly within the 'college impact model' which Pascarelli and Terenzini outline.

### **3.2 Research design**

The conceptual framework for the research, developed from the literature review, places student learning within a situated context and is concerned with the collaborative interactions which emerge from this perspective on learning. The research was concerned with learning environments which promoted formative assessment and which provided opportunities for students to interact, to self- and peer-assess, to develop confidence (learner autonomy) and to engage in authentic learning activities. These activities are

all aspects of the six core conditions of Assessment for Learning outlined by McDowell & Sambell, (2005) and therefore place the research design within this conceptual framework.

It was important that the research design enabled the researcher to observe, collect and analyse data within a research environment which paid attention to the social situatedness of learning, and the details of tutor and student interactions within the curriculum. The research was concerned with individual and group experience and sought to gain an in-depth picture of dispositions toward learning and approaches to study which encompass elements of autonomous learning behaviour. To do this, a qualitative research design was employed. A qualitative research strategy is concerned with the collection of words and meaning (Bryman, 2008). Qualitative research views the social world as being interpreted through individual construction, rather than with the collection of quantifiable data, the testing of theory and the fixed social reality which a quantitative research strategy may employ. Qualitative methodology pays attention to the quality of the data collected; it is concerned with the process of research, paying attention to context and both the subjective and objective aspects of data (Silverman, 2005).

### **3.3 Methodology**

The research used four case studies to access curriculum initiatives which all included a range of Assessment for Learning approaches in their design. Data collection included interviews with tutors and students, classroom observation, site visits and documentary analysis of module material. Data analysis was conducted through an analysis of concepts and themes which were developed through the literature review.

#### **3.3.1 Case study research**

The research used an explanatory multiple critical case study approach. A case study is concerned with the 'unique' features of the case (Bryman, 2008), and is known as an idiographic approach. A case study approach was most relevant to this research as it provided a framework which could be used to analyse data from the four case studies in this particular context. (Yin, 2003). In relation to external validity or generalizability of the case study

research: 'the crucial question is not whether the findings can be generalized to a wider universe, but how well the researcher generates theory out of the findings' (Yin 2003). Thus, case studies can be associated with both theory generation and theory testing.

An inductive approach was used to understand the relationship between theory and research. An inductive approach seeks to generate theory from research findings, and builds on awareness of what is known and thus can be built into a situated case analysis. This is in contrast to a purely deductive approach, where theory guides research and research is conducted through findings being compared to a hypothesis.

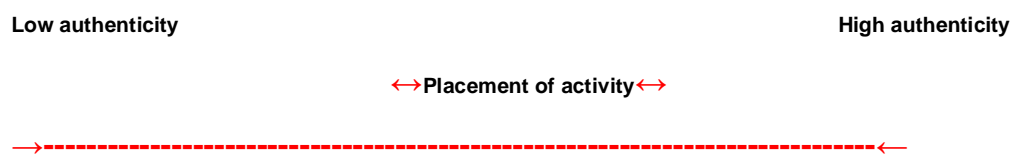
Case study research aims to develop an intensive examination of cases which can then be subjected to theoretical analysis. The research employs a *critical case approach* (Yin 2003). This is used when the research is informed by developed theory, and the case is chosen on the grounds that it will allow a better understanding of the circumstances in which the hypothesis will and will not hold (Bryman 2008).

### 3.3.2 Case selection

The study encompassed four twelve-week academic modules which ran through one semester. The research examined learners' experience throughout the module. This included: teaching approaches, projects undertaken, external visits organized by lecturers, observation of lectures and seminars and evaluation of assessment tasks.

The research did not aim to identify direct causal relationships between authenticity and autonomy, but examined the relationships between the learning context and student participation; depending on the students' own position. Perry (1988) describes this as 'different worlds in the same classroom'. The majority of studies of authenticity in teaching have been conducted in work-based or professional courses, particularly vocational programmes. This research outlined a new approach, developing a framework which defined authenticity in relation to four particular contexts. These contexts included: Authentic to an academic discipline, authentic to a professional context (but not aligned to any professional body or awarding

body), authentic in relation to real life/world settings and authentic in relation to being meaningful to individual lives. The research examined subject areas which were placed along a continuum of authenticity, that is it included modules and academic subject areas which were not viewed as strictly vocational in nature (e.g. humanities and social sciences) but may have had elements of professional practice and employability embedded in them to varying degrees (category 2). The research was interested in looking at the different characteristics of authentic learning activities within modules which were placed at varying points along a continuum of authenticity, for example, a learning activity which is authentic to the academic discipline, such as history students visiting a Cathedral, could be placed at the high end of the authenticity scale, whereas an assessment activity conducted as a simulation in a classroom setting may be further down (or along) the scale.



**Figure 6: Continuum of authenticity**

The figure below summarises the ‘working definition’ of authenticity used for case selection. This was developed through a review of the literature in relation to authenticity and forms part of the conceptual framework for the research.



Figure 7: Authenticity: Case selection

The categories are defined as follows:

- 1) 'Authentic to an academic discipline' relates to learning or assessment tasks which are placed within the specific curriculum of the discipline
- 2) 'authentic to a professional context' relates to tasks placed within a professional work environment
- 3) 'authentic in relation to real life/world settings' relate to tasks placed within culture, community or social life
- 4) 'authentic in relation to being meaningful to individual lives' relates to activities which are made personal to the individual learner in some way, and this may include personal journals, reflective logs or personal accounts of events.

This framework, and the continuum of where activities were placed, developed throughout the research as the various levels of complexity within the authentic task emerged through the research process. The table below was developed for the research to provide a framework within which to



categorize the various elements and dimensions of the authentic learning/assessment task.

**Table 1: Framework of Authenticity**

	Authentic to academic discipline	Authentic to professional context	Authentic in relation to real life/world settings	Authentic in relation to being meaningful to individual lives	Site visits	Classroom simulation	Negotiation of assessment criteria	Shared tasks
Case 1								
Case 2								
Case 3								
Case 4								

In relation to the potential to develop learner autonomy, the activities in the modules involved the students in formative assessment and feedback, in being responsible for developing their work/project, and required self-reflection, self-management and self-direction. Further activities included: peer- and self-assessment, students being able to negotiate part(s) of the assignment and the development of a community of learners. Additional elements included opportunities for learners to de-construct/construct knowledge and opportunities for higher order questioning. Not all modules contained all of the above elements, and many were not explicitly stated either on module descriptors or by the tutor themselves.

### 3.4 Negotiating access

The research was interested in comparing instances of development, or change, across similar modules. The research was conducted in one university because of the difficulties of comparing data across institutions. The modules in one university are not replicated in their entirety in any other university, while different cultures and assessment practices within universities would also have made comparisons difficult.

My task in negotiating potential access to modules involving authentic assessment was to involve tutors in a discussion about the outcomes they wanted from their module – this may or may not have been explicitly stated in module descriptors, but may have involved the tutor reflecting on their previous experience of teaching the module, or what they believe should constitute a ‘good’ educational outcome from the course of study. I found Crooks (1988), cited in Harlen, (1997) helpful in framing my initial discussions with tutors. Crooks reviewed the assessment field and identified four dimensions which help define the relationship between assessment and learning. These are: 1) assessment to motivate learning 2) assessment to help learners and teachers plan learning 3) assessment to help learners learn how to learn and 4) assessment to enable learners to judge the effectiveness of their own learning. Autonomy can be viewed as being linked to Crooks’ (1988) constructs, and I used these as a guide in my discussions with tutors.

#### **3.4.1 Sampling approach**

The research cannot make definite claims about whether authentic assessment activities do promote autonomy, and in this sense there is not a hypothesis to prove or disprove, rather the research seeks to evaluate and describe the effects of authentic learning activities on learner dispositions and engagement in relation to developing autonomous learning behaviours. The research therefore utilizes a ‘non-probability sample’. The term ‘non-probability sample’ refers to a sample created which does not intend to make concrete generalizations of the findings to a wider population. That is not to say that findings cannot draw a measure of comparability to other populations through relating findings from comparable cases.

The sampling method involved identifying four modules or subjects areas (cases) from the curriculum within the University, which in some way were developing what could be termed ‘authentic’ learning activities. Contacts were made through a ‘snowball’ sample’. A ‘snowball sample’ is where the researcher makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant to the research topic and then uses these contacts to establish further contact with others (Bryman, 2008). Education Research Associates

were contacted in the first instance and then widened to include tutors from the University. I developed contacts and I met with a total of twelve tutors. I was interested in studying modules which were situated at different points along a scale or spectrum of authenticity. My meetings with tutors involved discussing the module and teaching and assessment approach and then making a judgment as to whether a particular module fitted the criteria I had developed for the cases. Identifying the criteria involved developing my literature review to gain understanding of the arguments, concepts and definitions of authentic assessment and, through discussing this with my supervisors and colleagues, I developed the criteria I would use to identify 'cases' or modules. In selecting modules or 'cases' for the research, the inclusion criteria included teaching and learning approaches which aimed to provide an authentic social/cultural context which was meaningful and relevant to learners. This included projects, visits, production of artefacts or participation in a simulation/production/activity; and which allowed learners to:

- Develop control over their learning
- Explore complexity and develop creativity
- Be part of a community of learners
- Experience self- and peer-assessment
- Reflect on their learning

These points can all be considered aspects or characteristics of autonomous learning behaviour. Cases were subsequently identified within: Politics, Geography, History and Performing Arts. Cases were selected on the basis of different elements/dimensions of authenticity in their curriculum design, to gain as wide a range of authentic tasks as possible. The diagram below shows the rationale for case selection, and where the modules were placed within the developed framework of authenticity.

**Table 2: Sampling Framework**

	Authentic to academic discipline	Authentic to professional context	Authentic in relation to real life/world settings	Authentic in relation to being meaningful to individual lives	Site visits	Classroom simulation	Negotiation of assessment criteria	Shared tasks
Diplomacy	√	√	√			√	√	√
Geophotography	√		√	√	√		√	
Med Thought	√		√		√	√	√	√
Performance in Context	√	√	√		√	√	√	√

Students were then drawn from the four modules, across second and third years of study. The research involved a volunteer sample of between 5 – 10 students for each module. This allowed for a non-response rate of 20%, and gave a large enough sample for the research objectives to be carried out. A volunteer sample was appropriate to this research as learners had to be fully aware of the time commitment that taking part in the study would mean to them. This was important in relation to how learners felt they would manage their academic workload and if they had time to participate. It would have been inappropriate in ethical terms to conduct, for example, a random sample where students were asked indiscriminately to participate, or a systematic sample, where students would be assigned to take part in the study through a method (such as assigning every fourth student on the class register to the study). The researcher asked students for their permission to disclose their final module results. It was hoped that these results could be used within the research design to demonstrate a range of ability across the volunteers, helping improve the validity and reliability of the study.

The recruitment strategy involved identifying four modules within non-vocational degrees in similar subject areas - Humanities and Social Sciences. I chose non-vocational subjects because a significant amount of research has been completed in relation to authentic assessment in

vocational environments, but relatively little on non-vocational or 'traditional' academic subjects. It was difficult to find modules which had absolutely no vocational element, as most subjects in Higher Education now require an element of employability or skills development. My definition (for the purpose of the research) of a non-vocational degree was: a module which did not have adherence to a professional bodies' code of regulations, did not involve a formal accredited practice placement and did not have a predominant focus on professional practice, but was concerned predominantly with subject knowledge and theory, rather than practice. I chose 'similar' subject bases because of the need to compare across domain areas, for example a science subject may have skewed results too much, and I did not want to use comparatively different subject areas to assess potential differences.

### **3.5. Methods of data collection**

The research design included a range of methods of data collection. This was to aid triangulation, where more than one source of data was employed to allow findings to be cross-referenced, adding validity to the study. Methods of data collection included non-participant observation of four academic modules. This involved forty eight lectures and seminars. Fifty two student interviews and eight tutor interviews were completed. Documentary sources of data gathered included module descriptors, assessment strategies and examples of course work. Two student projects in the community were observed and data gathered. Data relating to the module, including narrative and dialogue between tutors and students from the University's e-learning portal were recorded. Three 'site visits' (Geography and History) were observed and field notes taken.

Focus groups were organised for the beginning and end of each module and learners and tutors were interviewed on an individual basis at the beginning of their module (Sept/Oct 08 and Jan/Feb 09) and at the end of their module (Nov/Dec 08 and April/May 09) and qualitative data gathered. Data was collected from a number of sources, including semi-structured interviews, observations of teaching and learning sessions both in the classroom and in the community, and examination of documentary sources including assessment, artefacts and materials the students had developed over the

period of the module. The interviews were divided into two parts, each student being interviewed at the beginning and end of the module. Each interview lasted between thirty and sixty minutes, making a time commitment for students of a maximum of two hours over the course of a module. Similarly, each tutor was interviewed at the beginning and end of the module, making a total of four tutor interviews.

The diagram below summarises the methods of data collection used for the research.

**Table 3: Methods of data collection**

Methods of data collection	
1	Non-participant observation of lectures and seminars x 12 x 4 modules (48)
2	Qualitative interviews – 4 staff and 52 student interviews
3	Examination of course work and assessments
4	Observation at site visits x2 Geography x1 History
5	Observation of assessments undertaken in the community x2
6	Student observations from 'Facebook' (Social networking site) - Geography
7	Course material and correspondence on 'Blackboard' (University e-learning portal) All modules
8	Observation at x 2 Exhibitions (University and community theatre)

### 3.5.1 Semi-structured responsive interviews

The research design used semi-structured responsive interviews to gain rich, thick descriptions of the subject area. A series of questions formed the basic structure of the interview, but flexibility to 'respond' to the interviewee, to develop the interview and allow follow up and 'probing' questions, was built into the structure. This allowed the researcher to vary the sequence of questions which formed the basic structure of the interview. A digital recorder was used to record the interviews and all interviews were transcribed for analysis. Topic areas covered in the interview schedule included:

- Expectations of the activity
- Motivation and engagement

- Perceptions of the authentic task
- Participant perceptions of relevance of activity – to current studies, to future work, to personal/community/social life
- Experience of the pedagogic structure
- Experience of working with others
- Reflection
- Self awareness
- Ability to make choices for action
- Choosing between alternatives
- Negotiation of outcomes

### 3.5.2 Objectivity in research

When planning the research and identifying definitions of 'autonomy' I wished to use for the research, I needed to identify what my knowledge goals were (in relation to definitions of autonomy) and my justification for these definitions. How did I decide what constituted knowledge and what it was I wished to identify? What were the currently held beliefs (in education) about the nature of autonomy? Did I have the same interpretation? If I didn't, how should I deal with these differences? These questions brought to mind the larger scale social processes associated with knowledge and the value and power issues which lay behind these interpretations. Certain aspects of the teaching and learning within the identified cases were inevitably going to be expressions of particular social norms, cultural groups, or class distinctions. I had to make judgements, within my epistemological framework (theory of knowledge) about what I viewed as 'truth' and what was objective knowledge which could be 'counted' as an aspect of autonomy? Did I have a shared understanding with the tutor about what it was they hoped to gain from the activity? Did we have the same constructions in relation to what could be counted as authentic? Was the aim of the tutors to develop learner autonomy? And, if so, what was the level of explicitly? Research processes reflect particular philosophies and methodological paradigms, with all research outcomes relating to a research process. Knowledge creation links method (how we find knowledge) methodology (why we choose these methods) and theory (what we hope/expect to find). It is important to be clear

about these processes; this is known as reflexivity in research. Reflexivity relates to 'self-consciousness' in the research process. This process emphasises explicitly and transparency in research design, implementation and analysis. Reflexivity in research explains why particular methods were chosen, and acts as a means to place research outcomes in a context which can demonstrate/justify their validity and usability within a particular context. The epistemological framework for this research views knowledge as a social construction. This approach views knowledge as being relative to its social context. Meaning is viewed as developing over time, within a particular social/political/historical context. A social constructivist view of knowledge views knowledge as being co-constructed and interpreted through social activities. Social constructivists are concerned with the meaning attached to activity. The research design for this study is placed within a social constructivist view of knowledge. Research methods were used which allowed the researcher to gather data in relation to individual and group experiences, concentrating on the meaning attached to these learning activities within this environment.

Messick (1994) may be useful here, in that he argues that a 'unified concept of validity' is required, based on construct validity. This unified validity is concerned with 'appropriateness, meaningfulness and usefulness' of any inferences made on the basis of scores, grades, etc. produced by the assessment procedure. Messick argues that any judgment made about the knowledge itself (the construct) must involve the understanding of it on the part of the learner. How do you know if your presence in the room as a researcher is having an impact on learners' dispositions and motivations? This is often mentioned as the 'Hawthorn Effect', where the presence of the researcher may be deemed to have a positive impact on the results of the study (Wickstrom & Bendix, 2000). It was therefore important to examine and account for any social variables within the study which may have affected outcomes. Cobb (1995) may also be useful here, in that he argues for a pragmatic approach to theorising. He writes that we should not look for a single, overarching theoretical scheme, and that in the process of problem-solving, we need to draw upon a number of perspectives to find solutions.



The pragmatic approach, therefore, advocates that we should actively seek ways of co-ordinating perspectives and that in fact; the tensions between different approaches often cannot be reconciled.

### 3.5.3 Triangulation of the data and audit trail for the research

A range of methods allowed for triangulation of results, independent of the researcher, increasing reliability and credibility. Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) concepts of 'dependability' and 'confirmability' were employed as a means of verifying data. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) discuss the issue of trustworthiness and outline four key components: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Robson (1993) emphasises the importance of the 'audit trail' which records the process of both the research and the researcher's thinking as a way of building credibility of the researcher. A detailed research diary was kept, detailing the process of the research from conception to final analysis and write up.

### 3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is the process of coding, indexing, sorting, retrieving and manipulating your data. Data analysis moves through a series of stages, outlined by Coffey and Atkinson (1996) as follows:

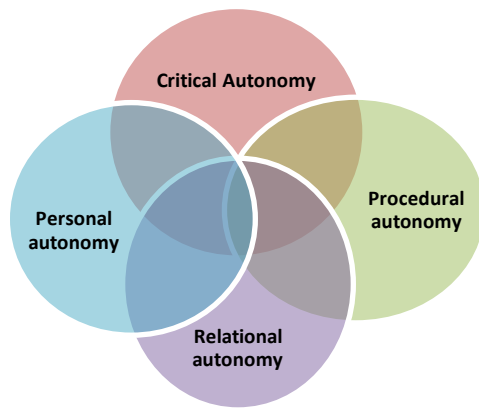
- 1) Data simplification and reduction
- 2) Indexing the data
- 3) Finding (creating) equivalence categories
- 4) Retrieving relevant chunks or segments of data that share a common code
- 5) Aggregating instances

The research used cross case interpretive analysis to analyse the data. The aim of cross case interpretive analysis is to *identify* similar themes and concepts across cases, to *describe* the particular qualities of an intervention and *illustrate* certain topics and areas. This form of analysis aims to *interpret* the data across cases, *develop theory* and draw conclusions. Thematic coding of the interview data allowed themes to be developed across the data. This process identified similarities and differences between groups of interviewees and modules and combined concepts to identify patterns across

interviewees and modules. A paper-based coding strategy was used as a research preference. This enabled the researcher to 'see' the data and develop detailed categories across the sample.

The recorded interviews were transcribed and two hard copies were printed, one to write on and one 'clean' copy. The font size was enlarged for ease of reading and margins made wide enough to enable comments to be written by the side of the text. To organise the data, each interview was divided into sections – beginning, middle and end. The analysis process looked for what was happening in each section, this included: clusters of terms, figures of speech and similarities. The data analysis process identified sequences of particular types of 'activity', incidents and patterns of behaviour. During this process, it was important to remain open to new aspects and emerging themes, whilst maintaining a systematic approach to the analysis. The themes were informed by the emerging data, theoretical frameworks and published literature.

These initial substantive themes included: the context of the learning activity, participants definitions of the activity and response, the learning activities themselves, regular patterns and events, participant strategies and group membership. This allowed a 'working definition' of each category to be developed. The table below shows the coding structure for the research, which was developed from the definitions of learner autonomy outlined in the literature review and relate to the definitions of autonomy identified by Ecclestone (2002) and Macenzie and Stoljar (2000), which have been summarised into a 'working definition for the research', shown in the following figure 8 and table 4.



**Figure 8: Autonomy: Case selection**

**Table 4: Coding categories**

Coding categories	Category elements
1. Student expectations/knowledge of module	a) Little awareness/confused b) Some awareness c) Reasonable grasp of material d) Good grasp of material
2. Student levels of motivation and engagement	e) On the sidelines, wavering, anxious f) Not engaged, angry, stepping back g) Interested, but anxious h) Interested, understands requirements, engaged and motivated
3. Students perceptions of authenticity/relevance/meaningfulness of activity/tasks to individual lives/academic progress/work/future	i) No links made j) Tentative links made k) Strong links in some areas l) Strong links most/all areas
4. Student views/experience of teaching culture/pedagogy	m) Negotiation n) Transparency o) Opportunities for group discussion p) Levels of support q) Formative feedback r) Peer feedback s) Opportunities for research
5. Student experiences of autonomy - personal	t) Evaluation of own learning u) Identifying own learning goals v) Reflection w) Communication skills
6. Student experiences of autonomy- procedural	x) Action planning y) Organisational skills z) Time management aa) Communication skills
7. Student experiences of autonomy - critical	bb) Questioning cc) Critical review dd) Problem solving ee) Voices and acts on own opinion ff) Ability to relate work to other modules/areas of life gg) Communication skills
8. Students experiences of autonomy - relational	hh) Working with others ii) Negotiation of tasks jj) Sharing tasks kk) Joining in group discussions ll) Communication skills
9. Students and tutors views of the module activities	mm) What did the student/ tutor want to achieve nn) View of module 'effectiveness' oo) Changes student/ tutor would like to make

The process of reading and re-reading the data over the four sets of cases allowed coding categories to be extended, modified and discarded, and a 'working definition' of each category to be formulated. This process represented a development of the coding categories over the initial period of becoming familiar with, and 'sorting' the data. When the coding framework was sufficiently developed, all interviews were subjected to the same rigorous and systematic analysis, using the developed coding framework.

The data analysis moved through a series of six 'stages'. The first stage involved the analysis of five pilot interviews with students from the politics

module. This allowed interview questions to be developed and refined in relation to the developing literature review and understandings based on observation of the module.

The second and third stages involved the analysis of ten interviews from the first set of interviews. These were transcribed and the process of reading and re-reading the data began. This involved identifying themes and categorising the data. Categories were identified in relation to particular events, regular patterns of behaviour, critical incidents, learning strategies, student relationships, student transitions and turning points. The fourth and fifth stages involved analysis of observations and documents from lectures, seminars and field trips. The final, sixth stage consisted of a cross analysis of all four cases. This included all data collected during the research process. This process continued across the four sets of interviews. This process of data collection and data reduction is shown in the following table and figure, table.5 acted as a timetable and a research tool throughout the research and fig. 9 demonstrates the research process.

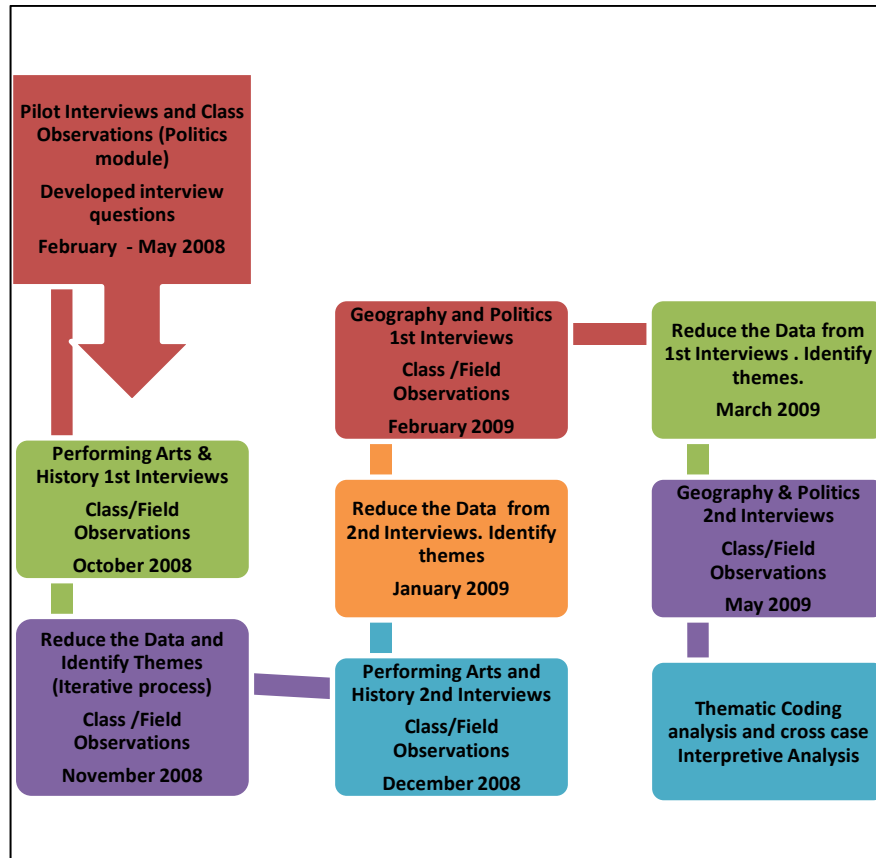


Figure 9: Stages of data analysis 1

Table 5: Stages of data analysis 2

Module for analysis	Stage 1 Interview 1 Coding, developing themes and categories	Stage 2 Interview 2 Coding, developing themes and categories	Stage 3 Compare and analyse interviews 1 & 2	Stage 4 Analysis of obs and docs from lectures, seminars and field trips	Stage 5 Analysis of all interviews with obs and docs	Stage 6 Cross analysis of of all 4 modules with analysis of obs and docs
Module 1	Pat Polly Poppy Pia Penny	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Module 2	Harriet Harry Hazel Henry Herbert	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Module 3	Geoffrey George Gerard Gertrude Giles	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓
Module 4	David Daniel Davina Deidre Donald	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓	✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓

### 3.7 Conclusion

The research methodology for the study consists of the following elements, and is summarised in the diagram below.

- Explanatory multiple critical case study approach
- Non-probability sample
- Cross case interpretive analysis
- Semi-structures responsive interviews
- Thematic coding



Figure 10: Summary of Research Methodology and Stage 2 of the development of the conceptual framework

This chapter has presented the research methodology for the thesis. It has discussed the research design, including the theoretical and epistemological framework, and the case selection and the issues involved in this. The process of data collection and analysis was discussed and methods to improve reliability and objectivity in the research were highlighted.

The next chapter, chapter four, presents the first case study of the research, which is located in the Politics Department and involves students taking part in a 'game' called 'Diplomacy'.

## Chapter 4

### The Diplomacy Module

The chapter is divided into eight sections:

**Section 4.1** provides an introduction to the module. Each section presents data from the modules, in the form of direct quotations from tutors and students. Data findings are presented and interpreted through the key themes outlined in the coding framework.

**Section 4.2** outlines the structure of the module, including the teaching and assessment strategy, learning aims and objectives, and tutor reflections on what he wanted to achieve for the students from the module.

**Section 4.3** gives details of the lectures and seminars – the ‘doing’ phase, or what happened during the course of the module, and student and tutor reactions. This section is divided into four parts: Introductory (lectures 1-4), Middle, (lectures 5-8) and End (lectures 9-12). The section concludes with an analysis of the tutor data.

**Section 4.4** provides evidence in the form of data extracts from five students, presented through key themes of Authenticity. This section presents data extracts from participants under key themes: a) Motivation and Engagement, b) Meaning and Relevance c) Pedagogy and Assessment Structure. The section concludes with an analysis of student data in relation to key themes of authenticity.

**Section 4.5** presents findings, with comments, from the five students in relation to the themes of autonomy which were used to code the interviews, under key themes: a) Procedural autonomy b) Personal autonomy c) Critical autonomy d) Relational autonomy. The section concludes with an analysis of student data in relation to the key themes of autonomy.

**Section 4.6** presents a summary analysis of student data through key themes of authenticity and autonomy.

**Section 4.7** discusses the constructions and perceptions of tutors and students in relation to authenticity. The section examines the pedagogic approach employed by the tutor and the students’ response to this approach.

**Section 4.8** concludes the chapter



#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the first case study of the research. This chapter is the first case study in the data reduction process and is one of the four building blocks of the four modules which form the basis of chapter eight. Chapter eight is designed to present a cross analysis of research findings from all four modules. Presenting the data from the four case studies allows the reader to gain a picture of the research process, the data extracts which are included give an in-depth, rich picture of the activities which took place during the module, and both tutor and student reactions to the pedagogic structure of the module. The chapter can 'stand alone' for readers interested in either teaching within the curriculum area of politics, or those who are interested in the use of simulations and authentic 'games' within curriculum. The methodology section of this thesis outlines the way in which the authentic learning activities were chosen and defined.

This module was chosen as a case study because it provides examples of authentic learning activities which, for the purpose of this study, were defined as:

- Authentic to a 'real life' context.
- Authentic to the profession of being a diplomat (but not directly linked through awarding bodies to a particular employment route).
- Authentic to the academic discipline: the game directly related to the topic of the module, Diplomacy.

The game was a classroom based simulation. The role of simulation in authentic learning has been defined and discussed in the literature review, however it is interesting to note that much of the research in relation to authenticity, simulation and 'game playing' is in relation to computer games and distance learning. This activity is different in that it is both a simulation and a game, it has both similarities and differences with 'computer gaming' and activities produced for distance learning, which will be explored further in the cross analysis.

The chapter provides evidence for the discussion of a model, or framework for practice, which is outlined in the discussion. The chapter presents data extracts from researcher observation of the twelve-week module, and data extracts from interviews with the module tutor and with five participating students. The students have been named: David, Dick, Davina, Deidre and Donald.

## **4.2 Structure of the module**

This section explains the way the module was structured, including the teaching and assessment strategy, the learning aims and objectives and lecture and seminar timetable over the twelve-week period. Data extracts which highlight the tutor's rationale for the authentic learning activities chosen are presented and the pedagogic approach taken in the module is outlined. The module was delivered over one semester (twelve weeks) through one three hour workshop per week; it was an optional module of the Bsc (Hons) Politics, based in the School of Applied Social Studies. The module took place in the second semester of the final year of a three-year programme.

### **4.2.1 Learning aims and objectives**

#### **Learning aims:**

- To examine theoretical debates on the nature and importance of diplomacy
- To investigate how the concept of diplomacy has evolved historically
- To assess the different types of diplomatic practice and the importance of this diplomatic practice in contemporary interstate relations

#### **Learning outcomes**

At the end of the module learners were expected to be able to:

- Critically examine the role of diplomacy in today's world order
- Apply diplomatic thought to real-world situations
- Examine critically whether current understandings of diplomacy can help to explain the business of interstate relations

In relation to practical and transferable skills, learners should also be able to:

- Gather, organise and deploy evidence, data and information from a variety of sources
- Use communication and information technologies for the retrieval, analysis and presentation of information
- Communicate ideas effectively and fluently, both orally and in writing
- Work independently, demonstrating initiative, self-organisation and time management.

#### 4.2.2 Teaching and Assessment Strategy

The module was assessed summatively. The assessment was in two parts. 20% of the marks were awarded on the basis of a seminar log. This log outlined learner's experience of the Diplomacy board game, 80% of the marks were awarded on the basis of a 2,500 word essay. The essay titles had a broad structure, but were designed so that learners could negotiate elements of the content to reflect their own interests.

The module was designed to allow for formative assessment in relation to questions and discussions during lectures, seminars and during the Diplomacy board-game sessions. Learners received summative assessment on written work, the seminar log and essay. The structure of the teaching comprised a combined lecture and seminar over a three-hour period, individual tutorials and private study time.

The following authentic learning activities were included in the module structure:

- Diplomacy board game
- Use of technology: lap tops in classroom, using mobile phones to take photographs of the positions in the Diplomacy board game, Facebook and University e-learning portal
- Weekly current political news slot from TV and Internet
- Use of current newspapers
- Original archived film – student choice
- Reflective seminar logs

**Table 6: Lecture and seminar programme**

Lecture and seminar programme		
Date (Week Beg)	Lecture (One hour)	Seminar (two hours)
Week 1	Introduction	Diplomacy Board Game
Week 2	The Renaissance	Diplomacy Board Game
Week 3	The Treaties of Westphalia	Diplomacy Board Game
Week 4	The Concert of Europe	Diplomacy Board Game
Week 5	The early twentieth century	Diplomacy Board Game
Week 6	The post-war diplomatic system	Diplomacy Board Game
Week 7	The background to the Cuban missile crisis	Diplomacy Board Game
Week 8	The missiles of October	Diplomacy Board Game
Week 9	Analytical frameworks	Diplomacy Board Game
Week 10	Wither diplomacy?	Diplomacy Board Game
Week 11	New approaches to diplomatic challenges: The Blair Years	Diplomacy Board Game
Week 12	New approaches to diplomatic challenges: Threat assessment and precaution	Diplomacy Board Game

#### 4.2.3 Tutor comments on the module

This section contains data extracts from an interview with the module tutor at the end of the twelve-week module. It is divided into sections which cover: assessment, engagement, authentic learning activities and skills development.

##### **Tutor comments on assessment**

The tutor discusses how the marks are allocated for the module:

‘Well the assessment is in two parts. There's an essay, which constitutes 80% of the marks, and that's on, well it's based upon theories practitioners have used on Diplomacy that we've studied through the course, but 20% of the module is based upon actually playing the Diplomacy board game, so if the students don't engage with it, at all, then they have difficulties when it comes to writing a reflective log’.

The tutor discusses the way in which he has introduced current political events into the titles of the essays:

‘The essay title was set this year, so it would be quite useful for the students to link in current events with their reading they've done on past diplomatic practices’.

### **Tutor comments on the authentic learning activities**

The tutor explained the reasons why he had chosen the Diplomacy Board game as an authentic learning activity, the game appears to be viewed here as a means to engage students in the learning process:

‘Diplomacy can be quite a dry subject and getting students to engage with texts that are several hundred years old can often be difficult, so really, the reason I've used this game is to engage students in the art of diplomacy and to get them to think about how negotiations actually work in the real world’.

The tutor explained that he links the curriculum to student's real life experiences wherever possible, these experiences appear to be a central element of the tutor's pedagogic approach:

‘I've tried to talk to the students, wherever possible, about their experiences. Now, I've tried to set the module up in such a way that they're doing more than one thing, so it's a combination of lectures, seminar reading, and playing the board game’.

### **Tutor comments on autonomy/ skills development**

The tutor commented on the potential link between student attendance on the module and their ability to complete the reflective logs which are part of the module assessment. The tutor stresses the importance of participation:

‘There is quite a close split between those who participated and turned up to lectures and those who didn't. I think it's very difficult to be self-reflective in a game if you haven't attended most of its sessions because then you're not getting use of the dynamics of the negotiation’.

The tutor discussed the skills he believes are an integral part of the understanding of the Diplomacy module, the ability to negotiate is highlighted as an important component of the course by the tutor:

‘But the reason for introducing the board game was to get them to think about negotiation. Diplomacy isn't just something you've got to read about in a final year undergraduate Degree; this is something that, well, it's a life skill, something that will stay with you for the rest of your life, the ability to negotiate’.

The tutor discussed other skills he believes are a part of learning about Diplomacy. Criticality and working collaboratively appear to be important pedagogical outcomes for the tutor:

‘Oh, I think critical analysis, attempting to read other people's motives, functioning as part of a team as well, because the way the module worked, we had seven teams and most of the teams had at least three players, so yes, working collaboratively’.

### **Tutor comments on student engagement**

The tutor related that he believes there is a link between student attendance on the module and their academic performance in relation to marks:

‘The ones who've attended, who've participated in the game, tended to do better in the game, and also they seemed to get better marks in the module’.

### **Tutor comments on pedagogy**

The tutor commented on student participation and the authentic learning activity in relation to engagement and observed that engagement in the Diplomacy module may have been reflected in similar levels of engagement in other modules during that academic year:

‘Some of the students did engage with it and others didn't so much, but it would be interesting to have a look at these students, their performance throughout the final year of their studies, to see if there's a link. It might be the case that the ones who haven't

engaged with it haven't been attending other lectures as well, so there might be more to it than the actual module itself'.

#### 4.3 Lecture and seminar activity

This section describes the module's programme of lectures and seminars over a twelve-week period. The section includes the assessment strategy, pedagogic practice and the authentic learning activities which were used in the module. The section is divided into three parts, The Introductory Stage (lectures 1-4), The Middle Stage (lectures 5-8) and the End Stage (lectures 9-12). The introductory stage details the main authentic learning activity, the Diplomacy Board game, and the middle and end stages give details of further authentic and pedagogic activities which were employed throughout the module. The authentic learning activities which are detailed in this section include:

- Diplomacy Board game
- Use of technology: lap tops in classroom, using mobile phones to take photographs of the positions in the Diplomacy board game, Facebook and University e-learning portal
- Weekly current political news slot from TV and Internet
- Use of current newspapers
- Original archived film – student choice
- Reflective Seminar logs

##### 4.3.1 The Introductory Stage

#### **The Diplomacy Board Game**

The main activity of the module was an interactive game called Diplomacy, which the students were asked to take part in. *Diplomacy* is a registered board game (Hasbros, Avalon Hill Division), published in the United States, which was initially manufactured in the 1980s; updated versions are currently available. There are a number of web-based forums where participants can play the game through on-line communities.

The tutor explained to students that the aim of the Diplomacy board-game was to help them understand the key concepts and themes of the practice and institutions of diplomacy. The tutor also commented that he hoped the activity would act as a mechanism to get students to attend regularly, as the game carried through the twelve-week module. Participants received detailed

information about the game in a handout and in a briefing session at the beginning of the seminar. Participants had to organise themselves into seven groups (with no more than three people in each group), which then became seven 'countries' who then deployed 'diplomatic' measures to gain control of the board. The countries included: Russia, France, Italy, Turkey, UK, Germany and Austria. The three people in the group were asked to decide on a role; the Leader (who would prepare the moves), the Summariser (who would act to re-focus discussions if the group were becoming side-tracked), and the Recorder (whose role it was to take notes and report back to the team during any adjournments).

The tutor then discussed the rules of the game with the participants. The board-game was to be used to develop skills in negotiation, bargaining and the agreement of treaties, within the context of International Diplomacy. The tutor stressed that the approach required participants to be 'active' learners and involved learners focusing on building alliances and cultivating relationships. The tutor linked back to the diplomatic theory behind negotiation, and how the students could use this theory to be successful in the game. The tutor encouraged the participants to communicate with each other outside of the formal sessions. The students responded that some of them had already set up 'Facebook' discussions, and were using this in the 'true spirit' of diplomacy, inviting some participants' to join in their discussion, but not being entirely forthcoming about who was party to the discussions and who was not. The students laughed about this and it seemed to generate a lot of discussion and engagement.

The first week involved a dry run of the game. The game was then played in the subsequent teaching weeks, where time was set aside to announce each team's next move. Student's reactions at the beginning of the module were mixed. Some students were very excited and pleased about the game; others did not seem so keen and were initially quiet. Comments from enthusiastic students included:

'This is the first chance in three years we've had a chance to apply what we know about politics'.



One student links the authenticity of the activity to their level of engagement:

‘I can relate to this. It makes sense to me’.

‘It’s the best module we’ve done’.

Whilst another student did not seem quite so enthusiastic:

‘Seems like a load of nonsense’.

The majority of the class did not know each other. The politics degree was modular in format and the degree required students to choose different modules and pathways through the degree. This meant in practice that students had little contact with one continuous group of students. This matter was raised by a number of the students as they started to play the game and choose teams, the few students who did know each other quickly joined forces and the others formed teams at random. Two of the students explicitly mentioned that they felt they would be at a disadvantage playing the game because they did not know each other and this was repeated at various times during the course of the module.

The session covered a three-hour period. The first hour was a lecture, where the tutor presented slides and discussed theoretical aspects of diplomacy with the students. The lectures mainly involved the tutor talking, but there was time made for discussion where the tutor would ask the class their opinions at regular intervals. This hour was followed by a short break, and then the students returned and the Diplomacy game was played for an hour. There was then a short break and the session was concluded with a seminar. This structure, whilst long, seemed to work well. The length of time presented many opportunities for students to interact and discuss ideas, and the two breaks acted as informal vehicles to chat over a coffee which could be brought back into the classroom.

At the end of the first session, the tutor asked the participants to write down their positions on the Diplomacy Board, so that the game could recommence the following week, with everyone in their correct positions. The participants responded by asking if they could take photographs of the board with their mobile phones, which the tutor supported. This worked very well as

the following week, the photographs were viewed through one participant's laptop, and the positions jointly confirmed by the group (to make sure no cheating was taking place: student emphasis) and the board set up again. The participant who used the laptop described in interview how he had completed web searches for the best strategic moves in the game Diplomacy and that he used these strategies in the game (his team, Russia, went on to finally win). The one hour session started with participants discussing the moves and then writing them down on a piece of paper which were then handed to the tutor. The tutor then read out each move, and after consulting with the group, made the appropriate moves on the board. The students then had to re-group, discuss the other teams' moves, and then provide a counter-move. This was then handed in, read out and the move played. This process took about one hour, with much discussion, with the different groups negotiating, some openly across tables, and others going outside to the corridor (after asking the tutor if this was allowed, which the tutor agreed to). Some groups were vocal and seemed to be confident in the rules; other groups were quieter and spent more time in quiet discussion, reading the rule book. The tutor negotiated breaks and finishing times with the students. On one occasion the tutor asked if the students would like to leave early, as they had covered the material for that day's session. The students asked if they could stay and play another round of the game. The tutor asked for a show of hands, and unanimously the whole group put their hands up, and proceeded to stay for another game. The format of the game became increasingly lively as the weeks went on, with students discussing and arguing over moves and whether particular moves were legal or not. The students crowded around the table when it was time to play their moves - as the tutor read them out there were gasps at surprise moves, cheers at brave strategies and groans from those who had been out-manoeuvred. After the first two or three weeks, the tutor noticeably 'stood back' from the game, leaving the students to interpret the rules, negotiate turns, problem-solve and manage the game themselves.

### **Use of technology**

Two students used laptops in the classroom; all students used mobile phones to take photographs of the positions in the game. Four of the teams set up sites on 'Facebook' to negotiate moves. The tutor placed module material on the University e-learning portal and encouraged the students to use this for discussion. However, no students used this facility, preferring to use the 'Facebook' site instead.

### **Weekly current political news slot from TV and Internet**

At the beginning of the module the tutor told the students that he wondered if they would find it useful to have a weekly fifteen-minute 'news slot' at the start of the session. This news slot would cover the previous week's news stories in relation to politics, with particular reference to news items which included aspects of diplomatic relations. Both the tutor and students would bring news items for discussion. The students responded enthusiastically to this, and the plan was agreed. This happened every week, with the tutor and students bringing items of news. This gave the opportunity to develop discussion and for students to place the module subject area in the 'real' contemporary world. The tutor also used examples from the news during lectures, which were relevant to the subject being discussed.

#### **4.3.2 The Middle Stage**

##### **Use of current newspapers**

The tutor regularly brought newspapers into the session, particularly those with details of current news stories regarding national and international diplomatic situations. These made the discussions authentic to the students in that the tutor related the stories to the theory of diplomacy, linking the theory back to the diplomatic practices which were occurring in the world.

##### **Original archived film**

The tutor explained to the group that he had a number of DVDs which he felt would be useful to support the students learning on the Diplomacy module. The tutor gave the titles of the DVDs and asked the students if they would find them useful and, if so, which ones would they would like to watch first.

The students were interested in the DVDs and asked that they be included in the sessions, voting on which DVDs to watch first. This process of negotiating the curriculum was met enthusiastically by the students. The films were then used as a basis for discussion in the following seminars.

#### **4.3.3 The End Stage**

##### **Reflective Seminar logs**

The summative assessment was made up of a written essay, worth 80% of the overall mark, and a written log outlining the participants' experiences of the Diplomacy board game. This was worth 20% of the overall mark for the module. The tutor stated that the students could submit the seminar logs in the groups they were in to play the board game, or they could do this individually. The tutor asked if they would like to negotiate this. The students said yes, and a discussion developed. This included concerns that some students may not turn up, participate or contribute, but would still get the marks from others efforts. The students decided amongst themselves to vote on the issue. A vote was taken, and unanimously the group decided to prepare the seminar logs individually. After the discussion had finished, the tutor explained to the students that they had just taken part in a negotiation, which was a central part of learning about diplomacy, with the tutor making explicit links back to diplomatic theory and the curriculum. The tutor explained to the students that if they were to make a 'good' attempt at this, they needed to attend the sessions, and make notes both during and after the session about their experiences. The tutor was explicit in his explanation, informing the students that it was important to link their experiences both to playing the game, and to their understanding of the diplomatic theory which they had studied during the module. The tutor then followed this explanation with a short PowerPoint presentation which described and detailed the process of reflection, using Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (1984). The tutor explained this process to the students and gave examples of reflection when the students were playing the Diplomacy game. The student's reactions were mixed. Some seemed enthusiastic and others related that they would find this task difficult.

#### 4.3.4 Analysis of tutors view of pedagogic structure

The table below summarises the tutor's constructions of the authentic activities and how these constructions relate to the tutors views of autonomy. Example learning activities are given from the module pedagogic structure.

Table 7: Analysis of pedagogic structure - Diplomacy

Views of Authenticity	Views of Autonomy	Pedagogic Structure
Authentic to academic discipline	To develop skills for the 'real world'	Choice of essays
Authentic to real world situations	To gain political awareness	Scaffolded tasks
To help engagement	To increase responsibility in learning	Negotiated assessments
To increase/maintain attendance	Democratic Citizenship	Transparency in approach
To develop critical thinking	Critical thinking	Group work (presentation)
To develop reflection	To help develop skills for other modules (e.g. Dissertation)	Team work (negotiation and communication, problem solving)
To develop skills of negotiation	To develop communication skills	Negotiated tasks

#### 4.4 Presentation of student data - Authenticity

This is the third section of chapter four. It presents data extracts from five participant interviews under key themes which have emerged from the data relating to authenticity. The five students have been called: David, Dick, Davina, Deidre and Donald. The key themes are:

- Motivation and engagement
- Meaning and relevance
- Pedagogy and assessment structure

##### 4.4.1 Motivation and Engagement

##### David – Motivation and Engagement

David talked about getting to know other students and that he has enjoyed this.

'I'm still not very keen on having any three-hour sessions, but maybe that's just me. But at least it's broken up by different things on the day'.

### **Dick - Motivation and Engagement**

Dick talked about his motivation for the activity:

‘I want to turn up for that not because I’m afraid that I’ll miss a go but because I enjoy playing it’.

### **Davina – Motivation and Engagement**

Davina said that she thought it will be harder for her to participate and maintain motivation because she did not know anyone on the module:

‘I think quite a lot of them are off the History / Politics course. So I’m going to be... It’s going to be a bit harder for me to participate that way’.

### **Deidre – Motivation and Engagement**

Deidre said she thought the module is confusing:

I didn’t really understand the whole concept because the instructions are very, very, very confusing so I just tried my best’.

Deidre explained that she was looking for someone smarter than her to work with:

“Oh, I’ll work with him because he seems really smart’ but then he wasn’t there the first time we played so I had to figure it out on my own’.

### **Donald - Motivation and Engagement**

Donald described liking the three hour structure of the module as he feels it gives the group time to develop conversations and discussion:

‘Well the way it’s scheduled all in that three hour block, I think that’s quite good because you’re getting the lecture, the seminar and it’s not like you come in at the beginning of a seminar, no-one wants to speak, it takes a while to get them going because by the time you’ve reached that point you’ve already been talking and discussing things so there’s more to talk and discuss about because the conversation is already there’.

#### 4.4.2 Meaning and Relevance

##### **David – Meaning and Relevance**

David discussed the authentic nature of the board game:

‘The most obvious things are kind of the obvious aspects of diplomacy which are negotiating with other people, potentially doing things, doing the opposite of what you say and potentially making alliances and having to trust the other person in the alliance’.

##### **Dick – Meaning and Relevance**

Dick did not see that the activity would have any direct relevance to his work, but qualifies this by saying that you couldn’t get any closer a simulation between the game and real life diplomacy.

‘I’m not entirely certain it’s going to be that much more useful than that. Having said that, it is, like, you can’t get any closer in a 3-hour lecture to real diplomacy than playing a board game’.

##### **Davina – Meaning and Relevance**

Davina seemed unsure of the relevance of the module:

‘I think he’s trying to make it more like, well, he’s trying to make it less boring. I mean, it’s a good example having a game named after the module as well. It’d be a waste if he didn’t use it. Yes, it’ll probably, if it works it’ll probably be quite useful but it depends on how well it works in the long run’.

##### **Deidre – Meaning and Relevance**

Deidre talked about her views of what she thinks the module is about:

‘I think he really wants us to try to be diplomatic, but I really didn’t understand the instructions in the first place. I really wasn’t sure how you turn it into diplomacy but I think I can understand where he’s trying to get us to be diplomatic. I’m just not sure this board game is the best way, even though it is called ‘Diplomacy’...’

'Yes, it really has. Like sometimes I'm like, 'Oh, I should go to lecture but I don't feel quite well' and then it's not like I'm actually being graded on anything except for a paper that I do by myself, so like, it's sort of really hard to make myself go to lectures sometimes because, like, I'm learning things but sometimes I'm interested in them and sometimes I'm not so I sit there for 3 hours just doodling because I've stopped paying attention because I'm not being graded on anything. And then in life you're not graded on anything but at least you're getting paid'.

### **Donald – Meaning and Relevance**

Donald related the skills developed during the diplomacy game to the world of work and wider society:

'I think with the Diplomacy, the actual module, you've got people skills, you've got to be able to talk. You've got to use the kind of negotiation thing to get it so that you're using it as the tool it's meant to be and not just a game that you play'.

Donald talked about the relationship between the board-game and skills useful for the world of work:

'Because the way I believe the world of work works and the way the world goes round, it is about connections and who you know. And I know the board game is a very crude way of explaining it but it's about making those connections, making compromises and meeting and reaching out to some people to further your goals while keeping them happy at the same time. I think that not only works well in Diplomacy, but that's how the real world works as well'.

Donald made explicit links to political theory and also to the world of work:

'And I think the game pretty much does play out how Machiavelli writes The Prince and all the key arguments that he makes in there and I think that's probably the point he was trying to make



with the game, about rather than just learning about the different things that diplomats have done or how diplomacy has evolved, but to actually experience it and try and actually have some sort of practical aspect to it, because you can't really send us off to be ambassadors for different countries around the world and expect that... It just wouldn't work. And so this is the closest we're probably going to get to doing that'.

#### **4.4.3 Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

##### **David – Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

David talked about how he appreciates the lecturer not giving his own opinions, but leaving students to make up their own minds:

'It's good to have xxx approach, which is kind of whereby he doesn't reinforce any particular ideology or any particular political worldview. It's interesting to always try and work out what his opinion is. xxx and I do all the time. But it's much better to have that than someone who is much more of an ardent supporter of whichever political ideology they have'.

##### **Interviewer: Why do you think that's important?**

'It's much better that the lecturer will give kind of the most balanced view possible of any particular topic and then let students work out what their opinions are rather than present a topic with opinions already built into it, and then let the students decipher the answers afterwards. So I do like xxx approach in that regard. In general, I think xxx is pretty good at what he does anyway'.

##### **Dick – Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Dick talked about appreciating the lecturer not giving his opinions, but letting students make up their own minds. He appreciated the wide choice of essay titles which were provided.

##### **Davina – Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Davina mentioned the fact that the tutor and some students know each other:

‘One boy seemed to have played it before and he knew what he was talking about and I think a lot of the people were a bit more comfortable because they knew each other and also knew the tutor as well’.

### **Deidre – Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Deidre commented on the amount of books you were expected to read:

‘You have all these books you need to read to sort of understand what’s going on and you have to take the initiative to read that and there’s a huge list of them. So it’s like, ‘Oh my goodness, there are so many books!’.

Deidre explained that the assessment system is different in the USA, and that she has had difficulties with this module’s criterion:

‘The thing that’s still totally bugging me is that my only grade is one essay. Usually back home there’s at least a mid-term and sometimes there’s other work too, like, sometimes you have tests and stuff...’.

### **Donald – Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Donald mentioned that he thinks the lecturer might be inclined to give more marks if students turn up and participate in the activity:

‘If they can see that you’ve turned up and you know what you are talking about, if your essay is a bit sketchy then they’ll probably give you the benefit of the doubt rather than someone who has no idea, comes up with a seminar that’s a load of rubbish and then has maybe turned in some really good essays’.

## **4.5 Presentation of student data - Autonomy**

This is the fourth and final section of chapter four. This section presents the data from five participant interviews under the key themes which were used to code the data. The five students are; David, Dick, Davina, Deidre and Donald. The key themes are:

- Procedural autonomy
- Personal autonomy
- Critical autonomy
- Relational autonomy

#### 4.5.1 Procedural Autonomy

##### **David – procedural autonomy**

David discusses his 'usual' approach to his studies:

'I'm usually quite bad at doing essays and work in general in advance of the deadline. I usually only work best when the deadline is really quite close. The dissertation is looming large and I've got about 10,000 words to write on that plus loads of other work to do in the background. So that's what I'll have to be concentrating on at the moment'.

##### **Dick – procedural autonomy**

Dick talks about his time management:

'Now we've both got the dissertation that we're doing at the same time now so that takes a massive chunk out of our time, and that's even before this essay in between before my other course exam, so it's like I'm, I don't want to but I'm probably going to leave that until after the... I would do the work as you go along but then it's not going to get written up until after my dissertation has been handed in'.

##### **Davina – procedural autonomy**

Davina described how she prepares for an essay:

'Well normally I start off quite organised. Normally I take notes from the lecture, but this one's a bit different because it seems it's all going to be rolled into one and you're not going to be doing just stuff for one so you're going to have to learn about, read what you need to know about beforehand'.

And her difficulties in knowing where to start:

'I just found that it was all quite broad because I wasn't sure like which part of the negotiations you were meant to look at. I was putting into Google, 'negotiations and diplomacy'...'

And her time planning due to work commitments:

'Because I work at weekends so I've got three days in the middle where I'm supposed to do it'.

### **Deidre – procedural autonomy**

Deidre explained her tactic for gaining a good mark:

'I think so, because the guys just knew each other so it was easier for them and they make secret deals and stuff and I was fine with that, I was, 'Okay, I don't really know what's going on anyhow...' and my goal was to find someone cleverer than me so that I really didn't have to do all that much work, because that's how I get through group projects, find someone smarter than you and they usually know what's going on and I'm usually just the person who writes things down'.

Deidre explained that she is not used to writing essay plans:

'But a paper, you need to make a plan and I've never had to make my own essay plan, like, 'This is what I'm going to do on my research and this is where...'

### **Donald – procedural autonomy**

Donald described the process of preparing for the essay as different from his usual method:

'A bit more stressed in the sense that I know, with some of my essays in the past, I have been able to do the work very quickly and then I can churn it out and it only takes a day or so to read through it, make the tweaks and necessary changes to it because I know what I'm doing and I know the subject. And I write it all down, get it done and then go back and make changes, but with

this one I pretty much have to write it piece by piece and not be able to know at the start what my conclusion is going to be’.

#### **4.5.2 Personal Autonomy**

##### **David – personal autonomy**

David reflected on his own performance, and recognised that in some respects his partner has taken a more lead role in the activity than he has:

‘So xxx isn’t necessarily one of the people that likes all the rules but he certainly had an understanding of it and was very willing to really get stuck in. And so if he was doing that then I just took a back seat and just talked to him about moves and stuff. But he was definitely the one, the driving force behind the team’.

In relation to what skills he thought he might have developed from the module:

‘I can’t really think of anything that’s specific to this module that I don’t have in general. I don’t know. All I can think of is trying to compare myself to other people who are on the module’.

##### **Dick – personal autonomy**

In response to thinking about his academic progress, Dick was able to reflect openly:

‘I think that my main area to work on would just be turning up all the time and also kind of putting more effort in, in particular starting assessed work earlier and writing it earlier and putting more background effort in. I think if I could do that more often, then I would get much better marks’.

##### **Davina – personal autonomy**

Davina reflected on her experiences:

‘I think from the logs, not just how you did, but how it affected everybody and more like, what sort of things you learned from it’.

### **Deidre – personal autonomy**

Deidre reflected on her essay-writing skills:

‘I’m not really that great at writing essays. I’m from America so our grade isn’t just one essay; it’s usually a mid-term exam, an essay and sometimes other projects’.

Deidre comments on the cultural differences in learning she has experienced in moving to the UK Higher Education system:

‘And over here, I don’t understand why you have to go to three hour lectures if your only grade is one paper. You may not even cover in a lecture, so I don’t really understand that. I asked someone and it’s like, ‘Oh we go to University for the sake of learning’ and I’m like, ‘That’s not why I’m going’.

### **Donald – personal autonomy**

Donald talked about reflecting on the game:

‘It’s more how you’ve done something and how you’ve seen it which I think is good because it’s your way of being able to say how you interpreted, what you learnt, how you interpreted and used that in the game and whether that actually influenced how you played it’.

#### **4.5.3 Critical Autonomy**

### **David – critical autonomy**

David talked about appreciating that the essay titles gave him scope to develop his own ideas:

‘The essay, I have given a fair bit of thought to and it’s one of those topics where because of the question, there’s only one question to choose from and it’s deliberately very, very open so you can write about loads of stuff’.

### **Dick – critical autonomy**

Dick reflects on what he has gained from the module:

'I don't think I've gained anything other than the obvious extra bit of knowledge about aspects of diplomacy. I can't think of anything more, any more abstract, like ways of thinking or anything like that'.

### **Davina – critical autonomy**

Davina commented that she felt that the assignment guidelines weren't explicit:

'Because I was reading last night about the seminar topic for today and I didn't really know where to start. It didn't actually tell you where to start'.

### **Deidre – critical autonomy**

Deidre stated that was not sure about her abilities to analyse:

'It just feels like, I can detail what happened, write out what I observed, but to analyse it, it just seems... I don't know. I'm not a big fan of analysis, which isn't a good thing being in Uni'.

Deidre reflects on the modules requirement to critically analyse course material:

'I just take things at face value and so try to analyse and try to find the critical meaning of things, like, I should've learnt it by now but I just never have. It's like trying to find nuances in things and diplomacy is about nuances but I'm still not quite at the point where I know how to discover nuances or knowing what they are secretly meaning and stuff'.

### **Donald – critical autonomy**

Donald talked about being able to develop his own point of view because of the way the seminars have been organised:

'The whole point is that you go from there and develop the argument further in the group so it's not about reading the book, turning up, get spoken at a bit more and write down a few notes.

It's about going in there and taking what you've learnt and what your views are and your opinions, to challenge the views that other people have put forward and using your knowledge to actually see what other people's views are so you can kind of incorporate into your arguments and when you come back and do an essay'.

#### 4.5.4 Relational Autonomy

##### **David – relational autonomy**

David talked about usually working on his own:

'I usually just stick to my, stay by myself, with what I'm doing'.

David talked about having to work with others, but not to have to work together to get marks:

'It's set up where you have to talk to each other to play the game but not necessarily to complete the work'.

David talked about his worries in finding someone 'good' to work with, although he said he is not really 'that bothered':

'Well if I don't get with anybody good or who I know then I'm not really that bothered.' I would just have to sort it out myself. But luckily, since I knew xxx from the trip, xxx offered to work with me so it's all worked out nicely in the end'.

##### **Dick – relational autonomy**

Dick discussed not previously knowing people from other modules:

'The people who are in this class haven't necessarily always been in the same modules, so I mean, I don't even know most of the people there so it's more like that you would talk to people you already know and make alliances with them'.

Dick related his worries:

'The only problem would be if you had to put up with someone who was an idiot and who didn't care or think about it. Like, if



someone who didn't really care, like, there were people who didn't hand their notes in on time because they hadn't written them up, whereas you should be working as you are going along instead of just pottering about'.

### **Davina – relational autonomy**

Davina talked about not knowing any other students on the module, and that she will work alone:

'It's a bit strange in your third year, not knowing anybody.'

Davina related that she thinks students who know each other performed better during the game:

'I don't know the person on the team very well so I don't have as strong a team as some teams maybe'.

'And maybe it's just like the people who know each other better, have got on better, and have had better results in the game'.

### **Deidre – relational autonomy**

Deidre explained about her difficulties communicating with other members of the group:

'Yes, so I think, in the other teams they all really know each other so it's really hard for me because I just came here and I really don't know anyone'. Deidre reflected on her group work skills:

'Personally I should try to be more part of a group and not be so afraid of people who have already made groups and that I shouldn't just rely on the clever person sitting next to me. It's quite interesting how, like, people who already knew each other seemed to do better than the people who'd just sort of got thrown together.'

### **Donald – relational autonomy**

Donald talked about knowing other members of the group:

“With that group there are a few that I’ve known from before, so I know probably about four or five of them fairly well and I can go and speak to them and we can talk about things’.

#### 4.6 Summary of student experiences in relation to key themes of authenticity and autonomy

The table below summarises the student experience on the Diplomacy module in relation to their experiences of the authentic learning task. The data is summarised under the three themes of: motivation and engagement, meaning and relevance and module structure and pedagogy.

**Table 8: Analysis of student data. Diplomacy: Authenticity**

<b>Student experiences of authentic task</b>
<b>Motivation and engagement</b>
Students intrigued and hooked into the activity
Students liked the three hour slot
Students participated in discussions outside of the classroom
Some students felt disadvantaged through not knowing other students
Students motivated by the seminar structure where students could choose item for discussion
<b>Meaning and relevance</b>
Some students saw relevance to real world Diplomacy
Students able to make links made between theory and practice
Instructions for game seen as too complicated by some students
Some students made links to skills development for professional life
Some students not sure of application to real life but acknowledged skills development
<b>Structure and pedagogy</b>
Three hour session allowed students time to get to know each other and for discussion to develop
Students given choice over discussion topics for seminars
Choice of presentation styles for discussion topics. Students able to co-constructing a narrative
Students could negotiate own essay titles
Students had to conduct their own research for choice of essay title

The table below summarises the student experience on the Diplomacy module with regard to the development of autonomous learning behaviours. The data is summarised under the four key themes of: Personal autonomy, relational autonomy, procedural autonomy and critical autonomy.

**Table 9: Analysis of student data. Diplomacy: Autonomy**

<b>Student experience in relation to the development of different types of autonomy</b>
<b>Personal</b>
Students appreciated the different approach to assignment
Students reflected on their progress because of the requirement to submit seminar logs
Students reported reflection on communication skills
<b>Relational</b>
Some students found start of game difficult as they felt at a dis-advantage because they did not know other students
Some students felt that students who knew each other had an advantage in the game and performed better
Students reported that they enjoyed getting to know other students
Students enjoyed the opportunity for group discussion and learning from one another
<b>Procedural</b>
Module required different approach to essay writing, students had to plan more because of essay plan & seminar logs
Students reported improved time keeping and attendance
<b>Critical</b>
Students had to conduct own research to decide on essay plan
Game required problem solving to work out tactical moves
Game required skills of negotiation to decide on moves

## **4.7 Constructions and perceptions of authenticity**

This section will examine the views and definitions of authenticity from both the tutor's perspective and the student experience. The section will examine the relationship between perceptions and experiences of authenticity (and how this manifests itself in pedagogy) and the potential demonstration of autonomous learning behaviours.

### **4.7.1 Tutor constructions of authenticity**

At the beginning of the module the tutor presented the Diplomacy board-game to the students as an authentic means to understand how to negotiate, develop alliances, and problem-solve within teams. The tutor understood the authentic activity as being relevant to the academic discipline and to real

world situations. The tutor spent a lot of time in the first session explaining what skills would be required to play the game (negotiation, problem-solving, and team work). The tutor explained to the students that the game required similar skills to the world of work and that the activity gave the students an opportunity to practice and develop these. The tutor emphasised the reflective nature of writing the seminar logs, and a one hour lecture slot was used to give examples and explain the process and importance of reflective thinking and how this linked to problem-solving and the development of critical thinking. The tutor negotiated essay titles with students and gave time during sessions for students to put forward their own opinions without feeling pressurised to 'come up' with answers. Every session started with a discussion of the week's news, and what the students' opinions were of this. The tutor was transparent in his approach, and explicit in his criteria for essay writing and seminar logs. The emphasis was on becoming a critical, political thinker. The tutor maintained a strong subject orientation and the students were encouraged to develop an identity as a critical 'politician'. The tutor explained that the reason that students were required to negotiate essay titles with him was to explicitly develop their negotiation skills. The atmosphere of the module was about participation, negotiation and transparency of process.

#### **4.7.2 Student constructions of authenticity**

The students were 'hooked in' to the Diplomacy game at different stages. Two students (who did not know any of the others) were slower to respond, but after initial hesitation became involved and engaged. All students related understanding the relevance of the game to the academic discipline, with three responding that they made links to employment skills and 'real life'. Some students related that they felt at a disadvantage through not knowing any other students because of the modular structure. The students reported that they enjoyed the three-hour structure, as this gave them time to develop relationships and discussion. The students stated that they appreciated being able to negotiate their own essay titles and that had given them 'control' over their learning. The students reported that they enjoyed the weekly 'news' discussions and this had made them feel like a 'politician'. A

number of students commented on the fact that the tutor did not give his own opinions, but left the students to make up their own minds, and this was also appreciated. The seminar logs were not very popular; overall, students did not see the relevance to the academic discipline, but acknowledged that they would be useful in helping them think about future work options. There was a lot of group activity in this module, and students were in their country teams every week, and many participated outside of the seminar to discuss moves and strategies. The overall view of the authentic activity from the students was one of enjoyment, inclusion, choice and negotiation.

#### 4.7.3 Tutor and student constructions of authenticity and the development of autonomous learning behaviours

The diagram below illustrates tutor and student constructions of authenticity, the main student response to these constructions and their relationships to the development, or demonstration, of autonomous learning behaviours.

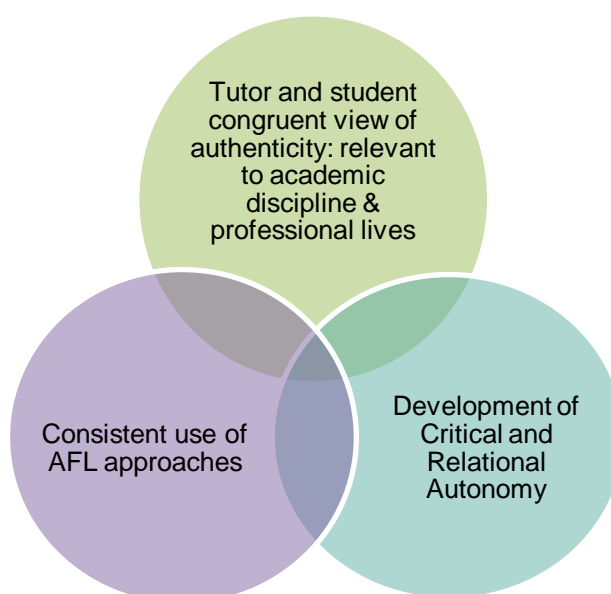


Figure 11: Constructions of authenticity and their relationship to autonomous learning behaviours – Diplomacy

#### 4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented data extracts from the first case study, Diplomacy, through key themes relevant to the research question. This chapter is the first of four building blocks for chapter eight, which presents a cross analysis of findings from the four case studies. This case study

predominantly used simulations and games as the authentic learning strategy. The authentic activities, for the purpose of this study, were defined as 1) authentic to the professional discipline and 2) authentic to a professional context.

The next chapter, Chapter Five, presents data from the second case study. This module was based within the Geography Department. The module presents research findings from authentic learning activities which were defined as 1) authentic in relation to real life/world settings and 2) authentic in relation to being meaningful to peoples' lives.

## Chapter Five

### The Geography Module

The chapter is divided into eight sections:

**Section 5.1** provides an introduction to the module. Each section presents data from the modules, in the form of direct quotations from tutors and students. Data findings are presented and interpreted through the key themes outlined in the coding framework.

**Section 5.2** outlines the structure of the module, the authentic learning activities which were used and tutor comments on the module.

**Section 5.3** gives details of the lectures and Seminars – the ‘doing’ phase - and what happened during the twelve weeks of the module, including student and tutor responses. This section is divided into three parts: Introductory (lectures 1-4), Middle (lectures 5-8) and End (lectures 9-12).

**Section 5.4** provides evidence in the form of data extracts from five students, presented through key themes of Authenticity. This section presents data extracts from participants under key themes a) Motivation and Engagement, b) Meaning and Relevance and c) Pedagogy and Assessment Structure.

**Section 5.5** presents findings, with comments, from the five students in relation to the themes of autonomy which were used to code the interviews under the key themes a) Procedural autonomy b) Personal autonomy c) Critical autonomy and d) Relational autonomy.

**Section 5.6** presents a cross analysis of student data for authenticity and autonomy through key themes.

**Section 5.7** discusses the constructions and perceptions of tutors and students in relation to authenticity. The section examines the pedagogic approach employed by the tutor and the students’ response to this approach.

**Section 5.8** Concludes the chapter.

## 5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the second case study of the research. It presents data from a twelve-week optional module conducted as part of the BA (Hons) Geography. The module constitutes one of the four 'building blocks' of research data which provide evidence for chapter eight, which presents a cross analysis of research data from all four modules.

This module was chosen as a case study because it provides examples of authentic learning activities which, for this study, were defined as:

- Authentic in relation to real life/world settings: a photographic project based in the student's community.
- Authentic in relation to being meaningful to peoples' lives: the production of a book or journal based around student's individual experiences of living in a northern city.
- Authentic to an academic discipline: learning activities were to be directly related to geographical theory.

The chapter can 'stand alone' for readers interested in authentic learning strategies within the subject area of Applied Sciences. Pedagogic approaches included: project work, the use of journals and reflection and the study of semiotics and media (photography) in applied contexts.

The chapter builds on Chapter One in providing evidence for the presentation of a model of 'learner response', which is outlined in the discussion. The chapter presents data extracts from researcher observations over a twelve-week period, and interviews with the module tutor and five participating students. The students have been named: Geoffrey, Gerard, Giles, Gertrude and Gwyneth.

## 5.2 Structure of the module

### 5.2.1 Learning aims and objectives

This was an optional module of the BA (Hons) Geography, in the School of Applied Sciences, in year three of a three-year degree. The module was delivered over the second semester (twelve weeks) through a two hour



workshop. The module aimed to use photography to explore chosen themes from the geographical and environmental disciplines. Students were encouraged to develop a critical visual methodology and apply and practice the skills to a photographic project on a topic of individual choice. The aim of the module was to 'encourage reflection on student's own perceptions and representations of their own geography and environment'.

The tutor description of the module (taken from module handbook) is as follows:

'At the heart of this module is the idea that you can use photography to explore, research and represent environmental and geographical ideas. This is no different to using essays, spectrophotometers, reports, exams and questionnaires. The photographs are therefore both a tool, like a pH probe or an interview, but also an outcome like an essay or exam answer. The workshops are planned to help you gain this experience as a group, carry out increasingly individual work and later on, provide a venue for exploration, support and discussion around your two chosen geographical themes.'

#### **5.2.2 Teaching and assessment strategy**

The assessment for the module was made up of two parts:

- Photographic work, handed in ready for an end of course public exhibition. This consisted of photographs students had taken; exploring geographical/environmental topics of the student's choice, along with a supporting critical discussion (maximum word limit 1000 words), primarily reviewing the geographical/environmental ideas and phenomena that the photography was used to explore (50% of module mark).
- A book or comic (and in both cases, a homemade badge) exploring the theme of: "Your place in the city". The book or comic content

consisted primarily of photographs, and was accompanied by the badge (50% of total mark).

The handbook gave explicit instructions about the assessment criteria for the photographic work, the comic/book and the badge. This included details of the required size and format of the comic book and instructions as to the size of image which the students had to develop for the badge. An example marking scheme was included, with exemplars of previously marked work. Instructions and examples of how to do a critical review/literature review were also included. The tutor stated that he had a badge machine which he would use to make the actual badge when the students brought him their finished image.

The teaching and learning strategy included a combination of lectures, seminars, workshops and site visits. The first half of the module introduced students to key ideas, the significance of photographs, different types of photographs (e.g. documentary, popular), key methods (e.g. composition, semiotics) and how to develop a workbook of ideas and images. Workshops ran alongside the lectures. In each workshop the first half was spent working in groups developing ideas for representing selected images or ideas. The second half involved the students going out into the community and taking some initial photographs, which were made available for critique the following week. Pictures were placed on the University's e-learning portal, week-by-week, so that students were able to see both their own and other students' work. The second half of the module required students to develop their individual photographic work, researching a specific geographical or environmental theme, idea, place or paradigm. There were timetabled workshops booked every other week to provide students with a venue to meet, exchange ideas and discuss problems. The students were given an extensive reading list of key texts and additional material.

This summary is taken from the module handbook. The words have been reproduced as they are in the handbook to enable readers to gain a picture of the structure, style and context of communication between tutor and students.

Table 10: Workshop Summary (Tutor, 2008)

Week	Workshop Topic
Prior to 2	Bring in a photograph to represent you.
2 Follow up to 2	<b>Introduction to workshops.</b> Taking apart an image. What to do for next week. Make your own versions of the image used in the workshop (you will have access to <b>Photoshop</b> , along with a basic intro on how to use the package).
Prior to 3	Bring in a photograph to represent the city.
3	<b>Sense of place.</b> We will watch two DVD's made in this city in recent years, both claiming to conjure up a sense of place. But do they?
Prior to 4	Photograph aspects of your journey back and forth to campus
4  Follow up	<b>"My Walks"</b> . We will go on a short walk through parts of the city which are very nearby but I bet you have not appreciated.  Photograph your journey to campus.
Prior to 6	Prepare a side of notes describing physical environment of the Town Moor and how these can be represented.
6  Follow up to 6	<b>Space and landscape.</b> The Town Moor.  Submit Town Moor images.
Prior to 7	Take a wander up and down the main city shopping street.
7  Follow up to 7	<b>Signs and wonders.</b> Representing action in the shopping area using a photographic comic strip.
8	<b>Looking ahead to the public event</b>
9	<b>Independent study</b>
10	<b>Independent study</b>
11	<b>Independent study</b>
12	<b>Module Exhibition.</b> Wednesday 12 <sup>th</sup> May, (which is the hand in deadline/venue). 9am – 1pm. (Doors open to the public at 11am). Wine, nibbles.

### 5.2.3 Tutor commentary on the module with data extracts

The following data extracts are taken from an interview with the module tutor at the end of the module.

The tutor reflected on his previous use of authentic learning materials:

'Over the years, I've included a lot of visual material in lecture, mostly ecological lectures and they've often had cartoons in. I thought for a long time, 'Wouldn't it be nice to try and use this a little bit more?' because many of our students like that as well and have always said 'We like the pictures, we get them; they make us laugh, they make us think about things.'

The tutor commented on his initial concerns in relation to the assessment strategy for the module:

'I thought there could be some problems using photography in a module, especially if it was the assessment, and I thought the problems would be technical, that students would need to be given cameras. The technology was never going to be the issue. They all had cameras, many of them had digital cameras, camera phones were just coming in; the technology side was trivial, there were absolutely no problems with having to worry about teaching them photography from that point of view'.

The tutor discusses his use of authentic learning activities in relation to a walk through the city:

'The walk through town, I weave a tale about this sort of magical world, this lost civilisation a long way from anywhere in either direction, and I take the students to places they've never seen before, and they find that quite intriguing, so they get a sense, a little bit, of my sense of place, and I can take them to see the chalk graffiti wall and places, the modern buildings, the astronomical alignments... And this makes them stop and think about ways of seeing their city.'

The tutor discusses this authentic learning activity in relation to being meaningful to individual lives:

'So I thought 'Let's get the students to do little books about their sense of place' which is a big, geographical idea about their environment, and there's part of me which thinks in a way, it's a fairly trivial exercise and 'Shouldn't they be learning about climate change, recycling, conserving elephants?' Well they do all those. So the irony is, they know more about elsewhere, the Antarctic, Zimbabwe, than they do about their own world and to reflect back on what they've learnt, what these three years have meant to them.'

The tutor relates student engagement to the authentic activities included in the module pedagogy:

‘Many of them choose it, this module, I suspect because it's a bit of a novelty, it's a bit different, and they're fed up doing all the other sort of routine, well not 'routine' stuff but the core stuff, the familiar stuff. They also choose it because it's not exam-based. Because it actually takes a lot more out of them, partly because it demands a lot of them and partly because a lot of them get very caught up in it and thoroughly enjoy it!’

The tutor discusses student reactions to the authentic learning activities:

‘And at the end, many of them, I think, find it great fun and many of them say 'This is just the best module I've ever done!' and that's a sweet thing to say, because they get a chance to show off their work at a public do. I wouldn't mind betting that individual students act in very different ways and I suspect there are some students who really don't like it and find it much more difficult than they ever imagined, because it's not their thing’.

The tutor comments on the module design, linking the social aspect of learning to the module structure:

**Interviewer: Can you tell me a little bit about why you've designed it so that the students have an exhibition at the end?**

‘People come in and there's chit-chat and people ask you about your pictures and there's wine and nibbles; they've never done anything like it in their lives! They think it's great fun, so the pictures should be seen by an audience, and that's very important, and it makes a great end to a module, because most modules just end with an exam, and the invigilator saying 'Put your pens down now...' Is that a good way to end a module? No.’

### 5.3 Lecture and seminar activity

The following authentic learning activities were included in the twelve-week module and were part of the assessment structure.

- The development of a photographic portfolio
- A written critical discussion accompanying the pictures
- Development of a reflective Book/Journal/Comic. The subject of the book/journal/comic is “Your place in the city”.
- Site visit – City Town Moor
- Site visit – A walk through central Newcastle – “My Walk”.
- Public Exhibition of final assessed work

The following activity was an additional task which the tutor asked the students to take part in. The activity did not form part of the module assessment. The tutor explained that although it would not be formally assessed, the task itself would be useful to the students by helping them to develop skills of critical analysis.

- Carbon footprint exercise

#### 5.3.1 The Introductory Stage

##### **Authentic Learning Activities**

##### **The photographic project and the book/journal**

The two main activities for the module assessment comprised a photographic project and the accompanying development of a small ‘book’ or journal, which incorporated the photographs taken by the students. The first session was in the form of a lecture. The tutor used PowerPoint to show pictures and to illustrate his discussion with examples. During the first lecture the tutor explained the two activities to the students. The tutor explained that the task involved the students in developing photographic records of their ‘place in the city’. The tutor explained that the pictures would represent their

lifestyle, how they used the city space. The tutor said to the students that the module aimed to tap the students' personal creativity, and that the work would be presented at a final year exhibition, which would be open to the public. The tutor explained that the production of the books would be unique to the individual, irreplaceable and authentic. The tutor used photographs of local places to give examples of his own 'sense of place' in the city and explained to the students what the city meant to him, including how he used the city, what transport he used, what public spaces he inhabited, what shops he used. The tutor then related these examples to geographical theory about the use of urban spaces. The lecture lasted for an hour, and there was little interaction from the students and it was difficult to gauge their reactions to the outlined tasks. The following week the tutor brought in examples of previous books and photographs which students had made and presented at the exhibition. This session had more of a seminar style, with students and tutor moving around the room looking at the pictures and books and discussing possible ways to do the project. The students were interested in the books and photographs; there was a lot of talking and discussion in the room, with many questions, laughter and an air of excitement. A couple of students looked anxious and a bit unsure. The tutor noticed this and encouraged them to join in the discussion, looking at the books and the journals which were made the previous year.

There were two further lectures which covered the theory of semiotics, photograph composition and geographical theory in relation to the use of space. The following eight sessions were allocated for independent study, where the students could use the computers in a department learning resource to use 'Photoshop' software on computers. The students were shown the Photoshop software by the tutor during the first workshop session; they then worked independently to produce their own projects. The students were observed during the following eight weeks whilst they used the software. Reactions to this varied, some students were confident and seemed to pick up the techniques easily, and were regular visitors to the resource, while others were only seen once or twice, and seemed more

hesitant, or related that they were using their own software at home to complete the project.

### **Site Visit – City Town Moor**

This site visit involved the students and tutor walking through a very large public grassed area on the outskirts of the city, which is known locally as 'The Town Moor'. The area belongs to the 'Freemen' of the city, and has been protected from being built upon. The area is quite surreal in that it has public walkways through it, street lighting, cycle paths and a military history museum, but is also the home to a large herd of cows. The cows have freedom of access on the moor, wandering across walkways, down cycle paths and up to curious strangers. The tutor explained the history of the moor to the students, describing it as a 'strange and beautiful place'. The tutor asked the students to think about their project, and how they could use examples to illustrate how people use spaces in cities, even surprising spaces, like the town moor. The tutor related the site visit to geographical theory, giving examples of public use, pointing out the dog walkers passing by and the group of runners using the pathways. The students reactions to the moor were interesting - students who were local to the city weren't 'phased' at all by the visit, it was familiar to them, but students who had no previous knowledge of the geography of the city seemed amazed, there was laughter at the cows roaming around, interest at the different groups of people using the space and exclamation at the sheer size of such a 'wild' open space so close to the city.

#### **5.3.2 The Middle Stage**

### **Site Visit – A walk through the city – 'My Walk'**

This activity involved the students meeting the tutor in the centre of town and going on a 'guided' walk through the city. The tutor asked the students to walk through a block of office buildings very quietly and 'listen' to the sounds they heard. The tutor called this a 'sound walk'. The tutor explained that this activity would help the students 'tune in' to the sounds of the city: the cars, pedestrians, noisy pigeons, building work being carried out nearby and snippets of people's conversations as they passed by. The students



appeared both intrigued and slightly mystified by these instructions, but all proceeded to follow the tutor through the maze of office blocks, down steps, across pavements, up steps, and through alleyways. The tutor stopped the walk at a number of points: to look and touch stalactites hanging underneath a damp ledge, to read the messages and 'graffiti' on an alley wall (locally called 'the flicker wall') and to tell the students a story about the 'Vampire Rabbit', which is a (locally) famous gargoyle mounted above an office block in the Georgian area of the city. The walk ended at the entrance to a large shopping complex in the middle of the city. The area was very busy with shoppers, street musicians, stall holders and pedestrians going about their lunch-time business. Amidst this busy throng of people, the tutor told the students a story about the history of the street. The story allegedly involved eighteenth century town planners taking note of 'astrological alliances' during the summer and winter solstices when planning the route of the street through the city. The story involved meridians, invisible lines and tunnels under the city. The students were 'pulled into' the story through the tutor asking questions and encouraging the students to think about their own use of the city space and how geographical theory related to this. The students appeared engrossed in the story; they asked questions and seemed intrigued by the mixture of fictional storytelling and geographical theory. This was followed up later in class, with the tutor giving the students a map showing the 'four magical points' he had talked about. These were actual places which the students could go and find if they wanted to.

### **Carbon Footprint exercise (not assessed)**

This activity involved the students in monitoring their carbon footprint over the time period of one week, to measure the 'global impact' they had on the environment. The students were then asked to submit a photograph along with their calculation which represented their own carbon footprint. The students had to calculate: how much electricity they used, how much waste they produced, how much of it was recycled, what food they ate, where it had come from (and calculate the air miles). The students were given a formula to calculate their impact:

([http://footprint.wwf.org.uk/home/calculator\\_complete](http://footprint.wwf.org.uk/home/calculator_complete)).

All students completed the task; there was a lot of discussion in the workshops about it, in relation to working out what should be counted, and what shouldn't. The students related that they enjoyed this exercise, had found it fun, and that the personal element of the task had helped them realise the impact contemporary lifestyles have on the environment.

### 5.3.3 The End Stage

#### **Public Exhibition of final assessed work – 'Our place in the city'.**

The students were required to display their final work (photographs and their book/journal) at the end of the year at a public exhibition. Students had to prepare a stand, and stay beside their work to discuss it with the people who visited the exhibition. The exhibition was advertised widely around the university and students were encouraged to invite their friends and family. Wine, soft drinks and snacks were available. The tutor e-mailed the students to vote on flavours of crisps (apple versus orange juice, and chardonnay versus pinot grigio). The students related that this, although couched in 'fun' terms (see appendix for an example), had helped them feel part of the organisation of the exhibition and helped them 'own' it as part of their own work.

The students set their exhibition up, with all students participating. The exhibition was very busy, with families and friends visiting, along with many students and staff from the university, from both the Geography Department and elsewhere. The students talked about their work, explaining links to geographical theory, how they had developed their ideas, and what they had learnt from the development of the reflective books/journals. The students related that they found the exhibition daunting at first, but seemed to gain in confidence as the morning progressed. Prizes were given out for innovative work in different categories; photographs were taken and later published in the University magazine. The atmosphere of the day was enthusiastic, well attended; serious in terms of the work the students had produced, but fun and enjoyable as well.

### 5.3.4 Analysis of pedagogic structure

The table below summarises the tutor's constructions of the authentic activities and how these constructions relate to the tutors views of autonomy. Example learning activities are given from the module pedagogic structure.

**Table 11: Analysis of tutor data**

Views of Authenticity	Views of Autonomy	Pedagogic Structure
Authentic in relation to peoples' lives	Wanted students to develop skills of criticality	Visual material
Authentic in relation to academic discipline	Wanted students to 'see' things differently	A 'fun' environment
Wanted a 'little bit of their soul'	Wanted students to become 'independent citizens' and develop 'civic strength'	Level of expertise with digital camera not an issue
Interested in students everyday lives	University not primarily about employment but to the development of 'free thinkers' who are not 'manipulated' by the media	Assessment not tightly linked to learning outcomes
Authenticity linked to the personal	About not becoming an 'automon'	Critical and visual methodologies
About creativity	Not being manipulated by the media	End product – a book
To develop critical thinking	Free to choose choice of employment	Important for students self esteem and learning to have their work looked at by others (in the form of an exhibition)

### 5.4 Presentation of student data: Authenticity

This is the fourth section of chapter five. It presents data extracts from five participant interviews under key themes which have emerged from the data relating to authenticity. The five students have been called: Geoffrey, Gerard, Giles, Gertrude and Gwyneth.

The key themes are:

- Motivation and Engagement
- Meaning and relevance
- Pedagogy and Assessment structure

#### 5.4.1 Motivation and Engagement

##### **Geoffrey – Motivation and Engagement**

Geoffrey talked about being interested in the module because it was something 'different' and something he hadn't done before:

'It's something with a difference, that's what I've found about it. It's kind of working individually rather than just going out and writing something. It's something I've never done before'.

##### **Gerard - Motivation and Engagement**

Gerard talked about being unsure about the exact requirements of the module and what the tutor expected:

'I've got some ideas already and I think it can just be anything really. I am a little bit worried about, in terms of marking it, how xxx would see it because he can't see it from my point of view so it might come across in a way that I don't want it to, which might make me have a lower mark'.

Gerard appeared intrigued by the personal element of the module. He said he thought he might learn some new skills:

'Well it's quite interesting and is definitely very different to anything we've done before. I think there are some new skills to gain'.

##### **Gertrude - Motivation and Engagement**

Gertrude related that she is interested by the different approach of the module, and that she will be actively involved in the process, rather than having information 'shoved into her':

'I feel like the creative side is tiny because loads of knowledge has been shoved into us in the last three years. I think it's just a really good way of learning and seeing people's perception on either the landscape or the way we see things'.

Gertrude talks about her motivation for learning:

'I go away from some lectures and I'm like, 'Oh God, I don't want to think about that ever again' until the exam comes along and you've got to think about it, whereas this one I think I would like to get into more detail with things and get into it and read more about it instead of having to force myself to do it'.

Gertrude related anxiety and rather mixed feelings about the module:

'And I'll just smile...even if I'm crying on the inside. 'It's too much!' Yes, it'll be good.'

Gertrude talked about the feedback strategy of the module:

'I think it might be a step-by-step feedback process we're getting. And I feel like that's a much better idea if we did that in other modules, it'd be really good because then you know whether you're going wrong at the beginning rather than finding out at the end that you've gone wrong, which is the case quite a lot of the time. When you get your results back, you're like, 'What? I was doing it wrong? No one told me at the beginning...''.

### **Giles - Motivation and Engagement**

Giles talked of his interest in photography and how this had been a motivation for him in choosing the module. Giles talked about being very interested in the module, particularly the theoretical elements. Giles won a prize at the final year exhibition for his work on the module:

'I'm quite interested in art and photography anyway so using it, having that as a different way of doing a module interested us from the beginning'.

### **Gwyneth - Motivation and Engagement**

Gwyneth stated that she was really looking forward to the module. She stated that as it is a ten credit module, she believes it will bring some 'light relief'. Gwyneth was not able to articulate the exact requirements of the

module, but said that she was aware that it is about developing a 'book' and presenting some photographs:

'But yes, it looks like it's really interesting and it'll be interesting to not write so much but to actually photograph and analyse the images and stuff'.

Gwyneth said that she is interested and excited by the thought of starting the module. Gwyneth states that this is related to the fact that there is no exam at the end of the course:

'So yes, it's quite an exciting module and it's not like one of the dull, 'Right, you're going to sit an exam by the end of this...' So I think you do get more passionate about it'.

Gwyneth seemed pleased about the level of information and support from the lecturer in relation to the module. She stated that the fact that other people would see her work, in the form of the exhibition, had motivated her more as she knew people, other than the lecturer, were going to see her work:

'Really well, yes it's gone really well. Xxx has given us lots of information so we know what we had to do and the lectures did stop quite early on but obviously then it was down to us to organise all our stuff and he'd given us enough information and he was very easily available; you could drop him an email or pop in and stuff. During the last week a lot of people have been in and out of his office, but yes, it's gone really well.'

#### **5.4.2 Meaning and Relevance**

##### **Geoffrey – Meaning and Relevance**

Geoffrey stated that he thinks he will be able to develop skills on the module which he can use in employment:

'It's all right, yes. It's good. I think it's quite valuable because it's the teamwork side, which is good to do for when you go out into employment'.

Geoffrey could explain the requirements of the module and also the fact that it was developing your own work and ideas and presenting, and arguing for, your own ideas in an open discussion:

‘Just basically you're going to have your own ideas and take your own pictures and try to refer them to the public who comes and sees them, see if they get the same kind of impression that you're portraying in the picture. And there's a book to go along with it, it's kind of personal to you and it's got to show something that relates to you as a person, maybe something you may do or something like your life so far, that kind of thing’.

### **Gerard - Meaning and Relevance**

Gerard related being interested in the module and its personal aspect:

‘Just because it is actually about me, something to do with myself and it's kind of, like xxx says, a bit of your soul... Almost like self-discovery, kind of trying to portray yourself, in a way, which is something that's really important to me. BMX, it's my main hobby and the main thing I do, so being able to show that is quite interesting’.

### **Gertrude - Meaning and Relevance**

Gertrude talked about what she thinks the lecturer wants her to do for the module. She talked about the relevance to her own feelings. She was positive about this requirement and said it will help her show her personality and individuality to the class and the public who will see her work:

‘Because he said he doesn't care if you have a top digital camera or you use a little... It's just as long as you get your perception and the way you feel out and then...’

Gertrude related that she found it hard to ‘open up’ and reveal personal aspects of herself, which was required for the module:

'Like, I know it sounds stupid because you're just taking photos, but it was really hard because it was like, 'Right, I need to put myself...' Like, especially making a book, I had to think, 'Right, what do I need to show that's personal to me' and open up, kind of thing'.

### **Giles      -    Meaning and Relevance**

Giles stated that he would find the Photoshop skills useful. He related that he thinks the approach to the module is a different way of looking at things. He mentioned that he thinks some students have taken the course as an 'easy option':

'I think some people may have taken it as an easy option. That's the impression I'm getting, you know, messing about with a few photos. And I think it's going to be more complicated than that and I think there are higher expectations from what it's going to be like'.

Giles talked about his hopes to become a primary school teacher. He said the ideas for his project came from his knowledge of the primary school curriculum, where children's work has to be photographed. He talked about how this relevance informed his planning for the module:

'I'm going to be a primary school teacher. It's why I came. I came with that purpose. That's why I was so disappointed when I was struggling to get a place. But that was the plan from giving up work to get to this point'.

He talked about the relevance of the project to his own personal life:

'It was about my sense of place; I had pictures, some of them going back three years over the different field trips that I'd been on'.



## **Gwyneth - Meaning and Relevance**

Gwyneth seemed motivated and excited that she was able to develop a project about her own interests. The analysis does not extend to other modules or other parts/aspects of her life:

‘Yes, you have to do a little book so that’ll be about yourself so that’s quite nice, to kind of put some of yourself into it. So that’ll be really exciting. I’m not quite sure what topics we have to do it on yet but I think that comes later on. And then the exhibition; that’ll be a bit scary! Other people looking at your work! So better make sure that’s good’.

Gwyneth was pragmatic about having to get the work finished. She related the assessment deadlines to a real life work situation and said she has appreciated this aspect of the course as it has helped her prepare for working life:

‘Yes, no boss is going to say, ‘How’s it going? Are you all right?’ and it is realistic so you get it done. And they’re not going to be, ‘Right, I’ll give you an extension,’ so if it’s done it’s done and if it’s not, that’s it!’

Gwyneth found the personal relevance motivating but ‘scary’ as well. She said that some students had not put too much personal information for the very reason that other people, the general public, would be looking at their work in the exhibition:

‘It’s a bit scary having people looking at your work because normally you just hand an essay in and only the lecturer reads it, so I think it does make you put a bit more effort in knowing that your peers are going to walk around and see it. I’m not so good with the book because I think a lot of people put a lot of personal things in so it’s a bit weird thinking somebody is going to pick that up and read it’.

### 5.4.3 Pedagogy and Assessment Structure

#### Geoffrey – Pedagogy and Assessment Structure

Geoffrey could explain the requirements of the module and also the fact that it was developing your own work and ideas and presenting, and arguing for, your own ideas in an open discussion. Geoffrey stated that he thinks the assessment criteria of presenting your own work are valuable, and the fact that others see your work adds value to it:

'I think that certainly presenting the photos is quite helpful because it's not so much as like doing a piece of work then just handing it into the office to get it marked, it's that you are going to be there on the day and you can at least talk about it and if people don't agree with you then at least you can explain why you've done it that way. It's definitely a good way of assessing your work'.

Geoffrey reflected on the purpose of the assessment:

'I think he's trying to get you into a different way of thinking about different things. When you look at an image, he wants you to try to relate that to Geography, it's not just about looking at a photograph. He's trying to get you more to analyse something that you do rather than just have a look at it'.

Geoffrey related that he has found the support from the tutor helpful:

'I've had a few words with xxx just about getting support for doing the project and he's been helpful. He's always there if you need a hand and you can refer ideas to him and he'll tell you if it works and what way to approach it if it doesn't. He's certainly supportive, yes, and there's guidance there if you need it'.

Geoffrey talks about how he has found the course information posted on Blackboard to be useful:

'Yes, it was very helpful, yes, certainly when you're going through your work, you can refer back to the lecture slides and just have a look'.

## **Gerard - Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Gerard said he liked the different approach of the module, and the fact that there were no exams and fewer lecturers where he had to memorise information:

‘Well it’s definitely different and it does actually make you think rather than just memorising dates and times when things happened and numbers of casualties and stuff’.

Gerard discussed the aspect of the module for which no marks are allocated, and describes them as being useful and interesting, even though he felt under pressure due to other work commitments:

‘There are a lot of non marks, like mini topics. I think one time we have to photograph our journey to the lecture and put that together and stuff. It just keeps us busy and stuff’.

Gerard discussed how he found the structuring of tasks very useful:

‘Actually going out next week and putting the thing into practice, like, it does really help if you actually gain an experience of doing that and then getting the feedback from that’.

## **Gertrude - Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Gertrude expressed concern that she was not able to access a social networking site the students had set up for the module, and this affected her ability to take part in the learning community. She expressed dismay that she didn’t know what the discussions were about. She says this impacted on her ability to do the writing required:

‘I couldn’t get onto Facebook to start off with so it was like, three weeks; there was another girl who couldn’t get on either. They were discussing things on the group. When it came to writing the critical kind of methodology thing, I found it really, really hard because I hadn’t got the chance to look at photographs and see how people were explaining them and what was symbolic about

them and all that, so it was really quite hard for me doing the writing’.

Gertrude explained that she would have preferred there to have been more lecturers, and that she had felt ‘lost’ with the subject material because of this:

‘I feel like we should've had more lectures on it, because there are things that I just didn't understand’.

Gertrude stated that she would have liked more opportunities to discuss the ideas and requirements of the course with others:

‘And I feel like I've let myself down in that discussion that I've wrote and had to print off because if we had sat down I think that would have been better because then we could've verbally discussed things. Sometimes I feel like I can get things out better talking than I can writing it down’.

#### **Giles - Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Giles talked about the collaborative aspects of the module and setting up a course Facebook site with the tutor:

‘It was on the university e-portal as well but people couldn't access that as much. Every time someone puts any information on you get a notification and everybody in the class ended up joining the xxx site.’

#### **Gwyneth - Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Gwyneth talked about her motivation increasing because the lecturer was so enthusiastic:

‘He's always really enthusiastic and that really helps when you're learning and bouncing around and stuff!’

Gwyneth talked about her frustration with learning how to use the photography software. This was an entirely new piece of learning technology for Gwyneth. She related that it had been frustrating but good fun as well, and seemed to have been motivated by the experience:

'I really want to learn it but it's frustrating. But then I get frustrated with computers because they never do exactly what you want. But that's been fun and annoying at the same time'.

## 5.5 Presentation of student data: Autonomy

This is the fourth and final section of chapter five. This section presents the data from five participant interviews under the key themes which were used to code the data. The five students are: Geoffrey, Gerard, Giles, Gertrude and Gwyneth.

The key themes are;

- Procedural autonomy
- Personal autonomy
- Critical autonomy
- Relational autonomy

### 5.5.1 Procedural Autonomy

#### **Geoffrey – Procedural Autonomy**

Geoffrey stated that he thinks communication skills learnt on the module will be relevant to him in the workplace:

'I'd say communication is the key, especially when I'm at work, you've got to have that teamwork and support'.

#### **Gerard - Procedural Autonomy**

Gerard talked about the assessment criteria as being able to gauge what the lecturer wants for an assignment, and what will gain him good marks. He said he is worried because he cannot do this in this module:

'I've been working on it bit by bit and gathering ideas but haven't actually started putting it together until just now, which leaves me with a week or two, which isn't too bad I guess. But at the moment, even though it's a smaller module, it interests me the most so it's taking priority'.

### **Gertrude - Procedural Autonomy**

Gertrude revealed that she had dyslexia, but had not told her tutor or the University about it, stating that she felt embarrassed. Gertrude did not relate any of the difficulties she had in completing the work for the module to her dyslexia:

‘Well, when I was younger I was classed as borderline dyslexic. To me, it's embarrassing. Even though I know I shouldn't be embarrassed about it, I've never been to see anyone about it but I do have difficulties with spelling and... If I see a word and I can't break it down to build it up into a word, so it's like, it's hard’.

### **Giles - Procedural Autonomy**

Giles talked about the way he plans his work, explaining that he has family commitments at home and, because of this, he has to plan his time very carefully:

‘Yes, so I thought I would do it sooner rather than later instead of leaving it at the last minute’.

Giles explained that he thinks too much time could be spent on work which is not really relevant, and said he understands that the project is not about producing the perfect photograph, but about presenting the idea behind it. He said he is quite instrumental in his use of time because he has to be because of his family and travel time:

‘I can see you getting trapped into spending loads of time manipulating the images, because there are so many other things to do at the same time’.

Giles talked about coming into university, explaining that the cost made him organise his time efficiently:

‘I'm don't come in here unless I have to because there's a cost attached to it just driving in so I have to be careful when I do come in and have my day planned so I can get everything done in one

go. But I tend to do most of the stuff myself through the last three years’.

Giles talked about learning Photoshop for the first time and how time consuming he found this:

‘And it’s quite interesting but a lot of it is time-consuming. But it’s the first time I’ve used Photoshop so you’ve got to get into the way of using the programme itself’.

### **Gwyneth - Procedural Autonomy**

Gwyneth talked about the different ways in which she had to prepare for the module:

‘Yes, because it’s a very different assessment so that makes you prepare differently, like it’s not just writing, it’s also practical things and you have to plan it more, you’ve got to get the materials and make sure your camera and your photos are going to print all right and all stuff like that; so it’s a bit more stressful because it’s not the routine of normally just printing an essay off’.

#### **5.5.2 Personal Autonomy**

##### **Geoffrey – Personal Autonomy**

Geoffrey said he finds it helpful to work with others to discuss ideas and develop his own thoughts:

‘I think it was to do with the workshop we had on Wednesday when everyone worked as a group interpreting the image on the board. It was like, you were coming up with ideas and people were suggesting things and you were looking at it yourself and thinking that you never thought about it that way’.

Geoffrey planned to use examples from his own life for the project:

‘It’s going to be good. And my book as well, I’m thinking of doing maybe something to do with ‘a life so far’, so maybe tracking my life from when I was born to now, looking at different things that

have happened and putting them in the book just to say how things have changed over time’.

Geoffrey discussed the importance of communication skills:

‘I think communication when working in groups. Teamwork is always important. It's given an opportunity to do that where some other modules don't allow it. So I think that's improved people's communication skills and just listening to other people and still having your own ideas’.

Geoffrey reflected on his performance and the ways in which the module had helped him in this process:

‘I think it has because I think in the past I haven't always looked at how I could've done things differently because sometimes you just, you don't realise for yourself. But I think certainly helping working within a group, I think you feel you can identify weaknesses within that, like, maybe what you could've said but didn't’.

Geoffrey related that he was surprised to discover new skills on the module:

‘I think that's what's surprised me because at one point we were just asked to jot down the ideas and then refer them to other people and as you go down the list you're adding different things and you're kind of surprised how one thought leads to another’.

### **Gerard - Personal Autonomy**

Gerard related that the relevance to his own interest has been useful, and the different structure of the lectures refreshing:

‘There seems to be less lectures, but that might have just been because I was enjoying them more, and because we took a lot of trips out, like the walks and things, just walking through the city centre and being shown different things and being taken out to a



field and being asked to portray something in a certain way and taking pictures and things. It was definitely a lot more interesting’.

Gerard stated that he was excited about the opportunity to show his work to people outside of the course:

‘Yes, I’ve never done anything like that before. I’m quite excited. I think I’ll be quite proud to display what I’ve got. Actually, an essay just gets marked and stuck in a cupboard, but this one, people get to come along and see what I’ve done. So I get to show off what I’ve done’.

### **Gertrude - Personal Autonomy**

Gertrude related that she feels anxious about receiving feedback and said she feels this is important to her learning and progress through the module:

‘Yes, but I don’t know if we’ll get feedback where he’ll tell us things. I don’t know if that’ll help us, like, reassure myself and make myself more confident because that’s what I probably need’.

Gertrude talked about learning how to use the photography software:

‘So we’re all getting a chance to use XXX, which is good because some people had never used it before and it is quite complicated’.

Gertrude related being stressed about the work for the module. She explained that she left the work until the last minute and didn’t have time to plan properly:

‘And then the week before I hadn’t done my dissertation and I was like, ‘Oh my God. Next week’s Geophotography, I need to start thinking about it.’ But by that time, I didn’t have time to think about it. So I think, if I’d planned my time and had better time management, I would have found the whole thing a lot easier, because I found it quite hard and I’ve been so stressed out and I’ve never been so stressed out with a module as much as I have with this one before’.

Gertrude related being critical about her work, stating that she felt very anxious about having her work on public display. Gertrude explained that she was extremely 'stressed' and would have preferred to have completed another dissertation rather than this module:

'With this work, loads of people are going to see it and are going to ask about it and I was having a heart attack every day when I thought about it! 'No, no, I can't do this!' I was really self critical about it. I would have rather I'd done my dissertation again than do this. But I think that is a big part of leaving it to the last minute. I tried now to but it's just, it happened to be like that'.

#### **Giles - Personal Autonomy**

Giles reflected on his time management during the module and his performance in relation to academic progress:

'You can't appreciate it at the time because there's so much going on and so much intensity, particularly in the last couple of months. It's quite full on'.

#### **Gwyneth - Personal Autonomy**

Gwyneth reflected on the use and purpose of the assessment. She said it would enable her to have happy memories of university life and to think about what she learnt at university:

'Kind of to realise what you like really and what you don't, not just what makes you 'you' I think. That's the impression I've got, when he said about the little books kind of being about you in the third year of University, what you've learned and what you know about the city and what you know about just yourself, which is really nice I think, because he says that some people come and ask for them back and stuff because it kind of represents what you're like at the end of university life'.

Gwyneth talked a lot about how she views the tutor's reasons for the module. She believes the tutor wants them to have fun. No reference was made to

geographical theory or other modules. Gwyneth stated that as it was 'only' a ten credit module, this had been instrumental in her choice, as she had other bigger modules to undertake during this period:

'I think it's really nice and he just wants us to have a bit of fun, to enjoy a bit of Uni! I picked this partly because I did a 10-credit module on the first semester so I had to kind of match it up. I know it's going to be hard work and it's a lot of practical work. It's not so much theory like I'm used to, it's like, 'You've got to go out there and do stuff' but that's good, a bit of variety and I just want to get something fun, a bit of light relief.'

Gwyneth talked about being able to reflect on her experience on this module:

'Yes, fine. I don't really review my progress as I'm going along but I've kind of reflected on what this module has meant and stuff like that'.

### **5.5.3 Critical Autonomy**

#### **Geoffrey – Critical Autonomy**

In relation to developing his ideas, Geoffrey talked about using his home town to develop ideas for his project. He was enthusiastic about this:

'I could maybe put bins in the front of the Hilton Hotel and Photoshop stacks of rubbish in front of it, different things like that'.

Geoffrey was able to relate this to geography theory:

'Well, when they are in a particular space and time, maybe how that area was once looked at but put it in the modern kind of world, so using like all streets that were once deprived and the way they are now'.

Geoffrey discussed the development of his learning during the module:

'Being a lot more critical as well about certain things. It gets you to think rather than just accept...'

## **Gerard - Critical Autonomy**

Gerard talked about being able to look at information in a new way, from a different angle. He talked about 'freedom' and being able to develop his work his way without being constrained. He links this to other areas of the course, and says the skills developed will help him with his dissertation:

'Mainly just looking at things in a different kind of way, like, we were interpreting a picture today and just everyone's different opinions came into it and just looking at things a lot differently, looking at the environment and things in a different way'.

Gerard discusses his experience of self directed learning:

'Just thinking for yourself and thinking differently and just putting together a piece of work with no real guidance. It's actually you going out there and doing some learning yourself and actually achieving something that you've done. It might help with the dissertation because it's kind of similar to that in a way, how it's an idea you've made and you are doing it. So it might help in terms of management to help with that really'.

Gerard discussed the opportunities he has had to develop his work without too much structure in terms of guidelines; he sees this as a positive move:

'There's not as much research into books and journals and things like that. It's all your work and it's not based on... Like, every other essay I've ever done is based upon someone else's work and learning from someone else, mainly taking their ideas and trying to put them across as your own, whereas this really is your ideas and you putting it across how you want and what you want to put across, so in that respect it's very good, a different approach'.

Gerard discusses feeling that he has control over his work:

'This is the only one I've really got control over because it's something I'm interested in and something I get to pick and I actually know what I'm doing, rather than being told what I have to

do and that it has to be done by a certain time. Whereas this is already in my head and it's just being developed and I am making new discoveries, which is good, but it's not stuff that I don't want to find and it's not a chore; it's something that I am actually enjoying doing, which gives me a lot of control, especially as it can be anything I want it to be'.

### **Gertrude - Critical Autonomy**

Gertrude said that the creative elements of the module will help her think differently. However, she is unsure if this can be related to other modules:

'I'm not 100% sure if it'll help in other modules, but it might do because if I'm thinking about things differently then I'll probably be able to think about it in other modules'.

Gertrude described the approach of the module as different. She described finding the process difficult. She talked about 'switching her creative brain' on:

'I think it was definitely different, my approach to this module than others, but I think it was more because of the creativity kind of thing. You don't really need your creative part of the brain to switch on when you're doing essays and stuff like that, so I think, yes, it was quite difficult I thought, in the end'.

Gertrude was not able to explain what she thought the lecturer was trying to achieve through this module:

'I have no idea.... I know that sounds ridiculous but, I don't know, I don't know what he wanted us to achieve really. It's completely different to the other modules that we've got, so even if he said, 'What have I achieved?' I wouldn't really know how to answer that. I'm sorry, I don't know...'

## **Giles - Critical Autonomy**

Giles talked about the module requirements as a different way of looking at things. He said he is interested in the meanings and being able to portray these using images rather than the usual text-based assignments:

‘Well it’s just a different way of looking at geographical issues and environment issues rather than the normal essay assignment and report, exam, so it’s working looking at something through images as opposed to written text’.

## **Gwyneth - Critical Autonomy**

Gwyneth related her experience on the module to other subject areas:

‘You kind of think about it when you’re just walking around and stuff, ‘Oh I need to do my book, what am I going to do with that?’ and I linked it to my dissertation which was on recycling’.

Gwyneth related that she had enjoyed having control over the choice and pace of work for the module:

‘Oh yes, massive choice, it’s great that it’s so individual and you can put your own views down. So yes it’s been a lot of control over what actually goes in’.

### **5.5.4 Relational Autonomy**

#### **Geoffrey – Relational Autonomy**

Geoffrey stated that he finds it useful to work with others to problem share. Geoffrey stated that he has learnt a lot from listening to other people in the group:

‘Communication and you learn a lot listening to other people and you get the ideas and you think of, like, if it’s better than yours you can agree with them...’

### **Gerard - Relational Autonomy**

Gerard initially related that he likes to work alone, but later he said that he enjoyed the opportunity to discuss his work with others:

'I generally work a lot by myself. I find it hard to concentrate when I get with a group of other people, like we'll talk about other things and it's better just being on my own really.'

Gerard relates that opportunities for group discussion have been beneficial to his learning during the module:

'We talk about it and maybe see how different people saw the work and, you know, I think it's just interesting how we have the group discussions where everyone's ideas get aired and you kind of see how people think differently and it opens your eyes a little bit I think, which is good.'

Gerard stated that working with and sharing ideas with other students was useful in helping him develop his own ideas:

'But yes, just being out in the field and stuff, being able to talk to the students and you can't really do that in a lecture theatre when you're listening. But when you go out and put it in to practice, you actually get to talk to them and say, 'How would you do this? How would you do that?' and bounce ideas off each other, rather than just getting the lecturers' set of ideas, so that was really helpful.'

### **Gertrude - Relational Autonomy**

Gertrude explained that she enjoyed working in a group, but when the issue of shared marks come in, she was very 'wary' as she thought others might gain credit for her ideas:

'I normally work by myself but if its group work, I work fine in a group, I don't mind it and I quite like it. But it's when shared responsibilities come along. When you know it's an individual piece of assignment that you've got to hand in, I don't really like

people latching onto my ideas when it's got to be my thoughts and things and then they always end up getting better marks than me, so... I'm like, 'Oh well, I'll not tell them my ideas...' But for this, I don't really mind. Everyone's going to have basically similar ideas I think. But I don't know.'

Gertrude talked about the positive elements of working with others, and that the format of the seminars has enabled this to happen, stating that she enjoyed sharing ideas:

'Yes. And I think we're getting to interact a lot more with other students because the workshops are making us listen to other people's ideas and sit down and talk to other people...'

Gertrude related that she found the experience of working collaboratively useful in developing her understanding of the module material:

'It was really good because if someone else pointed something out you could see it, but it changed the whole idea of the photograph and it was really good. I really do enjoy working in groups where you can talk and listen to other people in the class and get their ideas because it fills you with more knowledge as well and you feel like you know more when you come out.'

### **Giles     -   Relational Autonomy**

Giles talked about working by himself, and explains this is because he has work and family commitments, because it costs money to drive into University, and that his finances have been stretched by leaving work and coming to university:

'I tend to work mostly by myself. Like, I was in for nine o'clock today, until one, and I work while I'm in University because I don't have as much opportunity at home, so I tend to plan to do my work when I'm in here'.



Giles then talked about the positive aspects of being able to discuss ideas with students when he has had the opportunity:

‘It’s easy just if you, you know, it may not be something major but if someone else is doing it at the same time then they might just have a short cut. I think it’s a good idea having everybody together’.

### **Gwyneth - Relational Autonomy**

Gwyneth reported that she really enjoyed working with other students and had found this experience very helpful:

‘I found the workshop was really good, talking in groups, so it wasn’t so much him talking to us; we were interacting with each other and trying to analyse the image and stuff, so that was really good’.

Gwyneth talked about the development of a learning community, and using this experience to be able to develop her own points of view:

‘For me, I like working with other people. I find it much better if you talk about it, ‘Oh this person said this and he argued this’ and if you talk about it together, it kind of synthesises the information a bit so you kind of can put your points of view down’.

### **Interviewer: Did you join the social network site?**

‘Yes’.

### **Interviewer: And how did you find that?**

‘Yes it was good, it was a good way of, kind of a more modern way of communicating so I didn’t really write anything on the wall or anything but it was interesting to see what other people thought and stuff’.

In this instance, Gwyneth relate’ that she found the on-line communication useful for sharing ideas. Gwyneth also mentioned that she found it useful to

talk to other geography students who she would not normally meet due to modularisation requirements:

‘It’s just been a nice change to normal I think, because normally BA Geography don’t normally mix with the Environment lot’.

## 5.6 Summary of student experiences in relation to key themes of authenticity and autonomy

The table below summarises the student experience on the Geography module in relation to their experiences of the authentic learning task. The data is summarised under the three themes of: motivation and engagement, meaning and relevance and module structure and pedagogy.

Figure 12: Analysis of student data. Geography: Authenticity

<b>Student experiences of authentic task</b>
<b>Motivation and engagement</b>
Students intrigued by 'something different'
Some students not sure of requirements
Students interested to learn new skills
Students keen to be actively involved
Students reported anxiety about producing work
Students liked not having an exam
Students motivated by the final exhibition
Some students saw the module as an 'easy' option
<b>Meaning and relevance</b>
Module viewed as developing skills for work
Students used activities to develop arguments and ideas
Students found personal aspect very meaningful
Students liked that task involved their own ideas
Students viewed meeting deadlines as good skills development for employment
Exhibition viewed as valuable – students related that others seeing your work made tasks meaningful
Students reported that tasks about making you think, not just about memorising dates
Students made relevant links to Geography theory
Student stated that personal element sometimes scary – in terms of revealing yourself
<b>Structure and pedagogy</b>
Tutor support viewed as very helpful
Students liked the walks and extra-curricular min-topics
Students liked the 'step-by-step approach to feedback
Mixed view of Face book site and Photoshop- appreciated by some but frustrating for others
Some students liked fewer lecturers whilst others felt 'lost'

The table below summarises the student experience on the Geography module with regard to the development of autonomous learning behaviours. The data is summarised under the four key themes of: Personal autonomy, relational autonomy, procedural autonomy and critical autonomy.

**Table 12: Analysis of student data. Geography: Autonomy**

<b>Student experience in relation to the development of different types of autonomy</b>
<b>Personal</b>
Production of book helped students to reflect
Personal aspect of book production helped students reflect on future employment choices
Some students found revealing personal aspects of their own lives intrusive/ difficult
Students reported enjoying participation with others but appreciated marks were on individual basis
<b>Relational</b>
Students liked to work with others and problem share
Group work helped develop communication skills
Students enjoyed group discussion and sharing ideas
Discussed work with students from other disciplines
<b>Procedural</b>
Students reported skills developed linked to workplace
Students said interest in the task helped planning
Some students said they sometimes felt 'trapped' into spending too much time manipulating images
Students reported different type of preparation, they had to find materials and plan ahead more
<b>Critical</b>
Students related task to Geography theory
Students related interpreting information in a new way
Students developed work without feeling constrained
Students linked work to other modules
Students demonstrated developing criticality
Students talked about 'freedom' to develop own opinions
Students talked about 'thinking' rather than 'just accepting'
Students appreciated 'learning for yourself without too much guidance'
Students enjoyed developing their own ideas
Students reported enjoying having control over the task

## **5.7 Constructions and perceptions of authenticity**

This section follows the format of the previous chapter, and examines the views and definitions of authenticity from both the tutors' perspective and the student experience. The section examines the relationship between experiences of authenticity and the (potential) demonstration of learning behaviours which can be described as autonomous.

### **5.7.1 Tutor constructions of authenticity**

The tutor introduced the module to the students as 'wanting a little bit of your soul'. The module was described as a way in which students could evaluate their experiences at University and start to think about that experience in a critical manner. The tutor emphasised that they would be looking at the

hidden meanings of pictures and images, and would explore the world of semiotics. The tutor stated that the task was to develop a story book which linked the 'everydayness' of student lives to geographical theory. This would be achieved through a critical exploration of semiotics and geography theory. The tutor explained that the module was about creativity and individuality. The tutor reassured the students that he was not concerned with technical expertise with a digital camera, but that he was interested in the students' perceptions of the world and how they interpreted these perceptions. The tutor stated that the important issue was to engage with the critical and visual methodologies. The tutor, in interview, related that this perception of authenticity was to develop creativity and criticality. The tutor wanted the students to become 'independent citizens', to develop 'civic strength' and not be 'manipulated' by media imagery.

Students were free to choose the content of their book. The only requirement was that it related to them individually, and the book was related to geographical theory. The guidelines or the format of the book were quite specific, detailing size and format. Lectures were 'traditional' in nature, with the tutor giving a PowerPoint presentation at the front of the class. There was little interaction during these sessions. Four formal lectures took place, followed by two site visits. Students were then required to work alone, using the Photoshop software in the workrooms to develop their projects. The tutor was very approachable, and informed students that they could 'knock on his door anytime' in relation to ideas for developing their project, or advice on what to do next. The main orientation of the project was the emphasis on the personal nature of the assignment. Whilst the students were free to pick their own project, the guidelines about size, structure and format were tightly prescribed. The students were not required to formally work together in groups to develop their project; access was given to the workshops where students could use the Photoshop software on the computers. In this sense, the project was conducted alone. The tutor and one of the students set up a social networking site, which a number of the students joined. Students could post examples of their work and discuss progress. However, a number of students said they could not access the site and felt 'left out' because of this.

Material was also placed on the university e-learning portal, which the majority of students accessed. There were a number of additional, un-marked projects which students were asked to take part in, which added to the workload. The majority of students completed them but related that they were unsure of the connections to the main assignment task of developing their booklet. The atmosphere of the module was about individual, personal experience, working predominantly alone after the initial block of lectures and site visits.

#### **5.7.2 Student constructions of authenticity**

The students' perceptions of the authenticity of the task seemed to be very personally meaningful in nature. The main response was in relation to the individuality of the assignment task and their experiences as an undergraduate student. The tutor emphasised the critical nature of examining the semiotics in photographs and discussed linking this theory to students, but this didn't appear to be a principal understanding for the students in relation to the task. A number of students reported that they thought the tutor 'just wanted them to have fun' and 'wanted to them to think about their experiences in university' – with the emphasis on the social aspect of their experience, not the academic experience.

The very personal element of the module seemed to generate anxiety for some students; they related feeling nervous about 'revealing' themselves through the work which was required for the assignment. Students did not seem to work together to develop their projects. There was no formal structure in the curriculum to develop this, but students reported chatting to other students about Photoshop, if they found themselves in the workshops together. The students enjoyed the exhibition, and all reported finding this meaningful and personally relevant, although some stated that they felt anxious about having their work on display.

### 5.7.3 Tutor and student constructions of authenticity and the development of autonomous learning behaviours

The diagram below shows the relationship between tutor and student conceptions of authenticity, and the (potential) development of different types of autonomous learning behaviours.

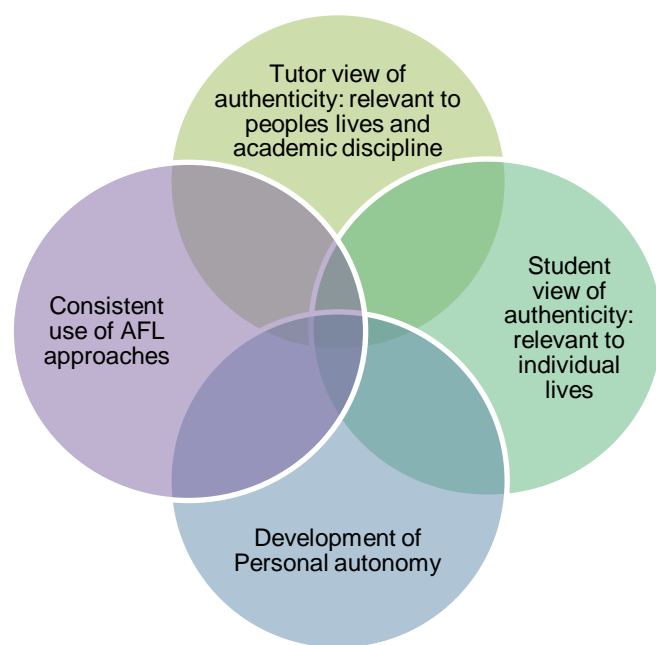


Figure 13: Constructions of authenticity and their relationship to autonomous learning behaviours - Geography

## 5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented data extracts from the second case study, through key themes relevant to the research question. This chapter is the second of four building blocks for chapter eight, which presents a cross analysis of findings from the four case studies. The authentic activities, for the purpose of this study, were defined as 1) authentic in relation to real life/world settings, involving a photographic project based in the students' community and 2) authentic in relation to being meaningful to peoples' lives, involving the production of a book or journal based around students' individual experiences of living in the locality. The next chapter, chapter six, presents data from the third case study. This module was based within the History Department. The module presents research findings from authentic learning activities which were defined as 1) authentic to an academic discipline and 2) authentic in relation to real life/world settings.

## Chapter Six

### The History Module

The Chapter is divided into eight sections:

**Section 6.1** provides an introduction to the module. Each section presents data from the modules, in the form of direct quotations from tutors and students. Data findings are presented and interpreted through the key themes outlined in the coding framework.

**Section 6.2** outlines the structure of the module, the authentic learning activities which were used and tutor comments on the module.

**Section 6.3** gives details of the lectures and Seminars – the ‘doing’ phase as what happened during the twelve weeks of the module, including student and tutor responses. This section is divided into three parts: Introductory (lectures 1-4), Middle, (lectures 5-8) and End (lectures 9-12).

**Section 6.4** provides evidence in the form of data extracts from five students, presented through key themes of authenticity. This section presents data extracts from participants under key themes a) Motivation and Engagement b) Meaning and Relevance c) Pedagogy and Assessment Structure.

**Section 6.5** presents findings, with comments, from the five students in relation to the themes of autonomy which were used to code the interviews, under the key themes a) Procedural autonomy b) Personal autonomy c) Critical autonomy d) Relational autonomy.

**Section 6.6** presents a cross analysis of student data for authenticity and autonomy.

**Section 6.7** discusses the constructions and perceptions of tutors and students in relation to authenticity. The section examines the pedagogic approach employed by the tutor and the students’ response to this approach.

**Section 6.8** Concludes the chapter.

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the third case study of the research. It is the third case study in the data reduction process and one of the four 'building blocks' of the four modules which form the basis of chapter eight. The presentation of the data in this format makes the data analysis process transparent, and provides evidence of the rigour of the data collection and analysis process. The chapter can 'stand alone' in terms of the findings in relation to the particular discipline of History and it also acts, as above, as a 'building block' to illustrate and provide evidence for the demonstration of a learning model, or framework, presented in the discussion.

This module was chosen as a case study because it included authentic learning activities which were defined as:

- Relevant to an academic discipline: History
- Relevant in relation to real life/world settings: site visits and the development of a debating society

This chapter presents findings from observations and interviews with five students who were participating in the module. The chapter also includes reflections from the module tutor, including his thoughts on the purpose of the module and what he hoped to achieve through his pedagogical approach.

## 6.2 Structure of the module

This section explains the structure of the module, including learning aims and objectives and the teaching and assessment strategy. Data extracts from a tutor interview are included, which give the tutor's perception of the module purpose and pedagogic strategy.

The module was delivered in the second semester, over a twelve-week period. The contact time was divided between a one hour lecture and a two hour seminar.



The tutor described the module as follows:

‘A broad, thematic survey of medieval thought and culture, designed particularly for students with parallel interest in medieval history, literature and the visual arts. The aim is to develop students understanding of the history of ideas as a sub-discipline of historical studies. This involves extending student’s grasp of general theoretical and methodological issues and addressing the particular problems of studying thought and culture’.

#### **6.2.1 Learning aims and objectives**

- A knowledge of selected themes in medieval thought and culture
- An understanding of the nature of intellectual history and cultural history as distinctive varieties of inquiry
- An understanding of some major concepts and issues associated with the 12<sup>th</sup> century renaissance and late 14<sup>th</sup> century crisis
- An enhanced ability to deploy primary and secondary sources in response to historical problems
- Skills of analysis, interpretation and citation in written form

#### **6.2.2 Teaching and assessment strategy**

Assessment for the module was through a 3000 word summative essay. Sample essay plans were provided, but students were required to develop a question of their own, negotiated with the tutor. Students were required to submit an essay plan and then meet with the tutor, where detailed feedback was given on the plan. This constituted the formative feedback element of the module. The formative feedback given was designed to:

‘Evaluate learner’s ability to research, to problem solve and to develop transferable skills’

(Module Handbook)

Formative feedback was designed to focus on these skills as well as on the historical knowledge of the primary source materials exhibited in the assignment; this included the compilation of a bibliography of items for

discussion. Formative assignments were intended to enable learners to engage with the whole syllabus and not just the topic they had chosen for their essay.

The tutor incorporated the following authentic learning activities into the structure of the module:

- Monty Python DVD
- Use of primary source material ('thinking like historians')
- Use of modern day relevant examples
- Debating society
- Group presentations
- Visit to Durham Cathedral
- Seminars to practice presentations
- Visual and textual original artefacts available on the University e-learning portal
- Anonymised former essays to gauge standard
- Visit to learning resource to look at equipment available for presentation

The tutor placed high emphasis on the development of learner presentation skills, and the building of skills developed at level four. The tutor stressed the value employers placed on presentation skills, and explained to students that he had structured the assessment to include formative feedback as a way of allowing students to develop such skills. All students were required to give a presentation either individually or as part of a group. All presentations were peer reviewed in the first instance, using anonymous questionnaires; this was followed up with individual or group verbal feedback from the tutor. The centre point of the module was seminar discussions of medieval primary sources in modern versions or translations, including some literary texts and visual materials. The focus on authentic primary sources was intended to encourage students to:

'Develop strong competencies in handling the basic raw materials of historical scholarship'

(Module Handbook)

The use of these activities was intended to allow students to develop criticality and to engage in historical debate. The module guide supplied weekly text extracts for the seminar sessions, along with a bibliography. The use of context setting and thematic lectures gave a frame of reference for seminar discussions and tutorials. Learners were given an extensive reading list of key texts and additional material. Learners were given a framework of standard assessment criteria.

**Table 13: Lecture and seminar programme – History**

Lecture and Seminar Programme		
Date (Week Beg)	Lecture	Seminar
<b>Week 1</b>	Introduction to the module	Introduction to the module
<b>Week 2</b>	The Authority of the past	The Re-awakening of Europe I
<b>Week 3</b>	Renaissance in the 12 <sup>th</sup> century	The Re-awakening of Europe II
<b>Week 4</b>	Kingship in the High Middle Ages	The Structures of High Medieval Culture I
<b>Week 5</b>	Microcosm and Macrocosm	The Structures of High Medieval Culture II
<b>Week 6</b>	The Church in the High Middle Ages	The Structures of High Medieval Culture III
<b>Week 7</b>	Theology in the High Middle Ages	The Structures of High Medieval Culture IV
<b>Week 8</b>	Vernacular Culture in the Late Middle Ages	The Crisis of Late Medieval Culture I
<b>Week 9</b>	Orders of Society	The Crisis of Late Medieval Culture II
<b>Week 10</b>	Chivalry	The Crisis of Late Medieval Culture III
<b>Week 11</b>	The Ideal Woman	Crisis and Renewal I
<b>Week 12</b>	The Christian life in the Late Middle Ages	Crisis and Renewal II

### 6.2.3 Tutor commentary on the module with data extracts

This section consists of data extracts from a tutor interview, and has been divided into sections which cover: Assessment, Engagement, Authentic Learning Activities and Skills.

The tutor commented on the assessment strategy:

‘The assessment consists of one formative exercise and one summative exercise. The formative exercise is a bibliographical study and essay plan, which will be the basis for the essay itself,

which is a summative exercise, the summative exercise at the end..’ It’s an opportunity as well for us to do feed forward...’

The tutor explained why he felt that a formative assessment strategy would be helpful for the students’ learning:

‘By giving students advice which can then go into the summative assessment, so that if we think that there are important items, for example that the students haven’t come up with, we can point them in that direction. If they are proposing something which we think is totally impossible, then we can prevent major disasters happening. That’s ‘feed forward’ because it’s advice given now that the students can act upon in the future’

The tutor explained the process of negotiation of the formative assessment strategy:

‘On occasion what happens is that if a student is struggling with a particular topic, what we can do is to say, ‘Actually, perhaps your approach is aligned to a slightly different kind of essay question, so let’s change the essay question.’

The tutor discussed what he hopes the students will gain from the module:

‘If you can actually get people taking charge of their own topic, even to the extent of changing the essay questions with permission, then that ought to help. When students come to me and say, ‘Well does it mean this or does it mean that?’ and I always tell them, ‘You decide.’

The tutor commented on the student’s use of primary source material during the module:

‘One of the comments that I was able to pass on, was that: ‘I hope you’ll be using primary source materials more fully’ and some people took that message on board.’

The tutor discussed the trip to the Cathedral and what he thought the students gained from it:

‘One of the problems of the topic that I teach is that students usually do not encounter it in everyday life. It has a classroom existence but not an immediate presence outside of the classroom, so that actually taking them to a 12th century site, one of the best preserved 12th century sites in England certainly, and giving them that kind of experience of a real 12th century flourishing institution that’s still there, I think that, quite apart from whether they learnt anything from the trip, I think the experience is the key thing, but it made Medieval Thought and Culture real in a way that perhaps my module guide can’t’.

The tutor discussed students’ skills development in relation to their future careers:

‘One of the key features of assessment is that it tests and enhances skills that will be used in other circumstances in their careers, extensively. When we are getting them to design and manage a project, when they do research, learning to be critical in their approach to evidence’.

The tutor related that he believes self awareness is an essential skill students should develop, with particular reference to their future employability:

‘I would say if we can get our students not only to develop the kinds of skills that I’ve been describing but to be aware that they’ve developed those skills, as individuals taking responsibility for their own actions and work, and we can then say to them, ‘Well you have these skills so let’s go and present them to an employer.’

The tutor discussed the development of presentation skills (which are formatively assessed) in relation to employment:

‘I put a heavy emphasis on good presentations, formatively assessed group presentations, and what I say to them repeatedly during the course of the year is, ‘Learn these skills in a supportive and fairly civilised environment where the worst that can happen is you get a bad bit of feedback. Don’t learn these skills when your job depends on it.’

The tutor reflected on student reactions in relation to engagement during the *Monty Python* DVD shown in the first seminar:

‘I think there was probably an element of surprise. Whether they actually got the message I was trying to put across, well, I suspect some of them did and some of them merely took it as an entertaining and soft way into the module. I suspect in a way the message also took a while to sink in.’

The tutor described the pedagogic approach used in the module:

‘I think it’s very important that the process of learning should, in so far as possible, be a cumulative one, so that it’s not ‘Done that; let’s move on,’ but it’s, ‘We’re doing this week. Oh, and that resonates with what we’re doing last week’ so that there’s a kind of enrichment process rather than just a kind of accumulation process. And sometimes we refer to it as a layering process.’

### **6.3 Lecture and seminar activity**

This section describes the module’s programme of lectures and seminars over a twelve-week period. The section covers the teaching approach, the assessment strategy and the authentic learning activities which were utilised. The section is divided into three parts, the Introductory Stage (lectures 1-4) the Middle Stage (lectures 5–8) and the End Stage (lectures 9-12). The introductory stage details four authentic learning activities, the middle stage details three authentic learning activities and the end stage details two authentic learning activities. This categorisation reflects the timing of the

main activities within the module, and has been structured this way for ease of reading. In some ways, though, it is an artificial separation, because the teaching and learning strategy was designed by the tutor to interweave and overlap throughout the module. The activities as a whole represent what the tutor called a 'holistic approach to teaching and assessment'.

The authentic learning activities the tutor used are detailed in the next section and include:

- Monty Python DVD
- Use of primary source material ('thinking like historians')
- Use of modern day relevant examples
- Debating society
- Group presentations
- Visit to Cathedral
- Seminars to practice presentations
- Visual and textual original artefacts available on the University e-learning portal
- Anonymised former essays to gauge standard
- Visit to learning resource to look at equipment available for presentation

#### 6.3.1 The Introductory Stage

The tutor introduced the module to the students, giving details from the module handbook of the areas to be covered and the requirements for the summative assignment at the end of the course. The tutor did not spend too long on the requirements, stating that they would return to the requirements in a couple of weeks. The tutor also stated that he wanted to begin with a discussion of the methodological principles which historians use to explore history. The first methodological principle is to unpick, or unlearn our stereotypes and prejudices. The tutor explained that he was using the *Monty Python* DVD to illustrate the points he wanted to make.

#### Monty Python

The first seminar was introduced with a *Monty Python* DVD – *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. The film is a parody of modern pre-conceptions of what life was like in the Middle Ages. It portrays people rolling around in the mud as a parody of media representation of the middle ages. The tutor used

images from the film to explain the prejudices which exist about the middle ages. The tutor used this as a term of reference in the film, to discuss standards and political movements in society. The tutor related that it is unhelpful to use twenty first century meaning to interpret the middle ages. The tutor explained that we can't use these terms, as they are culturally and historically specific, and explains that we have to talk about medieval thought and culture within the frames of reference of medieval culture. The DVD is used to assist students in understanding and developing theoretical arguments in cultural history. The tutor was explicit about this in his discussion with students when the DVD was finished.

### **Use of primary source material and original texts ('thinking like historians')**

This section was introduced in the second half of the session. The tutor asked the students to divide into two groups and examine the original texts from Chaucer's 'General Prologue' (Bloom, 1988). The tutor explained that he wanted one group to evaluate what the extracts tell us about medieval culture. The second group were asked to evaluate what we need to know about medieval culture to understand the text. The tutor encouraged the students to read the text looking for clues about medieval life; he explained that this was about 'becoming a historian'.

A lively discussion ensued, with all students participating. The tutor then re-convened the two groups to have a group discussion about the two texts. A discussion followed, the tutor linked the discussion back to the *Monty Python* DVD, and uses an example from the film to illustrate the political belief of the time. The tutor then introduced the students to a historical theory of interpretation – the hermeneutical circle, whereby the theory of interpretation is a circular process. The students all take notes at this point, and there is a buzz of interested chatter in the room.

The tutor opens a discussion about 'Abelard', who was a 12th century cleric. The tutor asks the students to think about Abelard in terms of the 21st century. The students take time to read the text, and then offer suggestions about Abelard:



‘Well, if you think about it, in our terms, Abelard was a bit of a celebrity, like a film star.’

One student says he can ‘see through’ the text as he thinks Abelard is:

‘Full of himself. He’s supposed to be a cleric, humble, quiet, he’s anything but.’

The discussion then moved to 21st century celebrities, and the tutor used this to relate back to characters from the 12th century, asking the students if they shared any characteristics. This makes the students laugh; they think up their own examples and share them with the group.

The tutor used slides of 12th century paintings to explain the theory and symbolism of medieval culture. The tutor then goes on to use local place names in place of historical names to make the lectures relevant to the students. The tutor told the students about the ‘miracle plays’ in English Literature, where scenes from history are re-enacted in contemporary settings, for example the birth of Jesus is set in Yorkshire with local people playing the shepherds, and local dignitaries playing the wise men. The tutor explained that these techniques act like a virtual reality device – they allow you to ‘see’ things and experience things from a different context.

The tutor closed the session by concluding and re-affirming that the study of history is evidence- and enquiry-based, encouraging the students to become enquiring researchers. The tutor explained the work for next week, a role play exercise where students will be required to develop a debating society.

The tutor used this activity to encourage the students to ‘think like historians’ and to ‘become’ a historian. The tutor was explicit in this understanding with the students, and refers to the group as ‘historians’ on a regular basis, for example to open or to expand a discussion, he would say ‘Now, historians, I would like you to consider...’.

### **Use of modern day relevant examples**

The tutor encouraged the group to discuss some particular 21st century values, for example: creativity, individualism, materialism and consumerism;

in small groups. The tutor argued that these values are 'un-medieval' - he encouraged the students to stand back from contemporary culture and values and to think about the medieval world as the people in medieval culture might have seen it. A discussion about the student's contemporary experience developed, and the group talked about conventions in society, with the tutor using modern day examples relating to cinema and television to develop the discussion. The tutor used these examples to ask students to think about medieval convention and to explain the importance of evidence and the use of authentic texts.

### **Debating society**

This activity involved a role playing exercise which centred on a debate based in the time of the twelve century renaissance, in relation to the Roman Catholic Church. The two debating sides were the traditionalists versus the modernists. The students had to divide into the two groups, and develop a debate based on medieval classical philosophy. The tutor explained to the students that the task's aim was to be 'adventurous and fun'!

The tutor introduced the session and the students divided into two groups: Innovators and Traditionalists. The tutor asked that people become involved. The tutor explained that the task was a team effort, that they should support each other, decide on the argument and help the team, stating that:

'This requires goodwill on your part.'

The tutor set the scene by telling the students that the room was now in the 12th century and they have a 'famous issue' to settle.

The traditionalists (six students) started by reading the module handbook. There was some confusion and little initial interaction. The tutor then joined the group. The tutor gave the students some 'pointers' regarding the values of the traditionalists, and this started the discussion and the previously quiet students started to offer opinions and suggestions.

The Innovators (seven students) had started off themselves, and a lively discussion was progressing as they were working together and offering contributions and suggestions. The tutor joined the group and asked what ideas they had. This interaction developed the discussion, drawing quieter students into the discussion. The tutor then asked the group to decide on their roles in the argument.

The tutor asked the 'Innovators' to start, and introduced the debate with himself in role as a cardinal. The innovators started the discussion, with the traditionalists joining in. There were two main speakers at the beginning of the debate. Slowly other students started to join in. The tutor made some suggestions to both sides; this seemed to encourage the students, and the debate widened and more students joined in. When the debate faltered the tutor offered suggestions (in role as a cardinal) which moved the debate along. The debate then came to an end. The tutor brought the students back to the present day. The tutor explained that debates like this did not happen in the 12th century, the discussions would not have been so open or so public, but snippets of the debate, held between the individual groups, have survived in original textual documents.

The tutor explained to the students at the beginning of the activity that the purpose of the session was twofold: 1) to develop their understanding of the theoretical arguments of the traditionalists and progressives in the 12th century, but also 2) to develop their team working, communication and public speaking skills. The tutor related to the student's that these skills would be useful to them not only for their assessment, but in the future when they would be looking for employment.

### **6.3.2 The Middle Stage**

#### **Group presentation**

The tutor opened the session by starting a discussion about the following week's work – students were required to do a presentation, which could be anything appropriate to the course. The tutor stated that the presentation was not mandatory and was not assessed. The tutor encouraged the students to work in groups, explaining that the rationale for the task was:

‘To develop your skills, to work collaboratively.’

The tutor then discussed the type of skills students would need in employment, as a rationale for the presentation. He directed the students to the reading list in the module guide and asked the students to read at least one author in relation to their presentation for the following week. The tutor related that this reading would be used as a basis for the students to develop a discussion amongst them and talk about what they have found out. He also stressed that this was ‘peer learning’, and they would be learning from each other, using original historical texts. The following week (Seminar Four), the tutor introduced the session by asking what texts people had read. The tutor asked the students to divide into two reading groups and asked the students to share what they had prepared. The two groups discussed their research with each other; the tutor asked if they would then share across the groups. This was done hesitantly at first, then more students joined in and a discussion followed.

The tutor explained the importance of working in a group and the skills the students would learn from this. He explained the benefits of learning from each other, and how the students could learn and develop in a:

‘Community of practice.’

The tutor then returned to the group presentation, explaining explicitly why the presentation was important in the development of skills: for employment, for public speaking, for planning, research and teamwork. The tutor then explained that he would take the group to a learning facility in the university, where they could use the PowerPoint, video and other facilities to develop their presentation.

### **Visit to Cathedral**

This session was used as a basis for a visit to a cathedral.

The tutor explained that a primary methodological principle in historical research related to empirical evidence. The tutor showed the students slides

of a medieval Cathedral in northern England. The tutor invited questions from the class, asking what the pictures portrayed about medieval culture. Student responses included: aesthetic beauty, power, spirituality and money. The tutor then introduced the second methodological principle of historical research, this related to the importance of placing events within time and context. The tutor again used the slides of the Cathedral to illustrate that the cathedral was 'huge' – demonstrating that religion in medieval life was 'huge' and a massive influence on the society and culture. The following week the class visited the Cathedral, where the group were given a guided tour by an official guide. As the group moved around the Cathedral, the tutor made linking comments back to the module, asking questions of students, for example what the Cathedral revealed about medieval life. The students were allowed access to parts of the Cathedral where the general public were not allowed, particularly an inner chamber which had been used in the making of the *Harry Potter* films. This resulted in great delight from the students, many of whom recognised the room. It was noticeable that some students were talking to students they had previously not interacted with, and the visit seemed to act as a vehicle for the students to make friends as well as to learn about medieval life and culture.

### **Seminars to practice presentations**

This session focused on a lecture about knights and the code of chivalry. The tutor brought the discussion up to present day with a discussion of the 'Knights Templar', Foucault's Pendulum (Eco,1998) and the various conspiracy theories outlined in Dan Brown's (2003) 'Davinci Code'. The tutor asked if this was an authentic experience of the knights of the 12th century. The students became engrossed in this discussion and a lively debate followed. The tutor ensured that all students were included in the discussion by asking carefully worded questions which encouraged discussion. The tutor wove stories into the seminar, of Arthurian romance and tragedy; he gave the students examples which linked back and forth across the curriculum. The session felt like a story, with the narrative moving backwards and forward between modern day and the middle ages. The students listened intently and took notes. On another occasion, the tutor said that the

session would be focusing on Chaucer. On this occasion he then stood in front of the class and told the story of 'The Knights Tale' (Bloom, 1988) a medieval romance, with no notes, prompts or PowerPoint. The students sat and listened intently. The plot was very complex and the tutor remembered all the names and twists and turns of the plot. The students appeared 'hooked'. The tutor then asked the students to look at the evidence that the 'Knights Tale' was not what it first seemed. The tutor asked the students to look at the original text and examine two extracts and look at the similarities. The discussion developed into a critique of Chaucer, and the irony in the poetry. The text was accessed at different levels, each level building on the other, with the tutor guiding the students to examine and analyse each layer. Throughout the session, the tutor made little jokes and used wordplay, which made the students smile.

### **6.3.3 The End Stage**

#### **Visual and narrative available on the E-Learning Portal**

The tutor informed the students that he would place original text on the university's e-learning portal. This would include original pictures, photographs and texts depicting medieval life and culture. The students could access this material to develop their discussions and prepare for their assignment.

#### **Anonomised former essays**

The tutor began one session with a discussion of potential essay questions and discussed the criteria for the essay with the student group. The tutor explained that the students were required to prepare a critical bibliography to demonstrate that they have completed the work for the essay. He explained that an essay plan was also required, and that this constituted formative assessment in preparation for the summative assessment, whilst also explaining the meaning of formative and summative assessment to the students. The tutor explained that he would give individual feedback on this. The plan was to be one side of A4 and the essay 3000 words. The tutor explained that he would get anonymised copies of former essays for the students to look at, to help them gauge the standard and the type of

discussion required. The group responded very positively to this. The tutor went through the essay, pointing out why the feedback had been written, the rationale for it and why the feedback was justified. The group discussed marks and the reasons for each section of marking. The tutor then moved to a translation of an original text and started to analyse the text, relating it back to the marked essay. The group started to discuss the original text, looking at the essay to see why the marks had been allocated.

### Visit to a learning resource in the University

The group visited a learning resource in the University and were shown the facilities available for their presentation; the tutor suggested that they do something in relation to their essays so that they were not 'doubling up' on work. The students seemed very enthusiastic and keen on the idea. The tutor made it explicit to students that they were 'co-investigators in historical analysis'; he invited discussion and was encouraging to students.

#### 6.3.4 Analysis of pedagogic structure

The table below summarises the tutor's constructions of the authentic activities and how these constructions relate to the tutors views of autonomy. Example learning activities are given from the module pedagogic structure.

**Table 14: Analysis of tutor data: Mediaeval Thought and Culture**

Views of Authenticity	Views of Autonomy	Pedagogic Structure
Authentic in relation to academic discipline	About students making their own judgements	Participatory, partnership style
Authentic in relation to real life	Students 'taking charge' of their own topics – being in control	Formative assessment: Feed forward. Essay plans and regular timetabled tutorials
Linked to development of skills, emphasis on employability	Students having confidence in their own judgements	Negotiating essay titles
Use of primary sources about 'becoming a historian'	About developing self awareness	Tutor calls the students 'historians' when communicating. Develops a sense of community and academic scholarship
Visit to cathedral to enable students to experience a real sense of history and place the module in a social context	Explicitly says – about developing student autonomy	Group presentations, debating society
Likes the element of surprise the students experience when the Monty Python is used. States that this is useful for engagement and motivation and to assist students in considering alternative approaches to the analysis of historical periods	About development of critical analysis and making judgements based on evidence. About taking responsibility for own actions. About self assessment. 'Tests and enhances skills that will be used in other areas' – about transfer	Curriculum viewed as a cumulative process, talks about enrichment and 'layering' process. Use of range of authentic learning activities, medieval pictures, primary sources, DVD's, external visits.

## 6.4 Presentation of student data: Authenticity

This is the fourth section of Chapter six. The section presents data extracts from five student interviews under key themes relating to authenticity. The five students have been named: Harriet, Harry, Hazel, Henry and Herbert. The key themes are:

- Motivation and Engagement
- Meaning and Relevance
- Pedagogy and Assessment Structure

### 6.4.1 Motivation and Engagement

#### **Harriet - Motivation and Engagement**

Harriet seemed keen to start the module and talked with enthusiasm about the style of the lecturer. This seemed linked to her motivation and engagement.

‘I just think XXX makes it sound interesting because he brings his, like, methods, like how he introduced, like he started the seminar with the DVD and it kind of got you more focused and interested. XXX just kind of, how approachable he is, I think that’s important as far as how you teach... It’s good how he has that approachability, yes. And you feel confident that he’s going to help.’

#### **Harry – Motivation and Engagement**

Harry seemed motivated by the idea of the trip to the cathedral, and being able to see the evidence of history ‘first hand’.

‘And with going to the Cathedral, which is what we’ll be learning about in our seminars, I think that will actually really help because you’re going and actually seeing what they would have seen.’

#### **Interviewer: What did you think of the Monty Python video?**

‘It was funny! I liked how he turned it off and explained the things that they were saying. It’s always nice to have things like that’.



Motivation was linked to enjoyment and the unusual for Harry. It seemed to act as a hook for him to engage in the session.

The tour guide's knowledge about the Cathedral seemed to impress Harry, and his motivation toward the subject seemed increased by this.

'She was good; she knew everything. Like, stuff that XXX didn't know, she knew about, everything to do with the cathedral.'

### **Hazel - Motivation and Engagement**

Hazel described being interested in the subject and said she was looking forward to starting. She described being interested in the use of original sources and said she found this relevant and it made the history interesting. She mentioned that this approach helped her make up her own mind about history and people's experiences.

'I found it really good, really interesting. I said before how it was a different approach to history rather than just looking at books, you can look at artefacts and old books and things and make up your own mind about the people in the society they lived in, and it's been really interesting.'

### **Henry – Motivation and Engagement**

Henry was very interested in local history and talked a lot about local place names linked to Roman times. Henry seemed interested by this and stated that he was looking forward to the module. Henry linked the visit to the Cathedral to his local knowledge; this seemed to be relevant to him and engaged his interest. Henry mentioned that he was interested in becoming a teacher. He did not talk explicitly about being a historian. Henry demonstrated interest in the *Monty Python* DVD and the visit to the cathedral.

'That's why the Normans built quite a lot of castles, it wasn't just for security, it showed they were in control.'

## **Herbert – Motivation and Engagement**

Herbert related that he thought the enjoyment of the module was related to the lecturer's popularity, or style. He seemed to be looking forward to starting:

'I think people are enjoying it. The way XXX communicates through his lectures, even all the jokes he cracks and he gives you like a twinkle out of his eye and it keeps your attention and I think a big part of why the module is quite successful...'

Herbert stated that he enjoyed the module, the way it was structured and the seminar style:

'I think it's better than I thought it would be. I really have been able to get to grips and immerse myself in what the material is and how it's provided; and his lecture, his seminar styles as well, it really appealed to me and it's by far my favourite module, and I'm not just saying that. It's genuine.'

### **6.4.2 Meaning and Relevance**

#### **Harriet - Meaning and Relevance**

Harriet discussed her motivation in relation to the trip to the Cathedral:

'I really enjoyed it. I need to go back. Yes, it was nice to see what you're learning about, with your own eyes. It makes it a lot more interesting. And when you can see it, like, when you're learning about it in the future, you can actually picture it. The guide was really good. She knew everything.'

Harriet seemed impressed by the knowledge of the tour guide. Harriet related that she found the trip useful in helping her understand her studies. She also stated that she found the experience of the debating society useful in helping her develop confidence:

'It was a good confidence booster because I'm not usually that confident. If you prepare enough then you feel confident to speak and it was all taken in fun, so it was good.'

Harriet stated that she enjoyed using the original texts and that she found it interesting, but couldn't articulate why it was useful:

'I like using the original texts, the language and stuff. It's like it gives a bit of a different aspect and makes it more interesting.'

### **Harry – Meaning and Relevance**

Harry found the relevance of using original pictures useful and this seemed to link to his levels of motivation and engagement:

'If he says something, you can't really imagine it that well, but if you're shown a picture of, say, the Grand Cathedral or something then you see it in context, it makes it real.'

### **Hazel – Meaning and Relevance**

Hazel described looking forward to the cathedral trip, relating that it would help her analyse her work. She also described liking *Monty Python* and being aware of the satire in the programmes. Hazel did not explain how this satire related to the history module.

'I'm looking forward to the visit to the cathedral, that's going to be interesting. And I love cathedrals, they are beautiful. And then just to sort of look at it and analyse it a bit more, is going to be really good.'

Hazel described using the trip to help her make links with the theory of the course:

'I think being there and seeing it is completely different to just being told about it, and I think when you actually go and see the evidence of the 12th century and of the impact of medieval Europe and the feudalism and everything, that's when it really hits you because you just think, 'Wow!' for it to still be here now, it's amazing...'

Hazel described how the skills learnt on the history module we will be useful to her in her intended future career as a primary school teacher:

'I just think the whole learning process that you get, helps you. It gives you the sort of skills that you need, the sort of analytical skills, the dealing with lots of information skills. The more and more you talk, the more comfortable you get. The ability to speak in, not 'formal' but in an educated manner... Informed. An informed manner. And something like that is useful for teaching.'

### **Henry – Meaning and Relevance**

Henry related that he saw the relevance of the module in relation to his future career:

'I'm more interested in the teaching side of things. If you want to work in a museum or if you want to work in culture of heritage department of a council or something, these are the kinds of skills you're going to need. And it's all relevant ultimately.'

### **Herbert – Meaning and Relevance**

Herbert expressed a lot of interest in the original source material of the module. He said he found this useful and relevant in thinking about how people lived in mediaeval culture. Herbert talked about enjoying the *Monty Python* film, saying that he had not realised the satire involved in the film before it had been used to illustrate the stereotypes of mediaeval life:

'I did get to grips with the source material... I like getting into the mindsets of people, how they did what they did and why they did it. I didn't realise their humour was anything more than slapstick or sketch based, but it's absolutely fascinating. And we do have that impression of the Middle Ages, that they were living in squalor and all that sort of thing.'

Herbert seemed to describe himself as a historian, and said he enjoyed becoming immersed in the subject. Herbert related that he really enjoyed the visit to the cathedral and had found the visit relevant; allowing him to imagine what it would have been like to live in mediaeval culture:

‘Oh, I loved it. Absolutely. Oh yes, you could feel yourself in that time. Because the Cathedral hasn’t changed in the amount of years it’s been built. It hasn’t got electric lights... it’s still as it was and you really could feel it. And then the next week when we had a talk about the Battle of Neville’s Cross and the monks going to the top of the tower, having been up there, myself, I mean, it’s an awfully long climb.’

Herbert discusses the ways in which the authentic learning activity has helped him develop his understanding of the module material:

‘You could imagine monks stood there beside you, looking out over Neville’s Cross, because you can see it from there. ... Not just the ecclesiastical aspects of the course, but the political aspects with the Prince Bishop and his fights with the Abbott, and William’s army and all that stuff; it really just added new dimensions to my understanding of the course. But then to be there physically as well, takes it to a whole other level.’

Herbert made links to other aspects of life, in this instance work as a journalist, and described the skills learnt in history as useful in this profession:

‘And the ability to use primary sources. Obviously useful for something like journalism for example, and to a deadline as well.’

#### **6.4.3 Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

##### **Harriet - Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Harriet talked about the approach the tutor had in lectures, and seemed to appreciate the structured aspect of the session:

‘It was good how he kept going back over it and kind of emphasising his point and it made you understand more of what he was trying to get at.’

## **Harry - Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

The popularity of the lecturer seemed to play a central part in Harry's motivation and engagement:

'The teaching is really good; it's more interesting than some of the other teachers. It's a good style of teaching.'

**Interviewer: Can you break it down at all? Why is it better or different?**

'I don't know... Everyone seems to find XXX lectures more interesting. I'm not sure if it's because everyone likes XXX. But yes, it's good.'

## **Hazel - Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Hazel describes the tutor's enthusiasm as a great motivation:

'XXX has been really helpful with stuff like that. He really teaches the subject well because I think... because he's so enthusiastic, like, it just rubs off on you and it just makes you sort of really interested in just the tiny, minute details of it all.'

Hazel reflects on her use of the feedback from the course:

'So I know what I want to put in the essay and I've used quite a lot of sources and books and things, so I'm quietly confident but I want to talk the plan through with XXX of course. It gives you little pointers to put you in the right direction, just to have that feedback is nice, because when you just do the essay, you hand it in and you just think, 'Oh I hope I've done it right...''

Hazel comments on the ways in which the use of authentic original sources during the module had acted as a motivation:

'That's why I like XXX course so much because it's just a step away from the monotonous book reading, because you can actually deal with the sources.'

## **Henry - Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Henry expressed enjoyment of the module. He stated that he liked the tutor's teaching style, and seemed to have a liking for the tutor, even commenting on his popularity. Henry stated that he appreciated the structuring activities and had used the strategies to develop his work:

'There's a great reading list at the back. It's very extensive. There must be thirty books there, just that one week eleven you know, and you've got maybe twenty there and everything's all set out and development stuff. It's really good.'

Henry discusses the support from the module tutor in relation to developing his own learning strategies:

'I've been to see XXX for the tutorial and he's recommended some books out of the list here, and there's a lot of support there and it's just a case of getting down and doing the reading and writing down what needs to be written down.'

## **Herbert – Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

In relation to the structure of the lectures and seminars, Herbert described the 'building blocks' of the module:

'Every week links back to the last in some way, it's a continuation.'

Herbert was positive about the feedback he received on the module:

'And I went and saw XXX about that and he gave me a list of things to think about, and a book to get, which I haven't been able to get hold of... yet. But I will! So that was really useful, to go and sit and have a chat with XXX about that.'

In relation to a question about feedback, Herbert related that he found this a useful process:

'If I've gone down the wrong path then that'll be useful in telling me. If I've gone on the right path but he wanted me to change direction slightly, that'll be useful.'

## 6.5 Presentation of student data: Autonomy

This is the fifth section of Chapter six. The section presents data extracts from five student interviews under key themes relating to autonomy. The five students have been named: Harriet, Harry, Hazel, Henry and Herbert. The key themes are:

- Procedural autonomy
- Personal autonomy
- Critical autonomy
- Relational autonomy

### 6.5.1 Procedural Autonomy

#### **Harriet - Procedural**

Harriet explained how she used plans to help her with essays:

'I found it much easier having to do a plan first and the bibliography so you know what books you're going to use. Because it's already kind of structured in your mind, that you've done the hard part and you just have to answer the question really.'

#### **Harry - Procedural**

Harry was able to say that he wanted good grades and he recognised that he could transfer the skills from the history module to other areas:

'I just want to achieve as much as I possibly can really. I want a decent grade obviously and I want to be able to take the skills that I've learnt from there and use them somewhere else'.

Harry stated that he had not left enough time to complete his essay, but was able to describe how he planned his work and make plans to structure an argument:



'It was just that mine was too much like a plan and not enough like assessing each book. That might have been because I left it until quite last minute, so didn't get a chance to do all the books really'.

### **Hazel - Procedural**

Hazel described using a spider diagram to manage her work and to think about concepts. Hazel relates that the actual physical activities involved in the module have helped her relate the theory to practice:

'I put things in a spider diagram, when I can see it in front of me, like, I'm more visual and active and I like to be talking about it and like to be actually doing it rather than just sitting.'

Hazel described the essay plans as being useful in gauging whether her work is concentrating on the right areas, and the feedback as useful in helping her evaluate her work:

'This year with the essay plans, it's put more stress on us because we never had to do it before so we've had to get all these plans in and you have to do all the reading before you can, a month before the deadline is even due in, and it is useful. In a sense, it can be a bit unnecessary when you think, 'Oh I've got a few months. Why are you putting all this pressure on us to do it?' but it's nice to be able to have that feedback.'

### **Henry - Procedural**

Henry was a mature student and expressed concern about working long hours driving a taxi and being able to get his work done for the module. Henry explained his organisation strategies on how he managed his work. He appeared very focused and organised, and clear about this direction when finishing University (he wanted to be a primary school teacher). Henry described working long hours at a part time job, and this represented difficulties for him in planning his work:

'I work a lot of hours. Difficult just trying to balance'.

## **Herbert - Procedural**

Herbert talked about his essay planning, stating that this was something he had always done. He talked about managing his time and that if he did this successfully; it helped to ease his stress:

‘I think he’s given some pretty good essay titles. It’s just an in-depth essay plan and I do essay plans anyway, I always have. Once you’ve got the plan, then the pressure is off your back’.

Herbert was able to describe his planning and preparation for essay writing in detail. He planned word count and allocated time to each section of the essay. This allocation of time was described as very important to Herbert.

### **6.5.2 Personal Autonomy**

#### **Harriet - Personal**

Harriet was able to reflect on her experiences at University and think about what she needed to do to manage her work in the second year. Harriet was able to develop a critical analysis of the types of sources she would need in this module e.g. more primary sources:

‘I think I’ll look through the book that XXX mentioned in the module guide. What I didn’t do last year, and I wish I had, was looked at more journals and different sources that are out there that are available to us. I did have the chance to but I didn’t get into it as much last year. More like primary sources.’

Harriet was able to relate her experiences on the module to her future working life:

‘I would say out of all the modules I’ve done this year, I like this aspect of history, cultural history and I’d like to do it further and that might be my expertise if I were a history teacher.’

#### **Harry - Personal**

Harry did not seem clear about his future career plans or in his decision to take the Medieval Thought and Culture module:

‘Yes, second year. I don’t really know what I’m planning on... I don’t even know why I’m on the course really, I just found it interesting. I haven’t got any aims as yet...’

### **Hazel - Personal**

Hazel described the tutor’s enthusiasm as motivational and encouraging whilst also describing the seminar/lecture sequence useful in having the opportunity to develop ideas and talk with others. Hazel described finding the formative feedback useful in essay planning:

‘Sometimes it’s a bit hard to grasp at first, but once you’ve had a few lectures and you’ve talked about it a bit more and looked at your, like, books and more excerpts or whatever, you begin to realise and you can see how medieval society thought about religion.’

### **Henry - Personal**

Henry could reflect on the skills he had learnt from the module and related them to his future career:

‘You do have to do a bit of research and have to put the effort in and I think it’s been quite difficult, I found that quite difficult but I’ve persevered and I’ve read bits and pieces and tried to fit it into other bits that I know already. All in all, it’s a good module, it’s just difficult.’

When asked what he thought he had learnt about himself during the module, Henry was able to articulate his thoughts:

‘About myself? That I need to plan better, read more, and try to put away distractions. It’s hard when you’re trying to balance Uni with your home life and work life. It is very difficult. So it’s really a case of saying, ‘Right, this is study time so if I’m resting then I can study then’ and it’s planning it out.’

Henry was able to reflect on his participation in group discussions:

'I tried to restrict myself to answering three or four times per seminar, and that's it. Because I don't want to be always talking.'

### **Herbert - Personal**

Herbert talked about his previous experience at a music school and how lonely he had felt there. He related this to his experiences of making friends, and how difficult this had been for him. Herbert said that he enjoyed the opportunity to mix with other students and have debates and discussions as this helped him formulate his own thoughts. Herbert talked about the need to plan his work more this year, and that he was interested in post-graduate study:

'I think the trip will be a good bonding thing.'

### **6.5.3 Critical Autonomy**

#### **Harriet - Critical**

Harriet stated that she had used the module to develop independent research skills. She talked about being a historian and using original sources. She was able to relate her experience on this module to other subjects she had studied:

'You just go into it in more depth this year and you've got a lot more information and more ideas to pick up on yourself and research things that interest you. So I'm feeling quite confident about the essay and am quite excited about starting writing it because I'm actually interested in the subject so I don't really mind writing it.'

Harriet discussed her ability to use learning materials across different modules:

'I suppose I've learnt that, well I kind of already knew that I like to bring in aspects from other disciplines and literature. I like to bring that into arguments.'

### **Harry - Critical**

Harry recognised the importance of transferable skills:

‘I will be able to use what I’ve learnt in other places’.

### **Hazel - Critical**

Hazel talked about writing essays and putting her own opinion into the work. She linked the authentic learning to imagining how people lived in mediaeval times, and describes finding evidence and using this to formulate her own opinion:

‘You can sort of look at something and analyse it yourself. It’s nice just to refer back to primary sources as well, it helps you sort of think about how the people felt and thought in that time. It’s hard but it’s good.’

Hazel described using the authentic original sources as a means to develop her own ideas about the module and being able to articulate this in her essays. Hazel described the tutor’s enthusiasm as a great motivation:

‘I’ve always liked about XXX course, because we’ve worked with the sources and things and it’s more of a hands-on approach to history. You can actually look at it and be able to say, ‘Well I think this’ and then you can argue your point whether you agree or disagree with any particular historian. It’s hard at first because of the old English language and it’s just once you get used to that, you are fine.’

### **Henry - Critical**

Henry was able to make critical links with the playing of the Monty Python DVD to the critical analysis of the middle ages, and that the DVD was highlighting the stereotypes of the middle ages:

‘Well the point he was making with that, he was showing that your preconceptions of medieval life are totally wrong. For example, you don’t think people that make mud pies built the Cathedral. I

think that was the point he was trying to illustrate and I think he illustrated it very well.'

### **Herbert - Critical**

Herbert described the way in which the course structure had helped him in his learning:

'The titles are very centred around what we've been taught. Sometimes, you pick up a module guide and see the title and think, 'We haven't... There's not even a lecture on that!' and that's self-learning as well. And I quite enjoy that to an extent. But XXX you can almost follow them down in terms of the lecture, to an essay, lecture to an essay...'

Herbert discussed finding the structured activities useful in the module:

'So that was... I think it was my favourite module. I like an element of being self-taught but I like somebody to back it up and to make sure I'm going in the right direction, to give a lecture so I know what to do.'

Herbert talked about his experience of studying other modules and linked these experiences to learning autonomy:

'The other modules I'm doing, it's a little bit too self-taught. There's no lecture as such. The group do a presentation and then the guy takes it further and then we have to look at our own... He doesn't provide sources for us, he provides questions and we have to answer them ourselves. Whereas I have learnt from that module, I haven't learnt as much as I'd like to have.'

#### **6.5.4 Relational Autonomy**

### **Harriet - Relational**

Harriet talked about the ways in which her friends helped each other with academic work, and described a developing community of practice:

‘Just if like, someone’s found an interesting quote or interesting paragraph in a book or something, and they share it. Or someone didn’t really understand them saying if someone for whatever reason, missed the lecture, I don’t know, keep them up to date.’

Harriet seemed to do much of the work for the module alone. She did join in group activities, and states that she enjoyed the debate, but this seems to have been primarily used as a means to gather other opinions then to work alone at put in the essay together, rather than any collaborative venture:

‘Well I liked quite a few of the essay questions so there was quite a big choice there for me to be able to go off and do by myself and look more into it. But also, with the way it’s structured, we could do group work as well, which was the debate and the seminar work, because it’s good to get other people’s opinions as well. You could bring that into your essay I suppose, if they make a good argument.’

### **Harry - Relational**

In relation to the seminar where the tutor showed pictures and diagrams of mediaeval life, Harry enjoyed the discussion with classmates and appeared to find this useful:

‘I thought it was a really good technique to not only show what he was talking about but to make us speak out in class about the different ideas, because everybody bounces off each other, discussing it and by listening to other people and stuff, your ideas become more.’

Harry saw the fact that he didn’t know other students as a positive thing; it gave him the opportunity to make new friends and develop ideas with new people:

‘Last year I knew everybody but this year the classes have changed so I’m in with people that I don’t really know very much.

And maybe that's a good thing because it makes us socialise more with new people'.

In response to working with others to plan essays, Harry preferred to work alone on this task:

'It's mainly individual when you're doing an essay but we've done a couple of group tasks, that debate thing. So that worked out right in the group.'

In relation to the debate which the tutor had set up for the group to take part in:

'Yeah, we were the traditionalists and the progressives who were arguing that they should use new thought and that we were arguing they shouldn't. For our group, we hadn't prepared as much as the other group, XXX sort of helped us. Yes, it was pretty good.'

### **Hazel - Relational**

Hazel described working alone to complete her essay, but enjoyed working with others to share ideas and formulate opinions before starting to write. She described working with other students as a useful experience and also that working with others was useful for developing ideas and exploring areas which she had not thought of previously:

'When it comes to actually doing the essay, I tend to work more on my own because you've got so much reading to do and it's easier for you to plough through it yourself than work as a group, but I think without the discussions that you have, you wouldn't be able to, like, you would probably be a bit more narrow-minded. So by talking through, it sort of opens your eyes to a few more approaches that you could take to the question.'



### **Henry - Relational**

Practical work commitments /concerns were an issue for Henry, and seemed to affect his ability to be able to take part in the group at times:

'I can remember reading up about it because I had to read for the next week. I wonder if I actually missed the lesson but did the reading. I can remember doing the reading for it and then... Oh! Yes, I remember why I wasn't there. I had a problem with the taxi. Had to put a new radio in.'

### **Herbert - Relational**

Herbert stated that he enjoyed working with others to share ideas, but was also keen to point out that he was an 'individual' and that all students in his group had different interests and approaches. He mentioned that no-one initially knew each other on the module, as they had not been taught together before. Herbert said that the Durham trip was a good way for the students to get to know each other, and they could now help each other with the work for the module:

'We go to the library together, we read, look at essay questions.'

Whilst Herbert related enjoying working with others, he pointed out that students' also worked individually:

'We don't do the same questions. We are individuals as well as a group.'

Herbert described liking to work with other students, but mentioned that time constraints often got in the way of being able to meet up. Different timetables were mentioned as a block to being able to get to know others and develop a community:

'I just think it's probably time-based, I think we all left it a bit late and so we put ourselves under too much pressure.'

Herbert discussed the difficulties that arose because of timetabling:

'We don't all do the same modules. Or even if we do, it's not timetabled the same.'

Herbert describes staying in touch with students from the previous year:

**Interviewer: You don't see the same people much?**

'No. It's been quite nice because I'm meeting some new people. But we still have the original crew from last year, stayed together and we keep in touch with regular texts and Facebook and stuff like that. We don't physically see each other as much'.

## 6.6 Cross analysis of student data for authenticity and autonomy

The table below summarises the student experience on the History module in relation to their experiences of the authentic learning task. The data is summarised under the three themes of: motivation and engagement, meaning and relevance and module structure and pedagogy.

**Table 15: Analysis of student data. History: Authenticity**

<b>Student experiences of authentic task</b>
<b>Motivation and engagement</b>
Students motivated by Monty Python DVD, they related finding it 'unusual and funny'
Students found the trip to Durham motivating, they found the 'first hand' experience relevant
Students engaged by the participatory style of lecturer
Students liked the scholarship –linked to identity of becoming a historian
Students appreciated the 'layering' of the curriculum
<b>Meaning and relevance</b>
Students found the trip to Durham very relevant
Students related that the Monty Python DVD helped link theory to practice
Students found local relevance of trip personally relevant
Students found references to employment meaningful
Students liked being called a 'historian', this promoted meaning and self esteem
Students liked using the original sources
Students found the debating society made culture meaningful
<b>Structure and pedagogy</b>
Students enjoyed opportunities to co-constructing knowledge
Students liked the participatory curriculum
Students enjoyed opportunities to develop own learning
Students liked the group presentations because there were no marks attached

The table below summarises the student experience on the History module with regard to the development of autonomous learning behaviours. The data is summarised under the four key themes of: Personal autonomy, relational autonomy, procedural autonomy and critical autonomy.

**Table 16: Analysis of student data. History: Autonomy**

<b>Student experience in relation to the development of different types of autonomy</b>
<b>Personal</b>
Students were aware of the skills they had developed
Students reported feeling valued
Students related being able to self assess
Students related skills development to different employment options e.g. journalism and teaching
<b>Relational</b>
Students stated they felt part of a learning community of historians
Students said that the trip to the Cathedral was useful for making friends and developing a learning community
Students reported that the group presentations and debating society helped to develop problem solving and critical analysis skills
<b>Procedural</b>
Students related that essay plans helped develop planning and time management
Students said primary sources helped to develop critical analysis
Students related that research skills were developed through using primary sources
Formative feedback structure helped develop student study skills
<b>Critical</b>
Students linked critical analysis to using original primary sources
Students related use of primary sources helped to develop problem solving skills
Students demonstrated critical development from independent research skills
Students aware that they could use skills developed during the module in other modules
Students developed own opinions based on 'scholarship' and 'becoming a historian'

## 6.7 Constructions and perceptions of authenticity

This section examines the constructions of authenticity from the tutor's and students' perspectives. It examines potential relationships between students' experiences of the authentic learning activity and the potential development of autonomous learning behaviours.

### 6.7.1 Tutor constructions of authenticity

The tutor presented the module to the students as a means to develop critical thinking within a disciplinary structure. The tutor referred to the students as 'historians' when talking to them and emphasised the development of a professional identity as a historian. The tutor placed great emphasis on the use of primary sources, relating that original sources were authentic to the discipline and would provide the means for students to engage critically with the literature. The tutor also related many aspects of

the course to professional life and skills required for employability. The tutor was explicit in his remarks about developing communication and teamwork skills for employment through the development of the debating society and through interaction during site visits. The tutor emphasised to the students that the trip to see the cathedral would make this period of history 'come alive' and would place their learning in a social and political context.

The tutor negotiated essay topics with students and was transparent about his reasons for doing this, relating to the students that the process of developing an essay title, doing the research, writing an essay plan and gaining feedback on it were all useful skills, not only for developing a critical understanding of the module but for developing skills for employment. The tutor used a *Monty Python* DVD to introduce the module to the students. After the initial surprise (and laughter) the tutor was again explicit in explaining to the students the reason for using the DVD – to enable the students to examine alternative viewpoints on medieval life and develop criticality. The overall atmosphere of the module was about transparency, negotiation, a strong disciplinary ethos and lots of opportunities for students to work together and develop ideas and alternative viewpoints through discussion and collaboration.

#### **6.7.2 Student constructions of authenticity**

The students stated that they felt they were part of a learning community of historians. They stated that although they would not necessarily move into employment situations working directly in the historical field, they were aware of the usefulness and applicability of the skills they had learnt whilst studying the module. They reported feeling valued and part of a 'team'. The students found the site visit to the cathedral useful, and the overall finding was one of placing the module in a context and understanding the reasons why it was important to use original texts to 'get behind' the preconceptions of medieval life. The students stated that the visit had also helped them bond as a group, and had provided opportunities to get to know students from other modules. The students found the use of the debating society useful for developing their ideas and examining alternative viewpoints. They reported enjoying using the original sources and found them relevant and meaningful. Students also

reported enjoying the participatory style of the module as it gave them a chance to develop their own ideas and ‘co-construct’ historical knowledge. The students stated that they liked the scholarship ethos of the module, they enjoyed being called ‘historians’ and related that they felt this gave them an identity and framework within which to develop critical thinking.

### 6.7.3 Tutor and student constructions of authenticity and the development of autonomous learning behaviours

The diagram below illustrates the relationship between tutor and student constructions of authenticity and the development of learner autonomy.

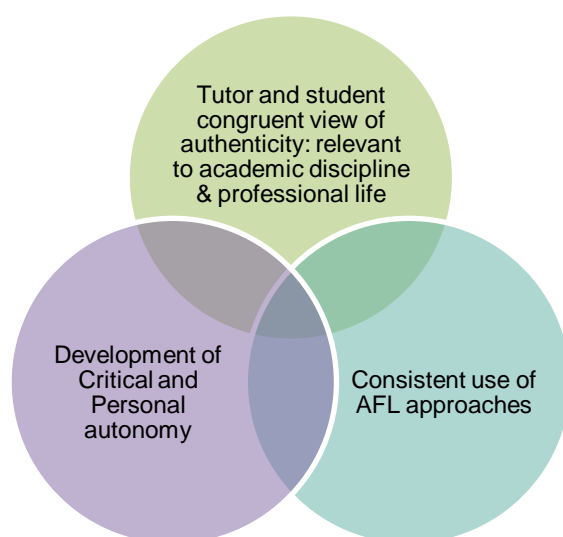


Figure 14: Constructions and perceptions of authenticity and their relationship to autonomous learning behaviours – History

## 6.8 Conclusion

The Chapter has presented findings from the third case study and represents one of the four building blocks for Chapter Eight, which presents a cross analysis of findings from all four case studies.

Chapter seven presents findings from the final case study of the research, a performing arts module.

## Chapter Seven

### Performing Arts Module

This chapter is divided into eight sections.

**Section 7.1** provides an introduction to the chapter. Each section presents data from the modules, in the form of direct quotations from tutors and students. Data findings are presented and interpreted through the key themes outlined in the coding framework.

**Section 7.2** outlines the structure of the module, the authentic learning activities which were used and tutor comments on the module.

**Section 7.3** gives details of the lectures and Seminars – the ‘doing’ phase, what happened during the twelve weeks of the module, including student and tutor responses. This section is divided into three parts: Introductory (lectures 1-4), Middle (lectures 5-8) and End (lectures 9-12).

**Section 7.4** provides evidence in the form of data extracts from five students, presented through key themes of authenticity. This section presents data extracts from participants under key themes of a) Motivation and Engagement b) Meaning and Relevance and c) Pedagogy and Assessment Structure.

**Section 7.5** presents findings, with comments, from the five students in relation to the themes of autonomy which were used to code the interviews, under key themes of a) Procedural autonomy b) Personal autonomy c) Critical autonomy and d) Relational autonomy.

**Section 7.6** presents a cross analysis of student data for authenticity and autonomy.

**Section 7.7** discusses the constructions and perceptions of tutors and students in relation to authenticity. The section examines student responses to their experiences of the authentic activities.

**Section 7.8** provides a conclusion to the chapter.

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter presents findings from the fourth case study of the research. It presents data from a twelve-week optional module conducted as part of the BA (Hons) Drama. The module constitutes the final 'building block' of research data and provides evidence for chapter eight which presents a cross analysis of research data from all four modules.

This module was chosen as a case study because it provides examples of authentic learning activities which, for this study, were defined as:

- Authentic in relation to real life/world settings: The students had to produce a drama project based in the students' local community.
- Authentic in relation to a professional context: The assessment activity was designed to provide students with the necessary skills to work as a freelance theatre practitioner.
- Authentic in relation to an academic discipline: The teaching and assessment activities were designed to examine the methodology of theatre in applied social contexts.

The chapter can 'stand alone' for readers interested in authentic learning strategies within the subject area of Drama and Performance. Teaching and learning strategies included: seminars, workshops, games, exercises to develop drama workshop techniques and professional practice sessions from 'visiting' professional theatre practitioners.

The chapter builds on the previous three data chapters and is incorporated into Chapter Eight, which provides a cross analysis of all four modules. This data chapter also provides evidence for the discussion of a potential model of 'learner response', which is outlined in the discussion. The chapter presents data extracts from researcher observations over a twelve-week period, and interviews with the module tutor and five participating students. The students have been named: Pat, Polly, Poppy, Pia and Penny.

## 7.2 Structure of the module

This module is a final year (third) core module, part of a BA (Hons) Drama, placed within a Performance Division in a School of Arts and Social Sciences. It represents twenty credits towards a three year degree. The module takes place in Year 3 (of 3), representing learning at level six. It took place during Semester 1: 2008/2009.

The Drama programme places particular consideration on theatre provision in a wide range of social contexts. The programme aimed to:

‘Produce graduates who are critically reflective and socially aware theatre practitioners.’

(Programme Handbook)

### 7.2.1 Learning aims and objectives

The aims of the module were to:

- Introduce students to the use and application of professional practices in developing a career in applied theatre practice.
- Enable students to develop their own practice to a professional model.
- Develop an awareness of the freelance world and the various strands of working life that exist for theatre makers in community contexts.
- Enable students to articulate clearly the methodology underpinning applied theatre practice.

On completion of the module, students will be able to:

- Identify and apply professional practice skills to various contexts.
- Facilitate and perform work in a specific context.
- Illustrate the means by which they are able to implement professional skills in a work-based context.
- Articulate clearly the methodology underpinning applied theatre practice.



The programme had a wide range of community partnerships, which encompassed the Prisons and Probation Service, Social Services, Third Sector providers, and a wide range of community theatre practitioners. These agencies made regular contributions to the development of the programme; visiting practitioners came in to work with the students on various applied theatre learning projects. The programme was keen to equip students with a 'real life' experience and knowledge of applied theatre provision and to be able to apply their learning in university to these applied theatre contexts:

'Inculcated within Drama is awareness that social or applied theatre never takes place in a vacuum but is always dependent on and negotiated via a complex web of values or codes. And that these values are best understood wherever possible by on site learning.'

(Programme Handbook)

The programme handbook stated that the first year of the degree aimed to develop learner confidence and introduce learners to the concepts and ideas of the programme, the second year was used to develop this knowledge, and the third was designed to allow students to develop their own area of work around specific interests. Performance in Context was delivered in the first semester at the beginning of the third year programme (September – December 2008). The module was designed to co-ordinate with two other final year modules, Professional Practice and Analysing Practice, which were delivered in the second semester. The module was delivered over one semester (twelve weeks), through one three hour workshop per week. The module was designed to develop learner knowledge of work in applied theatre settings and to develop students' ability to plan, deliver and evaluate work in professional practice. The learners were required to develop a performance based upon working in a particular performance context. Learners were able to research and decide upon their own choice of community group to work with.

The tutor describes the aims of the module:

‘This module aims to equip the student with the necessary skills to begin professional life as a freelance theatre practitioner working mainly with the public sector. The methodology of theatre in specialist applied contexts such as arts in disability or theatre in prisons or probation will be examined. Wherever possible teaching is designed to reflect the issues and concerns of those contexts in which students have chosen to specialise.’

(Programme Handbook)

### **7.2.2 Teaching and Assessment Strategy**

Students were required to develop a thirty-minute professional drama workshop and perform the workshop to their peers and examiners at the end of the module. The workshop had to be presented in groups of either two or three. Although a group project, the students were given an individual mark, reflective of their performance on the day of assessment. Students were also required to submit a workshop plan, outlining the delivery style, the methodology employed and the political/social context of the work. The students were given a pro-forma of areas to be included in the workshop plan and a marking pro-forma, which gave details of the six categories of assessment for the workshop plan.

The assessment panel included an external examiner and one internal examiner - the module tutor. This was a summative-based assessment which constituted 100% of the marks for the module.

The module was designed to act as a preparation for a following module, Professional Practice, where the students were required to then deliver the workshop ‘for real’ to their intended audience in the community. The learning requirements and assessment procedures were changed to allow for the module not being assessed twice. The assessment was therefore a ‘simulation’ of the performance which would be conducted in community organisations during the next semester.

It was also intended that the module would be used by learners as a basis for the 'Analysing Practice' module, where students were required to submit a critical reflection of their progress. The module handbook stated that the outcomes from the module would act as formative feedback for these two modules, which would begin in the next semester.

The teaching and learning pedagogy included seminars to discuss theory and methodology, interactive 'game'-based workshops, peer review, and two sessions conducted by professional theatre practitioners. These are discussed in detail in section two.

**Table 17: Lecture and seminar programme – Performance in Context**

<b>Week</b>	<b>Workshop Topic</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Games Exchange</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Understanding Methodology</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Focus on Specialism</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Understanding Context</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Focus on Specialism</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Understanding Participation.</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Focus on Specialism</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Focus on Specialism</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>Understanding Structure</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Question and Answer Session</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>Assessment Week</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>Assessment Week</b>

The following authentic learning activities were included in the twelve-week module.

- Interactive games and exercises to develop drama workshop techniques
- Visits to community-based theatre companies

- Professional practice sessions from 'visiting' professional theatre practitioners
- Group research and visits to potential community partners
- Practice workshop to peer group before final summative assessment in front of examiners

### 7.2.3 Tutor commentary on the module with data extracts

The following data extracts are taken from an interview with the module tutor at the end of the module. The tutor discusses the range of authentic learning activities which will be structured into the module:

'This module is an opportunity, very practical and hands-on opportunities for the students to get to see different practitioners in action and get those practitioners to share their methodologies and techniques with the students.'

The tutor comments on the module assessment and it's relation to other modules on the programme:

'Well I think this year, what I asked them to do was to read the module guide and come back if they had any more questions. And because I see this group quite a lot and because this module is related to other modules, quite often that boundary gets blurred.'

The tutor discusses the authentic learning activities the visiting practitioners will provide for the students:

**Interviewer: This year, you've brought a lot of external practitioners into the course. Why did you do that?**

'They can set work for the students, which will be actually related to their assessment and actually develop a bit more of a relationship with the students. So what I hope is that those visiting practitioners have been used to full effect, rather than a kind of blanket enhancement, if you know what I mean.'

The tutor discusses the authentic learning activities provided in relation to visits to local community theatres:

**Interviewer: I was interested that you asked the students to do a piece of written work about the visit to the community theatre, xxx; can you tell me a bit about that?**

‘I asked them to reflect on the experience, what had surprised them, what they’d learned, what they thought it was going to be like before they went. I think there’s a particular skill and need to actually reflect through the written word, mainly because they’ll be asked to do that as practitioners anyway, and write reports.’

The tutor commented in relation to autonomy/skills development:

‘You’ve got to think ethically and politically about what you do and then that fits into all the other work that we do. And I literally started them off in the first lesson this year, by literally thinking I was going to chuck them in at the deep end and say, ‘Here’s a series of case studies. You are going to act them out and you’re going to find what area has this practitioner made here or what are the particular issues in this case study.’

The tutor commented in relation to student engagement:

‘I got a sense after the community visit, of light-bulbs going off. Several people actually changed their project tack after that visit and said, ‘We want to work with a different client group because this really interested us.’ So I do think that there has been significant change. So it’s a question of, they should be able to answer the question, ‘Why do you want to do this work in this context?’ and not just say, ‘Oh well, it just seemed interesting.’

The tutor commented on the aim of the authentic learning activity:

‘What they have to be able to demonstrate by the end of this module is the ability to plan an effective methodology for a particular context and to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of that.’

### 7.3 Lecture and seminar activity

The authentic learning activities detailed in this section include:

- Interactive games and exercises to develop drama workshop techniques
- Visits to community-based theatre companies
- Professional practice sessions from 'visiting' professional theatre practitioners
- Group research and visits to potential community partners
- Practice workshop to peer group before final summative assessment in front of examiners

#### 7.3.1 The Introductory Stage

The tutor introduced the module to the students, explaining that the students were required to develop a short performance in small groups which would be performed at the end of the module. The tutor asked the students to think about what sort of context they would be interested in working in. The tutor gave the students a copy of the module guide and asked them to e-mail him if they had any further questions. The students did not ask any questions at this stage, and the tutor started to introduce the first activity.

#### **Interactive games and exercises**

The tutor began the module sessions with a discussion of what is meant by 'context' in relation to community theatre. The tutor introduced a series of games which were designed to help students explore different social contexts. This was done through the use of 'scenarios'. The first scenario was called: 'What is a context?' The tutor asked the students to think about different social situations and act them out as if they were real life experiences. These included: Someone complaining about poor food in a restaurant, someone going for a job interview, and a youth worker talking to a young person who was upset. The activities were 'stopped' at various points by the tutor, and the students were asked to then change the outcome of the situation by introducing new people, a new problem, or a new element to the scenario. This technique is known within performing arts as 'Forum Theatre'. The pace of the activity was fast, and the students had to 'think on

their feet' and respond quickly to the various situations they were confronted with. After each scenario was played, the tutor re-grouped the students for a discussion about the context of the scenario, what factors had come into play and what issues had been raised. The tutor used each section of the scenario to discuss different aspects of working in the community as an applied theatre practitioner. This included: health and safety, teamwork, communication, funding issues and ethical issues such as ground rules. This promoted a lively discussion; and there was a lot of laughter in the room. The tutor asked the students to produce a side of A4 for the following week, with bullet points of what they felt they had learnt from the scenarios, including 'do's' and 'don'ts', and points for future reference. This work was used the following week, with the tutor asking for feedback from the previous week and what the students thought they had learnt from the session.

### **7.3.2 The Middle Stage**

#### **Visit to community theatre**

The tutor organised a trip to a local community theatre, which was run by people who had learning disabilities. The tutor organised a seminar the week before the visit, which explored the medical and social model of disability. This promoted a discussion; the tutor used examples from current films to illustrate his points about social representations of disability. These discussions lead into an exploration of community theatre practice and the disability arts movement.

The trip to the theatre company involved the students talking to a member of the theatre in small groups, the practitioners explained the purpose of the group and a discussion about the types of theatre developed. One of the practitioners explained that the theatre group was started twenty two years ago, and was about social change in relation to societal attitudes to disability. The theatre group gave a short forum theatre presentation to the students, focusing on real situations which people with learning disabilities face when pursuing employment opportunities. The theatre practitioners ask the students to take part, inviting three students to take different roles, including

employer and employee. The students were keen to do this; there was much laughter, discussion and interaction.

### **Visiting practitioner sessions**

#### **Youth Justice**

The visiting practitioner opened the session with a discussion with the students about their workshops, and the reasoning and methodology behind them. The practitioner discussed his own background in Youth Justice, explaining the types of theatre workshops he ran with young people who had become involved in the youth justice system. The facilitator then asked the students to run through their own ideas for their workshops in front of the group. The students agreed to do this, and received feedback from the rest of the group and the facilitator.

#### **Women's' Community Theatre**

The practitioner from this community theatre worked with women in the community and used theatre to facilitate workshops with women. Potential issues included domestic violence, sexuality and teenage pregnancy. The session was opened with the practitioner talking about the role of the company; she then discussed boundaries, ethics and confidentiality within the workshop. The practitioner explained how the practical work of the company reflected the theory of Boal (1992), a community theatre practitioner, who the students had learnt about during the module. The facilitator introduced the students to a number of drama games, which the students all became involved in and participated as a group. The practitioner used scenarios from domestic life as a means to discuss themes which may have been relevant to the students' own lives, or relevant to the lives of the people in the community who they may work with in the future. The practitioner broke the scenarios down into smaller parts (for example, someone not taking their turn to do household chores) asking the students to think about how they or their friends, relatives or partners may react in similar situations. The students were then asked to build these experiences and conceptions into the scene. The students then acted out each scene, and



after each performance, the audience were invited to give comment (peer review) on each group's performance and offer constructive criticism. This activity seemed to work well, all students were engaged and there was much animated discussion about the task and the issues involved. The facilitator closed the session by asking the students to sit in a circle and give one positive and one negative comment about the session. Comments were all positive, there were no negative comments given, except that the students felt that the session was too short. The fact that this was an open circle may have contributed to this, as students may have felt exposed or vulnerable.

### 7.3.3 The End Stage

#### **Student-led research and visits to community agencies**

The tutor asked the students to bring in some 'interesting' research in relation to the module. The tutor explained that this could take the form of a newspaper article, an article taken from the web, or a book chapter. The focus of the research was to widen the students' knowledge of the political issues involved in the module. The tutor then asked the students to spend fifteen minutes with their project groups, and write down on one piece of paper all they thought they had learnt through the course of the module, under headings. The tutor explained that they could use this summary to direct their research for their project, and include both the practical and theoretical aspects of the teaching into their project plan. When the students had finished the task, the tutor asked the group to feed back. The project groups did this; whilst other groups used the opportunity to jot down areas they may have missed or comments which may have prompted their own thought process. The tutor also used the exercise to emphasise to the students what they had learnt. The tutor used peer feedback to evaluate where the students were in their learning and to identify potential gaps in their understanding. The tutor encouraged the students to research the public and voluntary sector agencies in the locality as potential organisations to work with for their performance. The tutor explained that potential groups could include schools, youth clubs, day centres, homeless organisations, and social services, all of whom worked with a wide range of people. The tutor encouraged the students to visit the organisations, both to start the process

of gaining permission to perform their workshop ‘for real’ in the next semester, and to gain a understanding of the context of the area they had chosen for their simulated workshop at the end of the module. The majority of the class did conduct research into relevant agencies and visited potential organisations. This process, however, seemed to promote a lot of anxiety for the students, as they did not know how to go about finding out about agencies, or the protocol for visits, or making requests to managers about ideas for workshops.

### **Practice workshop to peer group before final summative assessment**

The tutor explained to the students that they could use the second last session to practice their group performance in front of each other and gain peer feedback before the ‘real’ summative assessment the following week. The students talked for a few minutes and then responded that they would like to do this. An order of performance was negotiated between the students for the following week. During the next session, the student’s performed their workshops to their peers and gained feedback from the rest of the group. The students took notes and offered the group who had performed a summary of the comments which had been given. This appeared to work well, with the students relating that the feedback was useful in highlighting areas they still needed to work on.

#### **7.3.4 Analysis of pedagogic structure**

The table below summarises the tutor’s constructions of the authentic activities and how these constructions relate to the tutors views of autonomy. Example learning activities are given from the module pedagogic structure.

**Table 18: Analysis of tutor data – Performance in Context**

<b>Views of Authenticity</b>	<b>Views of Autonomy</b>	<b>Pedagogic Structure</b>
Authentic to academic discipline	Transferable skills	Visiting practitioners
Authentic to real world/professional life	Taking responsibility for own learning	Community visits
To develop practical skills	Developing skills for self employment	Simulations
To get real life experience	Development of critical political and social awareness	Peer feedback
To develop critical political thinking	Development of effective communication skills	Formative feedback
To understand the social context of community based performance	Development of “better” ethics and values	Summative assessment
To understand the professional context	Development of planning skills	Interactive games and exercises

## 7.4 Presentation of student data: Authenticity

This is the third section of chapter five. This section presents data extracts from five participant interviews under key themes which have emerged from the data relating to authenticity. The five students have been called: Pat, Polly, Poppy, Pia and Penny.

The key themes are:

- Motivation and Engagement
- Meaning and relevance
- Pedagogy and Assessment structure

### 7.4.1 Motivation and Engagement

#### **Pat – Motivation and Engagement**

Pat appeared very interested in the module, and mentioned this in relation to the ‘high standard’ which she perceived the assessment to be. Pat’s motivation seemed to be linked to the idea of the actual benefits to the community/group of people she would be working with. This was important and seemed to be a central component of her motivation. Pat related that in order to get a good mark the lecturer had stated that “passion” was one of the criteria the students would be judged on:

‘Well I think to get a really good mark I think it’s really important to be passionate and really want to do this and put your heart and soul into it but I think it is quite a high standard. It’s got to be something that’s really going to make an impact on the people’.

When asked how this “impact” would be evaluated, Pat seemed unsure:

‘Oh, I don’t know, I... There’s probably going to be a logbook, which we normally do. I’m not sure about this module. I haven’t looked at the guides yet for them.’

#### **Polly - Motivation and Engagement**

Polly didn’t seem very motivated or excited by the thought of starting the module. Polly seemed critical of the module and made repeated reference

back to her work experience in Africa. Polly did not seem to think that the module had much to offer her:

‘The lesson that we had this week, I just thought I didn’t learn anything. I suppose if you wanted to work with disabled people then maybe that would help you, but I don’t really see the point of it, to be honest.’

### **Poppy - Motivation and Engagement**

Poppy discussed her motivation in relation to starting the module:

‘Definitely excited. I can’t wait to take on a new challenge, because I have been out for a year as well...’

Poppy appeared highly motivated throughout the module and had a positive attitude to the course and the module tutor. Little mention was made of her group in relation to her motivation for the module. Poppy’s motivation seemed to be strongly linked to developing ideas for work outside and after university, and she seemed adept at making these links. Poppy stated at regular instances that outside tutors and professional workers in the community were very motivational for her. She had come back into university after having had a ‘year out’ working in theatre, and mentioned that she felt more at ease in this environment.

‘And also having the practitioners come in as well, that was something I really enjoyed and felt was quite valid and helped us a lot to influence our own work’.

Poppy related that she had enjoyed working with others during the module:

‘I’ve really, really enjoyed viewing everybody’s work because it just gives you an insight into the context they’re working in but also it helps you influence your own work and what area you want to go down, like in the style of facilitating for example, and how you’re going to approach it.’

Poppy had recently returned from taking a year out, and had been working in theatre to gain experience. She displayed high motivation about the module, and related that she was keen to get started. Poppy said she was keen to put a lot of effort into the module but appeared rather anxious about the seminars:

‘Yes, and thinking about the seminar as well, and how to make it really interesting, because seminars are usually the most boring things in the whole world and as a creative person you, it can be boring, but you have to have that side of it, you are going to have to present your work to people at some point, you need to be interested in it and want to do it more, so, yeah...’

#### **Pia - Motivation and Engagement**

Pia talked with great enthusiasm about the work and stated that she was keen to start the module. Pia had already organised her group and knew who she wanted to work with. Pia seemed quite concerned about the marks and if her group would work together and not let anyone down:

‘That’s the worst bit about it, a lot of people have other engagements and can let you down quite frequently, it is really frustrating because your mark and your course is dependent on other people, and I’ve put everything into the course.’

#### **Penny - Motivation and Engagement**

Penny discussed her initial experiences of the module and the way in which her motivation developed through the course of the module:

‘I think from the beginning, I didn’t quite understand what this module was going to be but I can see why they’ve chosen to do it, why it’s been helpful, because its clarifying your own kind of style of facilitation and what you find is important and putting it into practice. I think the module... I don’t know what the phrase is.... It’s surpassed my expectations.’

The reality and practical nature of the project seemed to have had an effect on Penny's motivation and interest levels. She described the activities as making sense and having real relevance to her own situation:

'I've actually found it a lot more useful than I thought it was going to be and I've actually quite enjoyed myself.'

Penny appeared to value the practical aspects of the course and the work in the community:

'I have to say, this is the first year I've enjoyed my Degree. Really. Because we're actually doing something now as opposed to 'faffing' about...'

Penny discussed her project at length and said she was proud of the way the work had developed:

'I'm taking storytelling workshops into a play centre and a school and we're basically letting the children make their own stories up and just comparing the different contexts of structured environment in school and an unstructured environment in the play centre.'

#### **7.4.2 Meaning and Relevance**

##### **Pat – Meaning and Relevance**

Pat discussed the relevance or meaningfulness of the task in relation to the 'impact' it would have on the lives of the people they would be working with in the community. No conceptual links were made at this stage to the application of skills in other areas, or life after university. Pat was intrigued by the idea of going into the community and producing a piece of work for that particular community:

'I think it was the whole, like, going in and doing a workshop to a real kind of school and having to organise all of that and things, it definitely helped. There are quite a few of us that now have experience of that. I think it's taught us that practical practice, if that makes sense, doing it practically helps a lot more, and doing

it in front of people, and getting the feedback is just a lot easier and a better way of learning.'

In this example, Pat made clear that the 'real world' (the authentic task) and having to 'do it yourself' (autonomy) are clearly linked. Pat related that this process 'helped' in her understanding:

'This is the real world and you've got to kind of do it yourself.'

Pat had an understanding of the module which focused on the tasks being 'real life', and 'real world'. She felt that the module had given her some experience of what certain jobs after university might entail:

'...because obviously with it being the final year, you've got to start thinking about the reality of everything and what you have to do afterwards. So it's given you a little insight into what you want to do and what it's going to be like and just giving you a bit of experience of what you could do, and then if you like that you can go onto do that, and if you don't then you know.'

### **Polly - Meaning and Relevance**

Polly did not seem to think that the module had very much relevance to her own life or work experiences. Polly seemed confused about the rationale for the module and was not able to make any links to drama theory or wider societal issues, or the world of work. Polly did relate that she found working outside University very relevant and interesting:

'...Everything I learn is not from University, it's from doing it outside, all the outside work that I do.'

Polly was able to make links between the community project and the relevance to her future working life. Polly was able to bring previous work experience into the work for the module, and used these methodologies in her analysis and planning for the project. Polly seemed quite centred on the work component of the task, and used the methodology to help her understand why arts practitioners should be working with particular communities. Polly stated that she was quite angry about large parts of the

module structure. This focused on the apparent lack of work in the community, even though the module was designed to do exactly this. Polly said she enjoyed the visiting practitioners, and saw them as relevant and refreshing:

'I think I've learnt most from the visiting facilitators that came. They showed us specific things they do and just the fact that they were outside working and they were really positive and enthusiastic.'

### **Poppy - Meaning and Relevance**

Poppy demonstrated a good understanding of the relevance of the tasks to future work through her discussion of possible work in the future, and was keen to explore the possible options which would be available to her. Poppy said she was interested in working in the community and discussed her previous experience in theatre as a way to understand the requirements of the module. Poppy stated that she was keen to bring previous experience of film-making to the module, but was unsure as to how to integrate this knowledge into the assessment structure. Poppy had organised to go and visit a museum in the city to discuss possible options, but appeared rather dismayed that she had not had much of a positive response. Poppy reflected on this approach and stated that in future she would ring first:

'I went to the museum yesterday, to see if I could speak to anyone about it, but the woman wasn't there. I didn't ring first and let them know or ask them, but I thought if I went down personally it would be better and I can arrange a time.'

Poppy said she had a clear idea of which ways the module was going to be helpful to her in evaluating possible career options:

'Give you the skills to be able to have your own mind in what you want and you can be if you're an artist or, you know, facilitator or whatever, and what you don't want to be.'



Poppy demonstrated a very high level of understanding of the relevance of the task, through her discussion of each stage's requirements, but primarily in relation to work and the possibilities of developing drama in the community. Poppy did not discuss theory explicitly, but talked about 'pushing the boundaries' in drama, however she was unable to explain, in relation to drama theory, why this was a 'good thing'. Poppy referred a great deal to her previous experience, and her interest in Black history, and was very enthusiastic when this interest was developed by a visiting lecturer:

'And that was really interesting to me and I enjoyed that but it was just like I wanted to know more, and it's been awakened, I'm like, 'Hello, yeah!''

### **Pia - Meaning and Relevance**

Pia discussed the project the students had to prepare in the community in relation to her academic progress and was quite focused on the marks. Pia did talk about the practical task in terms of it 'being useful' for the participants (in the community) but did not make explicit links between the drama theory being taught on the module and the actual practice she would be involved in. Pia described being excited about the prospect, and was a little bit nervous:

'Sometimes, I must say, I think 'how are we actually going to do this with real people, and going out there and...?' We're not massively equipped yet it is very scary, but I'm excited because it's completely self run'.

Pia expressed interest and enthusiasm about working in the community and was keen to go and meet people in different centres. Pia was clear that this was the driving force of her enthusiasm for the module, and could express her interest in relation to the experience being helpful in helping her decide and/or consider future career options:

'I was surprised at how natural it felt to just be in that context and it just felt really nice working with them, and it was such a positive atmosphere and I felt I'd really want to be part of this atmosphere and contribute to this'.

Pia links the authentic learning experiences to exploring possible future employment areas:

‘Well through our project overall, working with our target group, I mean, I’ll learn a lot about that context, which I previously had no knowledge, so that’ll be really nice. And that kind of opens up other doors for who I’d like to work with when I’m older.

### **Penny - Meaning and Relevance**

Penny discussed what was important to her – her values - in relation to the work she had developed. Penny was positive and keen to expand on this. Penny was able to use her own experiences and value-base to relate to the theory which had been part of the course:

‘I think it’s about empowerment of participants in workshops, letting them decide what they want to do, taking ideas and letting them develop ideas and giving them ownership of work and a good sense of community’.

The students visited a community theatre project where participants had learning difficulties. Penny expressed anxiety about the visit:

‘I think it just would’ve been quite good to have said, ‘Okay, there’s a guy that’s autistic and he finds it difficult to sit in with a lot of people at one time...’ and then I would know. I felt upset when I was there because I didn’t understand and I think it’s important as well to understand everybody... ‘

The conversation moved to future life plans and Penny was able to explain clearly what she wished to do in the future in terms of a career:

‘Well I want to go into working with children so it’s fantastic for what I want to do because I mean, you’re being ‘trained’ I suppose, to be a facilitator it means you can have, you know, all these different transferable skills’.

Penny appeared to value the experience for its relevance to real life and her plans and hopes for the future. Penny expressed an opinion that it would have been useful to do more work in the community:

‘I think the University should have connections with schools all over, get in there in your second year and you’ll learn so much more. You’d be in a much better position by the third year.’

#### **7.4.3 Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

##### **Pat – Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Pat related that she had a “good grasp” of the practical elements of the module. She was clear about the need to prepare and organise projects of her own choice. Little mention was made of the assessment criteria or the module guide, or timings for assessments. Pat was interested and appeared excited about starting the module. She focused on the idea that she had choice and control over the design of her project:

‘The module... We’ve got to get to grips and we’ve got to organise projects of our choices, with people of our choice, it can be children, adults, and elderly people, people with disabilities, anyone.’

##### **Polly - Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Polly seemed unclear as to the module requirements:

‘Well I find that at Uni anyway, you know when they’ve got the marks scheme to get a First, it’s not specific to that essay or to that assessment.’

##### **Poppy- Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Poppy was able to articulate the requirements of the module quite clearly. Poppy stated that she understood that there was an essay, a proposal and a project and was able to explain the links between this and requirements for other modules:

‘...it’s the 3,000 word essay and the project and the proposal. It ties in with everything else that we’re doing as well, so obviously it’ll help my time properly.’

#### **Pia - Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Pia could articulate in quite precise detail the requirements of the module. She explained the mark allocation, the practice requirements and the group project requirements. Pia stated that she had gained the most experience from the module in terms of the practice experience with different visiting practitioners, and through visits to community projects:

‘It’s been really good, a really good module, and I think that’s especially thanks to the outside practitioners coming in. I think that’s where I’ve learnt the most because we got to observe different practice and methodologies and that really informed our own practice.’

#### **Penny - Pedagogy and Assessment Structure**

Penny could discuss the different aspects of the module in relation to the placement in the community and what was required. Penny’s knowledge of the finer aspects of the assessment did not appear to be clear, and she seemed to be focusing on the ‘wider picture’:

‘Well, I think it’s, from what I can gather, it’s getting ready to be able to go into performance situations and working in the community and being able to deal with any troubles or problems that we might have’.

### **7.5 Presentation of student data: Autonomy**

This is the fourth section of chapter five. This section presents the data from five participant interviews under the key themes which were used to code the data. The five students are: Pat, Polly, Poppy, Pia and Penny.

The key themes are;

- Procedural autonomy

- Personal autonomy
- Critical autonomy
- Relational autonomy

#### 7.5.1 Procedural Autonomy

##### **Pat – Procedural Autonomy**

Pat was able to action plan and work out a realistic timeframe for the completion of work. Pat enjoyed the time spent with the rest of her group, planning the work, and was able to manage this process harmoniously. Pat mentions that all group members had different work commitments, so a considerable amount of time was spent negotiating who would complete what task. Pat was the only student in the group who drove, so she had volunteered to do a lot of research in the community. Pat relayed that she enjoyed the authentic learning aspects of the module:

“Practical’ nature of this task, rather than ‘pouring over theories”.

##### **Polly - Procedural Autonomy**

Polly stated that she was good at setting goals and planning. This was focused on her work in the community, and classroom-based planning was not given much attention. Polly displayed excellent organisational skills through the large amount of contacts and partnerships she had developed and was able to make and maintain effective links in the community with professional organisations. Polly stated that her working life was very important to her and she used this experience regularly as a ‘sounding board’ to understand her studies at university. Polly stated that she was able to manage her work and was able to reflect on this:

‘I spent hours and hours in the library. We started with what we wanted to do for the plan, and we started looking at the actual project then we looked and thought, ‘What do you think will be best for the assessment?’ So after we looked at what we’d do for each session, we planned ten-week sessions’.

### **Poppy - Procedural Autonomy**

Poppy initially stated that she felt she wasn't very good at organising her time, but demonstrated through the interview that she was able to manage a number of tasks at once, was organised and good at time management. When asked about how she planned her time for the project she said:

'I think it's good in a way, it tells you, helps you to go on in life really because you're not going to always have a deadline... Whatever people you work with, they're going to have certain deadlines.'

### **Pia - Procedural Autonomy**

Pia talked about organising her work, making plans in relation to the module requirements, making lists of people to contact and starting to allocate tasks within the group. Pia talked about wanting to gain a First Class degree, and said that she had worked out the percentage she needed to get in each module, given previous results, to achieve this. Pia had undertaken a lot of research into community organisations which her group wanted to work with. Pia had organised visits, telephoned people and allocated time in her diary:

'On paper... I like writing things down. I like having journals and mind mapping usually helps at this really early stage. Discussion with my group, but I am quite a visual person and I like having a logbook.'

Pia expressed confidence about her organisational skills - she talked about setting and regularly revisiting her goals, and managing her time. Pia discussed other modules in relation to her progress and experiences on this one and was able to evaluate her own position:

'So I just said, 'Every night this week, we all have to work on it. So I'll take Friday, xxx takes Saturday and xxx takes Sunday and I'll take Monday' so for a week we just emailed it to each other and we put in red what we'd changed and then someone else would

work on it and then forward it to the next person. We got there in the end and we handed it in.'

### **Penny - Procedural Autonomy**

Penny appeared positive about the tasks she would have to perform in the planning of the module and was clear that it was about her choice:

'Well primarily the project, it's up to us to decide. I think primarily you try and organise it how you want it to be.'

When asked about what she thought she had to do to get a good mark, Penny replied:

'I don't know what you have to do per se, because I just do it.'

When asked what she thought the lecturer might be looking for in a good project, the answer was much clearer:

'Originality, tightness in organisation. Having everything on time, knowing exactly what you're doing and where you're going. No mess-ups. But then again, I'm sure that if there was a slight mistake or anything like that, they're not going to mark you down as you're only ever going to what's happened because of it. So yes, managing, being able to.'

### **7.5.2 Personal Autonomy**

#### **Pat – Personal Autonomy**

Pat was quite clear at the beginning of the module about what she wanted to do for her project and was able to reflect on her options:

'You can do anything you want; it doesn't have to be drama or anything. I think I'll do the more production management kind of thing.'

Pat used two main methods to evaluate her ideas – this included a 'mind map' of ideas, and making lists of possible options. This can be related to aspects of personal autonomy in terms of task allocation, sorting ideas and reflection.

Pat was able to reflect on the learning experience in relation to identifying her own strengths and learning goals. Pat was also able to recognise that her confidence levels affected her performance, and that she needed to work on this area. Particularly in relation to group tasks and performance:

'I think when I'm nervous I get a bit shy and step back a bit. I need to put myself out there a bit more and just think about myself a bit more and I think I need to have more confidence in myself really.'

### **Polly - Personal Autonomy**

Polly was able to discuss the module in relation to her previous work experience, and she was able to articulate the skills she had learnt from this. Polly was reflective in relation to the module in that she compared it to previous years' learning, and used this reflection to be critical of what she perceived the module to be about:

'Well last year we all complained that we spent six weeks planning a whole workshop that we took into schools, and it's supposed to be, like, a community-based course and we spent an hour in the school. I understand that other people may not have worked before and it may have been good for them. But I just felt like it was all in the classroom and we were wasting time talking about things when we should really be doing it and getting experience.'

Polly still seemed unsure of the module assessment requirements:

'I think he wants us to... I think that it's supposed to give an indication of what your project is about and how your methodology and how you're going to go about achieving your aim. But I was thinking that I don't know what would have made a good assessment yesterday, like, what were they looking for and were they looking in particular for how well you facilitated? Or were they looking at your methodology behind it? I didn't know what would make an excellent assessment yesterday.'



## **Poppy - Personal Autonomy**

Poppy related that she enjoyed the visiting practitioners, lecturers and project tutors who came to work with the students. Poppy didn't question any of the module assessment practices, but seemed to accept that they were valid and useful without question. Poppy also talked enthusiastically about 'shadowing' a professional worker from a homeless organisation - she found this very useful and was able to incorporate the information she had gained through this research into her drama project:

'Just like being more aware of the actual context we're working with. My aims have changed in terms of knowing that you need to do the research on whoever you're working with and you need to be a lot more aware and be more open-minded and change your own political... Well not necessarily change but adapt your political standpoint. Like before, if I just thought that people on the streets were a waste of space and they were there because they were all 'druggies' and they were all alcoholics, they've chosen to be there, rather than thinking a bit more open-minded than that, that so many different reasons why. So my aims have obviously been influenced by the fact that I've done the research and opened my mind to that.'

Poppy was able to evaluate her own strengths and identify her learning goals, or areas where she knew she wasn't so strong (she mentions procedural tasks). Poppy showed some frustration at other group members when they were 'off sick', as she felt this put the group at a disadvantage, but she was able to reflect on the fact that this had an impact on her because she felt that her own organisational skills weren't so good, and she would have to work harder when the other member wasn't there:

'I know XXX had a bit of a problem with her attendance, but those sorts of things put a strain on me and it's making me think, like, I'm going to have to be a lot more prepared in case she doesn't turn up... Not that I don't trust her and I don't have every faith in her, but, it's just, you know, to be aware.'

## **Pia - Personal Autonomy**

Pia discussed her experiences of finding out about her personal attributes during the module. Pia was able to verbalize her motivations and her areas of anxiety about the work she had to carry out for the module.

‘I’ve learnt that I’m bossy, but that’s also through my stage management module as well. I maybe talk to people different now and I’ve got the confidence to say what I think. So when xxx and xxx are playing on their mobiles when we’re meant to be working, I’ll say it now, I’ll say, ‘Can we please put our mobile phones away, because we’re working?’ and I don’t think I’d have had the confidence to say that last year, but I don’t think other people like it but I just feel it has to be said. So I’ve learnt that.’

Pia spoke clearly about her goals and her feelings about choosing a career. Pia seemed to be able to look at the different aspects of various careers, from being a teacher to stage management. Pia could frame the different careers in their contexts and was able to weigh up different aspects of careers, both positive and negative. Whilst Pia seemed able to do this, she did not seem at the point of having made a definite carer choice:

‘As a stage manager I’ll need to develop my technical knowledge.’

## **Penny - Personal Autonomy**

Penny was able to discuss the ways in which the module interlinked with other modules, and was able to explain the rationale for this e.g. how this module was to act as a preparation for the Professional Practice module in the Spring term. Penny was able to discuss the types of skills she felt she would need to be successful in the module and seemed quite ‘strategic’ in her analysis:

‘Well I suppose the obvious ones are organisational skills, patience, communication skills, being able to speak to people on a universal level as opposed to a very direct and narrow way of looking at it, especially when you’re dealing with, like, how other

people speak. I suppose it's really when you then try and translate that to a school context.'

### 7.5.3 Critical Autonomy

#### **Pat – Critical Autonomy**

Pat talked in more detail about the module requirements, and appeared to be able to develop her thinking about the assessment from elements of procedural autonomy (list-making, being task-orientated) into critical autonomy (being able to think about the module requirements in relation to other areas):

'We've got to organise it a lot of the time and plan it all ourselves, I think it's; kind of like stating, this is the real world and you've got to kind of do it yourself. It's not like, we're not spoon-fed or anything like that. We've got to think of things ourselves and then organise it with the group.'

#### **Polly - Critical Autonomy**

Polly regularly referred to her working life when discussing her decision-making process:

'I've done similar stuff. I feel like I'm bragging all the time, but the company that I've worked for years, like, because I've worked my way up there and now I'm at the stage where I deliver the training on my own.'

#### **Poppy - Critical Autonomy**

Poppy could discuss the social circumstances of the people attending her workshop, and relate this to drama theory and wider social policy issues.

Poppy was keen to be seen as 'different' in some way, and wanted to challenge herself:

'I suppose thinking of something more unique and not what everybody else is doing, something more of a challenge for yourself. A bit more outside of the box. So working with maybe

groups that you wouldn't normally work with, pushing the boundaries basically, and maybe the type of project that you do, put your own slant on it, your own thoughts.'

Poppy displayed a high level of understanding of the requirements of the module. Poppy stated that she understood the context of the module, and the rationale for working in the community, but was unable to link this explicitly to theory or to the inter-connecting modules:

'We've had to do plans of the literature review. So that's been a load of reading, basically, and looking at all different sources of material, so books and journals and websites, all different types of stuff. And also the practicals and planning for the proforma of the workshop.'

Poppy talked about her ability to use critical capacity over the time of the module. This was focused on the practitioners' role, and she was able to discuss the practice role in relation to aspects of drama theory, particularly political influences and how drama could be used to explore these ideas:

'Because one of our initial ideas as well was about *Big Brother* and the whole issues around that. So looking at loneliness, issues of freedom, how free you are and all sorts of... CCTV, surveillance. So from that as well, we took just that one theme of surveillance and being watched instead of that whole big thing of *Big Brother* and what it means.'

This critical analysis was very much based in the community, in the authentic task which was being developed. Poppy was able to question societal attitudes about social inclusion - access to the Arts, for example - and was critical that some students had not 'pushed the boundaries' and had stayed within 'safe' parameters for the assessment:

'I know what it means, but who does have much access to the arts? Does it mean being able to pay to go to the theatre, or what does 'much access to the arts' mean? So how safe do you want

to be? And I feel like a lot of people this year have stayed within the boundaries, a lot.'

### **Pia - Critical Autonomy**

Pia discussed her performance on the final module assessment, highlighting the individual nature of each groups presentation:

'I just felt really proud of our work and because, every group had a different style, it was like showing them 'our' style, and there was some pride in that as well and that was nice. And I did feel a little nervous in the morning but nowhere near what I would have felt a couple of months ago, so that was really good. So hopefully that will carry on into my project and with the real target group hopefully, we'll sustain that level of confidence in ourselves.'

Pia expressed great pleasure at having planned the project independently:

'And I like how in third year you self manage and you choose everything and everything is your choice and your passions and that's brilliant because it gives you freedom to figure out who you are and figure out your style and what you want to do with the rest of your life and see what you're good at. And I've really enjoyed that element of them letting you do what you want.'

Pia expressed great interest and enthusiasm about being able to 'choose' your own community group to work with. She felt this gave her a lot of independence and the opportunity to demonstrate her 'passion' for Drama.

Pia admitted that she had sometimes found this process unnerving:

'It's a bit scary and it is hard. Sometimes it can feel a bit unsupportive because I feel like it's just us, and even though I know all the lecturers have a supportive nature and would support us, unless you go and get it, it's not readily available.'

## **Penny - Critical Autonomy**

Penny expressed some anxiety about the independent nature of the module, but was able to reflect on her experiences on a previous year's module in relation to this anxiety:

'It's a bit nerve-wracking, you have to find the people to do it, how many people you're working with as a group, what their roles are in that group, you have to then find your areas that I want to do in schools, you've got to do the CRB checks as well.'

### **7.5.4 Relational Autonomy**

#### **Pat – Relational Autonomy**

Pat's motivation seemed to be crucially entwined by the experience she had with the group she was developing the project with. When the group worked well, Pat's motivation was high. When the group came to be individually assessed within the groups' whole performance, Pat was disappointed with her mark and this disappointment resulted in Pat questioning her group's loyalty toward her:

'I don't know, because we have got quite a close relationship as a group, but then you do kind of start thinking, 'well, is she doing that because she just wants to...?' And 'They are my friends, but if it comes to it, would she?' Do you know what I mean? 'Would she let me shine or would she just be thinking about herself?' It's hard....You do start thinking like that. 'Is she doing that because she wants to jeopardise my mark?'

Pat stated that she enjoyed working as a group, enjoyed the allocation and negotiation of tasks, and was a motivated, willing member of the group. The group process seemed to 'go wrong' for Pat when it came to the actual performance of the project, and assessments were made individually of the groups' performance. Pat expressed anger and uncertainty about the group relationship at this point, relating that she thought the other two members had perhaps in some way 'not played fair' in the group assessment. Pat's confidence seemed undermined at this point:

‘Maybe you’ll stick to what you’ve been told what your section’s going to be and then maybe other people might do more than what they’ve said they are going to do so it looks like they’ve done more when we’d all said, ‘Oh, I can do this and this. I feel like I didn’t shine as much as the other two did and I don’t know if that was intentional of them or not. Hmm...’

Pat enjoyed and valued the feedback from the rest of the class in relation to their project development:

‘I think we are so comfortable with each other now as a class, that we are not afraid to give feedback, you’re with them everyday nearly and they are your friends and you can just take on any criticism from them because you know they are saying it to help you and are not being bitchy. You are just completely comfortable and it probably makes you feel more confident because your class, they want to uplift you a bit, ‘Oh that was really good!’ And you feel much more confident about it.’

### **Polly - Relational Autonomy**

Polly was keen to work with her partner, a friend who she had worked with professionally outside of university. She appeared to show little interest of the rest of the class. Polly was keen on the assessment being marked individually and not as a group, and expressed some anxiety about the group process:

“Oh, which group am I going to be in?’ And if you’re going to be let down. It shouldn’t even matter who you work with in the real world, but if you can choose then why not get let down by other people. And the marking will be better if it’s individual.’

Polly did not appear interested in working with the rest of the class; she worked solely with her partner, whom she had worked with professionally. She was keen to have individual assessment, and this appeared to provoke anxiety for her. Polly did relate that she enjoyed the feedback from the rest of the group and had found this beneficial:

‘That was good because it just allowed us to give feedback from the group and so I think as a group now, it’s since the practitioners came in from outside, we’ve just been really supportive of each other so it’s been really good to get the group’s feedback because even though it can be critical, they’ll always say, ‘Why don’t you try this?’ and I think that’s something as a class that we’ve got really good at.’

### **Poppy - Relational Autonomy**

Poppy said she was not too keen on working with the others in a group situation. Poppy related that she was keen to be assessed individually, and saw the group as a device to support her in areas where she felt ‘weak’ and to give her time to develop in other areas:

‘Well I’ve never been very good at it. I know pretty much what I’m doing for my proposal, and I’ll set some kind of a timeline out for that, and hopefully the people in the group I’m working with for the project are quite organised as well so they can have that skill and I’ll have the time to be more creative”.

Poppy seemed to have an instrumental attitude towards working in a group with other students. In a couple of instances, she talked about the rest of the group as being ‘responsible’ for the practical organisation of tasks, giving her free time to develop the more ‘creative’ aspects of the task. Poppy mentioned that she enjoyed looking at others’ work as this helped give a context to the work and helped in her own ideas. Poppy didn’t seem to engage with the group process in the classroom, but when the group were left to develop their project in the community, this motivated her and she talked with more enthusiasm about the group members. Poppy was pleased that the group’s work was individually assessed, and was keen to have her work recognised as her own, and not part of a group contribution. Poppy was keen to put forward her own identity as an ‘arts worker’, and was somewhat critical of students who didn’t challenge ‘the boundaries’:



‘Obviously I’m not trying to put people down because it’s fine, whatever they’re doing is valid, for them, but as arts workers, I feel like we need to step out of the norm of what we’re doing and try and go from a different angle and work with people who usually aren’t being worked with; usually, anyway. Do you know what I mean?’

### **Pia - Relational Autonomy**

In relation to working with others, Pia comments that a lot of time was taken up in organising meetings:

‘There are so many issues to think about, you’ve got to get a balance, like, one person to be the leader and you want to feel comfortable around them, you get to have arguments with them and you need to live close enough to them to meet up all the time. A lot of our course is like, who you’re going to work with, and it actually detracts from the actual course and it can take up a lot of your energy, sorting out the groups and getting the groups together and then making the rehearsal schedule...’

Pia’s experience of working with others appears to be mixed. Pia states that she is keen to work with others but also expresses concern that her marks may be affected by other students’ performances. This seemed to be the source of some anxiety for Pia. She also seemed to be frustrated about the other members’ commitment to get on with the task:

‘It’s quite hard to all meet up to do the work. I’m always the one saying, ‘Let’s get on with the work.’ It’s really bad, because we could just talk for hours.’

Pia related that she had found feedback from her peer group more useful than other types of feedback:

‘I feel that I’ve learnt a lot hearing people’s feedback for other people. And there are loads of questions been raised and we’ve only learnt through practice. Like, the times when we learn most

about an exercise or a facilitation style is from trying it, and then you see where the errors are. So that's been really beneficial.'

## Penny - Relational Autonomy

Penny seemed to find the actual experience of working with others quite problematic and appeared anxious about the allocation of marks within the group:

'I sometimes think it's a bit unfair because as a situation that's not necessarily mine, that you can create a document and it represents the whole group yet one person could have put far more into it than another.'

Penny discussed the merits and the problems of working in a group, and acknowledged that everyone had different areas of strength:

'Yes, because some people are better at other things and I think it's best to work to people's strengths in a group.'

## 7.6 Analysis of student data for authenticity and autonomy

The table below summarises the student experience on the Performing Arts module in relation to their experiences of the authentic learning task. The data is summarised under the three themes of: motivation and engagement, meaning and relevance and module structure and pedagogy.

**Table 19: Analysis of student data. Performing Arts: Authenticity**

<b>Student experiences of authentic task</b>
<b>Motivation and engagement</b>
Students related that the visiting practitioners were very motivating
Students found visits to community venues motivating
Students stated that peer sharing of work was motivating and seen as relevant
Group workshops engaged students
<b>Meaning and relevance</b>
Relevance of activity seen as having an 'impact' on the user group
Students related relevance to future career through community visits
Community visits linked to identity as an arts worker
Visiting practitioners found relevant and meaningful to future work
Interactive games seen as relevant to developing student skills with user groups
<b>Structure and pedagogy</b>
Students didn't like shared marking system
Students related that the module structure was too complicated, it linked into two other modules
Majority of students reported that they had no previous experience of developing links and working in the community, community experience viewed as stressful because of this

The table below summarises the student experience on the Performing Arts module with regard to the development of autonomous learning behaviours. The data is summarised under the four key themes of: Personal autonomy, relational autonomy, procedural autonomy and critical autonomy.

**Table 20: Analysis of student data. Performing Arts: Autonomy**

<b>Student experience in relation to the development of different types of autonomy</b>
<b>Personal</b>
Students reflection related to future employment
Students developed awareness of own personal capabilities, mainly in relation to organisation skills, with some interpersonal skills.
<b>Relational</b>
Students enjoyed the group tasks, but anger expressed at sharing of marks
Students reported enjoying peer feedback which did not involve marks
Students reported frustration when people didn't turn up or do their share of the work for group tasks
Marked group task and final summative assessment produced anger and resentment among some students
<b>Procedural</b>
Students talked about the development of planning and organisational skills
Students used 'mind mapping' exercises to plan tasks
Students reported that visiting venues took up a lot of time and organisational skills, but developed the use of diaries, telephone skills and co-ordinating skills
<b>Critical</b>
Limited – students more involved with planning of tasks
Some students made links to drama theory but not linked to wider societal analysis
Majority of students demonstrated little understanding of the social context and how this related to drama theory

## **7.7 Constructions and perceptions of authenticity**

This section provides an overview of tutors' and students' constructions of authenticity. The section examines potential relationships between students' experiences of the authentic learning activities and the potential development of autonomous learning behaviours.

### **7.7.1 Tutor constructions of authenticity**

The tutor presented the module to the students as a way in which to develop student understanding of the 'real world' of professional freelance theatre practitioners. The tutor stressed the practical nature of the module, relating to the students that the module would enable them to gain an understanding of the political and professional issues involved in working in the community as a theatre practitioner. The tutor was keen to develop awareness of the social and political context of community theatre and for students to develop critical thinking in relation to this social context. The tutor informed the students that the module was about the students taking responsibility for their own learning, for developing their own project and developing skills for self

employment. The tutor emphasised the development of communication skills, planning skills and the development of ethics and values. The module had quite a complex structure, it formed the basis for two other modules and fed into both a parallel running module and a module to take place in the following semester. The tutor had developed a diagrammatical structure for this which was included in the module handbook. The tutor saw the visiting lecturers as a means to assist students in developing an awareness of the social and political context of community-based theatre, and as a chance to develop specific theatrical skills. The tutor's rationale for the community visits was for students to see 'real' theatre groups in action, and be able to develop their understandings of the social and political context of these organisations. The authenticity, for the tutor, was very much about real world experience, professional skills and critical political awareness.

#### **7.7.2 Student constructions of authenticity**

The students stated that they found the visits to community venues useful in helping them decide on their project. The students used this experience to think of other groups whom they could work with. This experience was viewed as relevant to their work for the module, but little comment was made about the social and political dimensions of the community-based groups, and this was not related back into the module assignments as critical analysis. The students had little previous experience in relation to developing work in the community; all the students mentioned this and related that they found the process of initial communication, e.g. setting up visits and making contact with organisations as very stressful.

The students enjoyed the visiting practitioners, and primarily saw them as being able to develop specific skills and techniques for improvising and working with groups. The students enjoyed working with each other and developing group work. This was seen as developing skills for working in theatre. The group process was severely disrupted when the group were required to develop a group project with each other, which required group effort and group marks.

### 7.7.3 Tutor and student constructions of authenticity and the development of autonomous learning behaviours

The diagram below illustrates the relationship between tutor and student constructions of authenticity and the (potential) development of autonomous learning behaviours.

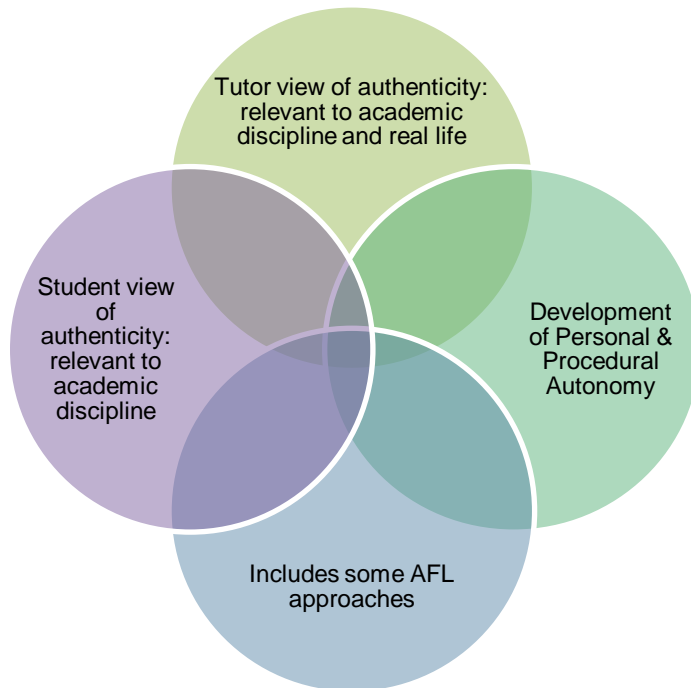


Figure 15: Constructions of authenticity and their relationship to autonomous learning behaviours – Performing Arts

## 7.8 Conclusion

This chapter has presented evidence from the fourth and final case study. The chapter discussed the structure of the module, learning and teaching activities and presented data extracts from the tutor and students through key themes relating to the concepts of authenticity and autonomy. This chapter is the fourth data set which will be included in chapter eight, which presents a cross analysis of findings from the four case studies.

The authentic activities which have been presented in this chapter were defined, for the purpose of this research, as:

- Authentic in relation to real life/world settings: The students had to produce a drama project based in the students' local community.

- Authentic in relation to a professional context: The assessment activity was designed to provide students with the necessary skills to work as a freelance theatre practitioner.
- Authentic in relation to an academic discipline: The teaching and assessment activities were designed to examine the methodology of theatre in applied social contexts.

The next chapter, Chapter Eight, presents a cross analysis of the four case studies.

## Chapter Eight

### Critical Discussion

This chapter is divided into five sections:

**Section 8.1** provides an introduction to the chapter and presents research data to illustrate the ways in which tutors views of authenticity relate to the development autonomous learning.

**Section 8.2** examines student constructions of authenticity and their relationship to autonomous learning

**Section 8.3** discusses the module pedagogy in relation to student constructions of authenticity and resulting developing autonomous behaviours.

**Section 8.4** outlines the relationships between authentic learning activities and autonomous learning

**Section 8.5** concludes the chapter.

## 8.1 Introduction

The previous four chapters presented data from each of the four cases. This chapter draws all four modules together and presents a cross case analysis using key themes to provide evidence of findings. The purpose of this chapter is to examine potential links and relationships between different constructions of authenticity (students and tutors) and the display of student autonomous learning behaviours. Observational data from the four module activities and data from tutor and student interviews are used to illustrate research findings. This chapter presents the last stage, stage 3, of the development of the conceptual framework for the research, which is shown in the figure below. The conceptual framework brings together the research question, the literature review and the research methodology and links the topics and themes presented into a coherent framework within which the research data can be analysed.

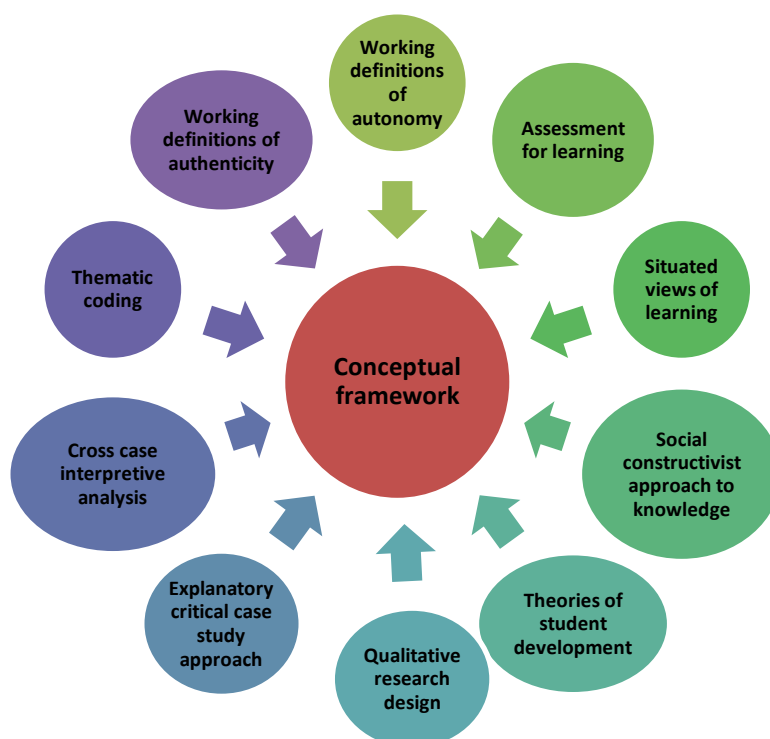


Figure 16: Conceptual framework: Stage 3



### 8.1.1 Tutor constructions of authenticity and their relationship to autonomous learning

The previous data analysis chapters presented tutors' and students' constructions of authenticity, their views on what was meant by learner autonomy, and the resulting pedagogic structures which developed during the modules as a result of these views.

The diagram below demonstrates the ways in which the tutors' views of knowledge and theories of learning impacted on the way in which the modules were designed.

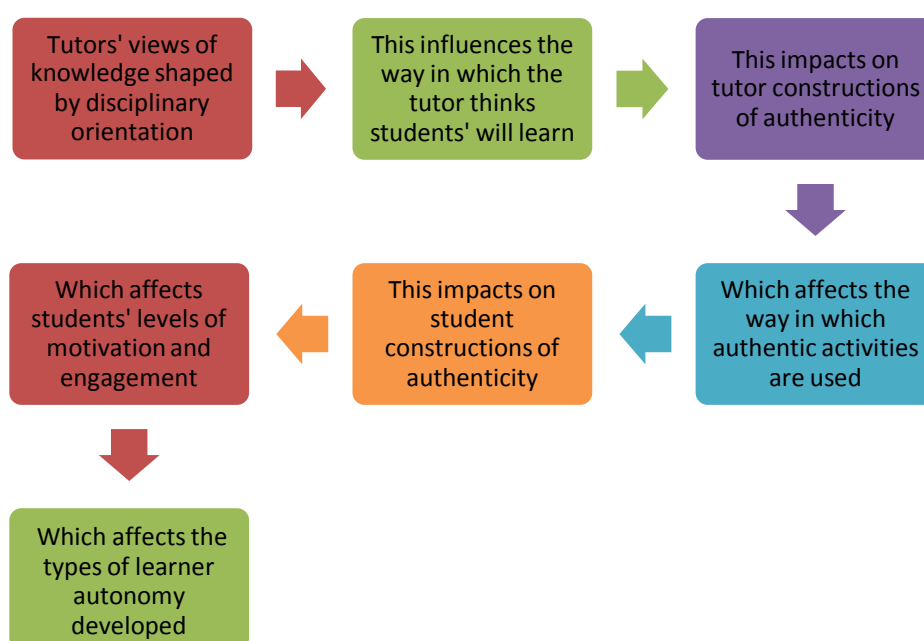


Figure 17: Ways in which constructions of authenticity inform teaching and learning practices

The literature review and methodology section outlined four ways in which the module tutors constructed the authentic learning activities. These included: authentic to a professional background, authentic to an academic discipline, authentic in relation to people's individual lives and authentic in relation to real world situations. These constructions were intertwined with the tutor's views of knowledge and beliefs about how students learn. These constructions became evident as the module progressed, with students' varying levels of experience and own knowledge positions affecting the learning process and potential for developing autonomous learning.

The tutor from Performing Arts constructed authenticity in relation to professional life. The tutor was keen for students to develop practical skills, to gain real life experience and to understand the social context of community-based performance. This construction resulted in authentic activities which were designed to develop students' employment skills. The relationships between the authentic learning activity and the development of autonomy can be seen as developing through the particular pedagogic strategy which the tutor designed. This is demonstrated through the tutor for Performing Arts designing activities for the students, which are framed within particular constructions of authenticity. The first activity required the students to produce a drama project with an organisation in the students' local community. This involved the students' liaising with community organisations and designing a drama project which was appropriate to the needs of the organisation and its service users. This construction of authenticity was viewed by the tutor as being authentic to real life/world settings. A second activity involved visiting practitioners coming into university and working with students to develop their freelance theatre practitioner skills; this can be viewed as a construction of authenticity which views the activity as relevant to a professional context. The tutor wanted students to develop skills (learner autonomy) which would be useful in the world of work; this is the 'link' in the relationship between the provision of the authentic learning activity and the (potential) development of learner autonomy.

This construction of authenticity is demonstrated by the following, where the tutor talks about one of the visiting practitioner's brought into the course to work with students:

'I think that his mode of delivery and his very 'no nonsense' approach to it and his ability to come in and say, 'Look, I'm doing this on a daily basis and I'm earning my living doing x, y and z. So take it or leave it...' in a sense. But these are the parameters that you've got to work in if you want to earn a living.'

The tutor went on to talk about the types of skills he hopes students will gain from the module:

‘Well I know for a fact that a lot of the work, certainly the planning, the documentation, the evaluation, and then the practical presentation of work will be useful. That is what they will have to do when they leave if they want to get work and maintain work. So I think there are lots of transferable skills to take away from it as well as hands on, ‘Actually well, this is what you would have to do if you are a freelance theatre practitioner’.

These constructions appear to influence the tutor in the ways in which he designed the curriculum and the types of tasks and activities he expected of the students. The relationships between authenticity and the development of learner autonomy are framed here by the tutor’s construction of the authentic task. The way in which the activities were *purposefully* designed, that is, to develop learners understanding of the world of work and professionalism, seemed to predominantly result in students developing the ‘types’ of autonomy which related to task management and reflection. Students on this module mainly reported the development of procedural types of autonomy, closely followed by personal autonomy, linked to reflection in relation to future employment (this result is discussed further in the following section).

The Geography tutor constructed authenticity in relation to the academic discipline and to peoples’ individual lives. The tutor was keen for students to relate their everyday life experiences to geographical theory. The tutor was explicit in that he wanted students to develop ‘critical thinking’, to be ‘free thinkers’, to develop their creativity and to be free to choose their own type of employment. This was demonstrated by the tutor when he stated:

‘And if it turns them into more sort of independent citizens and builds their civic strength, so they’re not just automatons, there’s no harm in that; it’s what University should do.’

The tutor developed learning activities which were authentic to real life /world settings; this consisted of a photography project based in the students’ community and authentic in relation to being relevant to peoples’ lives. This involved students producing a book or journal based around students’

individual lives. The relationships between these authentic learning activities and the development of learner autonomy can be viewed as evolving within a pedagogic framework within which the tutor constructed the authentic learning activities.

These constructions affected the ways in which the tutor developed learning activities, and subsequently, the ways in which the students experienced the module, with students on this module reporting the development of personal, procedural and relational aspects of autonomous learning behaviours (see discussion below).

The History tutor constructed authenticity in relation to the academic discipline of history and in relation to real life/world settings. The tutor created a strong disciplinary ethos within the module, referring to the students as 'historians'. The tutor was keen to assist students in relating real life phenomena (a visit to the cathedral) to history and to the use of primary sources. This is evidenced when the tutor talks about authentic learning activities and he explains why he has included original source material in the module pedagogy:

'I think it's essential that historians at some point actually go to historical source materials, read them and think about them and make their own judgements about them and have confidence in their own judgements about them. And again, that's absolutely basic skills for what is essentially their practical demonstration of their ability to work as more autonomous students, which is the third year dissertation.'

This construction of authentic learning assisted in the development of a pedagogy which included considerable use of original source material, which, in turn, required students to develop skills of critical analysis, review of evidence and self-assessment in relation to this process. The tutor included a range of strategies and activities which can be described as authentic learning activities, these included: use of modern day relevant examples, a visit to Durham Cathedral, the development of a debating society and a Monty Python DVD. The relationships between the authentic

learning activities and the development of learner autonomy can be viewed as developing within this pedagogic framework. Students on this module consistently reported the development of critical, relational, personal and procedural aspects of autonomous learning behaviours (see below).

The fourth tutor, who taught the Politics module, also constructed authenticity in relation to the academic discipline, as well as to real world settings. The tutor related that the module's aims were to develop critical thinking, communication skills, to develop skills for the real world and to increase students' responsibility for their own learning. This is illustrated when the tutor talked about negotiating essay titles with students:

'Well I think it gives students more autonomy. I think at this level, final year undergraduates, we've got to be preparing students for Masters level and I think once you get past undergraduate level you've got to be thinking of yourself as an autonomous learner, so it was an opportunity for students to develop their own critical thinking really.'

The Diplomacy board game was designed to require students to negotiate, problem-solve and communicate with each other. The module pedagogy included these aspects through all activities. These activities included a weekly 'news slot' where students were encouraged to discuss items of the weekly news, use of current newspapers political editorials, and original archived film. These activities provided an environment within which authenticity was viewed very much as integral to the curriculum; activities were developed and introduced at a range of levels and in different formats. The relationship between these authentic activities and the development of learner autonomy can be viewed as occurring within this 'rich' environment of authentic learning. Students on this module consistently reported the development of critical, relational, personal and procedural types of learning autonomy (see below).

In summary, the data has revealed that there were significant relationships between tutor constructions of authenticity, the development of module pedagogy, and the development of different types of autonomous learning

behaviour exhibited by students. The types, levels and variances are discussed further in the following sections.

## **8.2. Student constructions of authenticity and their relationship to autonomous learning**

The next three sub-sections use data extracts to discuss student constructions of authenticity and student experiences of the development of learner autonomy in relation to these constructions. Whilst student experiences are discussed in relation to the categories which have been used to develop themes for the cases, it is important to acknowledge that the definition of autonomy used for this research does not view autonomy as a unitary concept, but as activity which can develop in a variety of ways, which may not necessarily follow a 'uniform' pattern. Different aspects of autonomous behaviour are viewed as being at times more prevalent than others, but this does not preclude the idea that other elements of autonomy may be developing, in a variety of different ways. This could include a sophisticated 'layering' process which is seen as occurring in a multi-dimensional, fluid manner. This viewpoint on autonomy can be seen as underlying the main principles which inform this research and central to the definition of autonomy used in this study.

### **8.2.1 Authenticity, motivation, engagement and learner autonomy**

The authentic activity seems to have an important role to play at the beginning of a learning activity, where it can be seen to act as a device to intrigue, engage and motivate learners. Students who reported becoming engaged in the authentic learning tasks described being motivated to learn and keen to try out new approaches and ideas. The learners perceived the task(s) as relevant to their own learning needs and reported feeling in control of activities. In this instance, self determined learning can be related to motivation in that the learner has a sense of ownership of the learning process. This was demonstrated by Herbert (History): *'I really have been able to get to grips and immerse myself in what the material is and how it's provided'* and Dick (Politics): *'I want to turn up for that, not because I'm afraid that I'll miss a go, but because I enjoy playing it'*.

In relation to the Politics module, the combination of negotiation, partnership working and a strong subject orientation enabled the students to feel part of things; they had an identity (as politicians or as challenging, critical thinkers) a purpose in the game (to develop strategies and negotiate) and could see the relevance of the activity to their future lives (the development of skills). To engage with the game the students had to use types of behaviours which they perhaps found difficult, new, strange, or creative, energising and motivating.

Some students reported often feeling disorientated at the beginning of a module, when a lot of new information was being processed. Some students reported not understanding the guidelines, the rationale for the task or the level or standard of work required. These were common themes for students at the beginning of modules; however, the severity and length of time these concerns were exhibited for varied, most became less over time and did not seem to interfere with the overall learning experience.

Students' engagement during the modules could be seen as moving backwards and forwards along a 'timeline'. Levels of engagement changed during the course of the modules, with some students actively engaged from the beginning and maintaining this engagement throughout, illustrated by Gwyneth (Geography): 'Really well, yes it's gone really well', Hazel (History) *'I found it really good, really interesting'* and Pat (Performing Arts) *'I think it's really important to be passionate and really want to do this and put your heart and soul into it'*.

Some students took more time to become engaged, and when this occurred as the module progressed, maintaining this engagement varied. This is evidenced by Penny (Performing Arts): *'I think from the beginning, I didn't quite understand what this module was going to be, but I've actually found it a lot more useful than I thought it was going to be and I've actually quite enjoyed myself'* and Gertrude (Geography) *'And I'll just smile...even if I'm crying on the inside. 'It's too much!' Yes, it'll be good.'*

A small number of students did not fully engage with the learning process throughout their modules. This was demonstrated by Polly (Performing Arts),

*'The lesson that we had this week, I just thought I didn't learn anything. I don't really see the point of it, to be honest'* and Davina (Politics) who seemed unsure of the module: *'If it works it'll probably be quite useful but it depends on how well it works in the long run'*.

Some students did not seem to respond to the authentic learning activity and could be described as 'compliant' with the learning task. They 'accepted' the activity, 'got on with the task', but did not appear to exhibit any great motivation or 'ownership' of the task – they, in effect, 'jumped through the required hoops' to gain marks. This could be termed an instrumental or surface approach to learning, and is evidenced by Gertrude (Geography): *'I have no idea...I know that sounds ridiculous, but I don't know what he wanted us to achieve really'*, and Penny (Performing Arts): *'I don't know what you have to do per se, because I just do it'*.

The students who exhibited this type of response could be said to not be 'intrinsically' motivated. The learning activity had, for some reason, not worked for them and they had not found the authentic activity (or curriculum process) motivating or engaging.

At different points during the module, students could be described as disengaging or withdrawing from aspects of the learning activity. Conflict within learner groups emerged and opposition to elements of the learning task and different types of challenge were demonstrated toward the learning activity. This was demonstrated by Pat (Performing Arts): *'I feel like I didn't shine as much as the other two did and I don't know if that was intentional of them or not. Hmm...'* and Deidre (Politics): *'I didn't really understand the whole concept because the instructions are very, very, very confusing, so I just tried my best'*.

Varying levels of 'resistance' or disengagement were exhibited by students across all cases, at different stages in the module. Three main themes seemed to engender resistance on the part of students. These were 1) when students were required to take part in tasks or activities which were new or unfamiliar to them, evidenced by Gertrude (Geography) *'I feel like we should've had more lectures on it, because there are things that I just didn't*



*understand'*, 2) when the authentic learning activity was not perceived as relevant or meaningful to the students, evidenced by Deidre (Politics) *'but I really didn't understand the instructions in the first place and I wasn't really sure how you turn it into diplomacy'* and 3) when marks and assessment grades were attached to group activities, demonstrated by Polly (Performing Arts) *'Oh, which group am I going to be in? And if you're going to be let down....and the marking would be better if it's individual'*.

The seminal work of Kelly (1963) may be useful in understanding perhaps some of the reasons why students may withdraw from particular learning activities. Kelly's theories are applicable to the development of autonomy in that Kelly states that when new learning takes place which does not hold congruence with our already imposed belief system, confusion or withdrawal from the learning situation may occur. This withdrawal can be countered through the teacher assisting the learner in becoming more aware of their psychological process, and in learning, to take more control over their learning processes. It has been recognised that these processes of change can be difficult and frightening for some learners and that when learners are not fully motivated to become involved in the activity, change or the development of autonomy may become difficult.

In summary, when the authentic learning task was constructed by students as a device to motivate and engage, learners reported feeling that they had control over the development of their work and a range of autonomous learning behaviours developed.

### **8.2.2 Authenticity, meaning, relevance and learner autonomy**

When authentic learning activities were seen as relevant and meaningful by students, this seemed to promote a range of autonomous learning behaviours. The development of **personal autonomy** was seen quite distinctly in the Geography and Performing Arts modules, where the assignments required students to undertake a considerable degree of reflection. This was illustrated by Geoffrey (Geography): *'I'm thinking of doing maybe something to do with 'a life so far'....just to say how things have changed over time'*, Gwyneth (Geography): *'Kind of realise what you've*

*learnt and what you know about the city and what you know about yourself, which is really nice I think*' and Pat (Performing Arts): *'I think when I'm nervous I get a bit shy and step back a bit. I need to put myself out there a bit more'*. Personal autonomy was also demonstrated in the Politics and History modules, where students had to reflect on their performance in the Diplomacy game, evidenced by Dick (Politics): *'In particular, starting assessed work earlier and putting more background effort in'* and Harriet (History): *'What I didn't do last year, and I wish I had, was look at more journals and different sources'*.

The development of **critical autonomy** was quite marked in the History and Politics modules, where both had a marked disciplinary structure. The politics module required students to make judgments on their own about particular courses of action, negotiate, problem-solve and weigh up particular actions against one another. This was demonstrated by Donald (Politics): *It's about going in there and taking what you've learnt and what your views are and your opinions, to challenge the views that other people have put forward and using your knowledge to actually see what other peoples' views are'*. The students undertaking the History module reported that they had found using the primary sources very helpful in developing critical analysis and being able to understand the social and political context of the time. The students reported that the research skills they had used had made them feel like 'historians' and this context had been useful for developing new ideas and testing these ideas out with other students during debates. This was illustrated by Hazel (History): *'You can actually look at it and be able to say, well, I think this, and then you can argue your point whether you agree or disagree with any particular historian'*. Critical autonomy was also evidenced in the Geography module, where students reported interpreting information in new ways; critical links were made to semiotics but not always to geographical theory. This was illustrated by Geoffrey (Geography): *'being a lot more critical as well about certain things. It gets you to think rather than just accept'*, and to a lesser extent, in the Performing Arts module, where critical analysis in relation to the political and social context was limited, as were links to underlying drama theory. This was illustrated by Pat

(Performing Arts): *'we've got to think of things ourselves and then organise it with the group'*.

The Performing Arts and Geography students particularly reported skills which could be referred to as the development of **procedural autonomy**. The Performing Arts students used the module experience to develop time management skills and to gain information about potential community groups, whom they would like to work with, illustrated by Penny (Performing Arts): *'Tightness in organisation, having everything on time, knowing exactly what you're doing and where you're going. No mess-ups'*. Meanwhile the Geography students reported having to plan well to manage tight timescales due to dissertation deadlines, evidenced by Gwyneth (Geography): *'Because it is a very different assessment you have to plan more, you've got to get the materials and make sure your camera and your photos are going to print all right....it's not the routine of normally just printing an essay off'*.

**Relational autonomy** could be seen across all modules, particularly in relation to the Politics and Performing Arts modules, where students were required to work in groups as part of the assessment criteria. This was illustrated by David (Politics): *'It's set up where you have to talk to each other to play the game but not necessarily to complete the work'*. The Politics students' group work skills seemed to develop through the collaboration required to play the game. There were no marks attached to the group work process and the essay assignment was summative and individual in nature. The seminar logs required individual activity and reflection. There was no competition involved in the allocation of marks, and no requirement to share out tasks to contribute to a group assessment process. This could be viewed as marks 'not getting in the way' of the relationships which developed through the activity. The authenticity of the activity was constructed through a mixture of student (and tutor) participation. The authentic activity was not just about the Diplomacy game itself. To enable the game to 'come alive' and 'work' as the tutor intended, the tutor had to set up the group activities in a way which allowed students to participate and collaborate in tasks which promoted 'genuine interdependence' (Hartley, 2005, p. 67).

In contrast, marks did seem to ‘get in the way’ of relational tasks in the Performing Arts module, the group activity and developing relationships were disrupted and students withdrew, or resisted the activity. This was evidenced by Penny (Performing Arts): *‘I sometimes think it’s a bit unfair because as a situation that’s not necessarily mine, that you can create a document and it represents the whole group yet one person could have put far more into it than another’*, and Pia (Performing Arts): *‘Maybe other people might do more than what they’ve said they are going to do so it looks like they have done more’*.

### 8.3. Constructions of authenticity and the development of learner autonomy: Two models from the data

The two figures below, shown as Model A and Model B, demonstrate the ways in which tutor and student constructions of authenticity related to the development of learner autonomy.

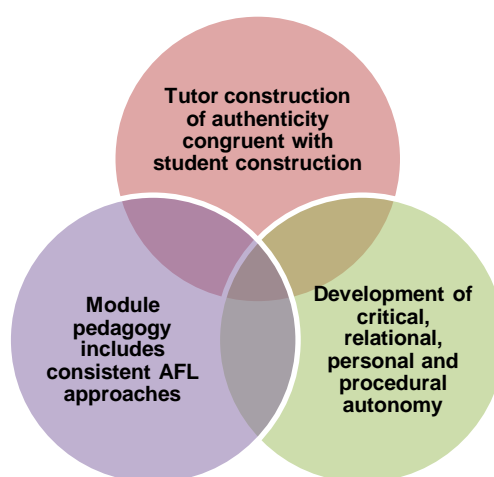


Figure 18: Constructions of authenticity and the development of learner autonomy. Model A.

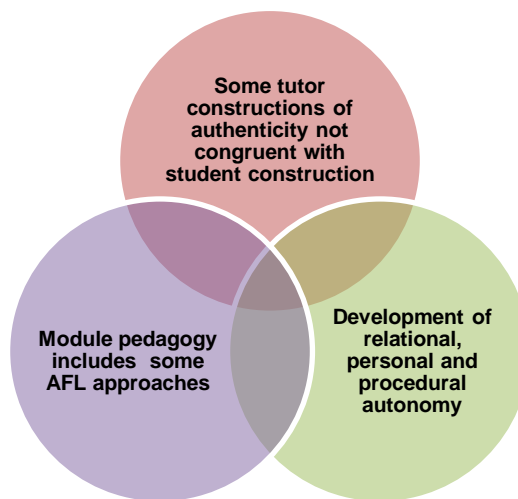


Figure 19: Constructions of authenticity and the development of learner autonomy. Model B.

## 8.4 Relationships between authentic learning activities and autonomous learning

The research has evaluated types of autonomous learning behaviours which have emerged from a range of different authentic pedagogic strategies. The research has identified what types of pedagogic strategies have promoted the development of autonomous learning behaviours and what happened in the absence of such strategies. The findings (the research outcomes) are summarised here:

- Authentic activities which provided opportunities for students to engage in problem-solving and critical analysis, particularly related to their subject disciplinary knowledge, displayed aspects of critical autonomy
- Authentic activities which had a focus on students engaging in reflection displayed aspects of personal autonomy
- Authentic activities which involved students collaborating on learning tasks promoted relational autonomy
- Authentic activities which emphasised a wide range of tasks which required organisational and time management skills displayed aspects of procedural autonomy

- Students who engaged in authentic activities which included all, or a combination of the above, displayed autonomous learning behaviours across a spectrum of autonomy
- The development of autonomy can be viewed as occurring in a multi-faceted, multi-dimensional manner, within a complex 'layering' process

#### **8.4.1 Relationships between authentic activities, pedagogic frameworks and the development of learner autonomy**

- Authentic activities consistently produced 'initial' learner engagement. The authentic activity could be viewed as providing the initial 'hook' which 'intrigued' learners, the activity 'drew' learners into the activity and provided a vehicle with which the learners could access the learning activity. This 'hook' has been described in relation to the 'working definition' which was used to select cases, and includes activities which were viewed as: authentic to the academic discipline, authentic to real-life setting, authentic in relation to being meaningful to individual lives and authentic in relation to a professional context. The authentic activities acted as a motivator and source of interest to the students throughout the modules. It is important to note, however, that even though learners may have displayed varying levels of engagement (and enthusiasm for the tasks) during the module activities, this engagement did not necessarily result in learners displaying autonomous learning behaviours. Learners who were engaged in a range of 'busy' tasks which required considerable organisational skills, and good time management, consistently displayed aspects of procedural autonomy. The inclusion of activities which required a great deal of organisation effectively drew the learners' attention (and energy) away from any potential activities which could have provided deeper problem-solving opportunities. Where authentic activities were presented which did offer problem-solving opportunities (particularly related to disciplinary knowledge) learners displayed aspects of critical autonomy.

- Authentic activities were more effective in developing learner autonomy when supported by a range of pedagogic approaches which supported the authentic activity. These pedagogic strategies included: transparency of learning aims, opportunities to self-assess and reflect, the provision of informal feedback, including peer assessment, feedback from the tutor and opportunities to collaborate with other students. These types of curricular approaches can be placed within an Assessment for Learning pedagogic framework.

#### **8.4.2 Relationships between tutor and student constructions of authenticity and learner autonomy**

Tutor and student constructions of the authentic activities appeared to affect the type of autonomy students displayed. Mismatches resulted in different outcomes than were initially intended by the tutor. Two examples include the authentic activities undertaken in the geography and the performing arts modules. The geography tutor clearly stated at the beginning of the module that he hoped the students would be able to develop skills of critical analysis in relation to geographical theory. However, the way in which the authentic activity was constructed and presented to the students resulted in the display of procedural and personal autonomous learning. Similarly, the performing arts tutor related to students that one of the module's aims was to develop students' political awareness in relation to community theatre, but the construction of the authentic activities seemed to result in mainly relational and procedural autonomy being displayed. It would seem, then, that in order for the authentic activity to produce the intended outcome of the module aims and objectives, both tutor and students' constructions of authenticity need to be aligned to the intended learning outcomes for the module. This requires transparency of process from the beginning of the module to the final evaluation.

### **8.5 Conclusion**

The data presented in this chapter demonstrates that the authentic learning activity cannot be seen as an entity which acts 'by itself'. An authentic learning activity cannot be 'added on' to a learning programme as a 'type' of enrichment, and be expected to provide meaningful experiences for students

without an awareness and acknowledgment that the authentic activity is part of an overall pedagogic approach, incorporating both tutors' and students' perceptions of knowledge, assessment and learning. These perceptions can be said to be 'socially situated' and bound up with institutional culture, assessment norms and standards, which are both locally and nationally defined. Assessment shapes how students view the curriculum and make decisions about what they learn and how they learn it (Ramsden, 2003) so assessing autonomy may be essential for its development in an institutional context (O'Leary, 2006).

The data analysis has revealed that it is difficult to 'separate out' different aspects of autonomous learning behaviour. For one 'type' of autonomy to develop (for instance, relational autonomy), students have to be able to exhibit a certain degree of personal autonomy, for example, communication skills and self awareness. The development of critical autonomy may depend on students developing procedural skills. One type of autonomy seems to build on another type of autonomy and the concept can be seen as multi-dimensional and developed within a complex layering process.

The data analysis has raised a number of questions, including the issue of 'measurement.' Are we able to measure autonomy? If we can describe and define autonomy, what are the inherent difficulties? The measurement of autonomy seems to be problematic. Benson (2001) states that perhaps there are three main factors which make this difficult. The most pressing factor is that autonomy is 'a multi-dimensional concept'. Autonomy can be viewed in a number of different ways, depending upon a range of factors, including the learner's age and their educational experience. If autonomy is defined as a construct, it is not always assured that learners will demonstrate or use this capacity. Benson argues that a 'genuine' autonomous behaviour is one which is self generated and not a learner response to an external mechanism required by the tutor. The final factor which makes it difficult for us to measure autonomy is that autonomy can be defined as part of a developmental process. Benson relates that at present little is known about the stages learners go through when developing autonomous behaviour. It can be argued that the development of autonomy is context specific, uneven



and variable. A learner who demonstrates autonomy in one area may not necessarily demonstrate it in another (Little, 1992, p. 5).

The final chapter of the thesis, the conclusion, will draw the thesis together, outlining main research findings, outlining the thesis contribution to knowledge and potential direction of future research.

## Chapter Nine

### Conclusion

This Chapter is divided into four sections:

**Section 9.1** introduces the chapter and outlines the research completed for the thesis

**Section 9.2** provides a review of the research outputs

**Section 9.3** examines the conceptual links between the research findings and discusses the research's original contribution to knowledge

**Section 9.4** considers the research's implications for practice

## 9.1 Introduction

The conclusion of the thesis returns to the research question to examine the conceptual connections between the research findings. The research question asked: **How do authentic learning activities, placed within an Assessment for Learning framework, assist in the development of learner autonomy?** The research was interested in authentic learning activities which paid attention to assessment environments, learning cultures and collaborative tasks. The thesis evaluated the outcomes of four case studies which were described as displaying these types of curricular approaches. The research has identified that there are significant relationships between the provision of authentic learning activities and the development of learner autonomy. These relationships are examined in section 9.3. The next section reviews the research process and the activities which were part of it. The thesis was made up of a series of chapters which acted as a 'map', guiding the reader through the research process. Each chapter built on the previous section, developing a conceptual framework which provided a clear route and rationale for the choices of research methodology, data collection and analysis, shown in the figure below.

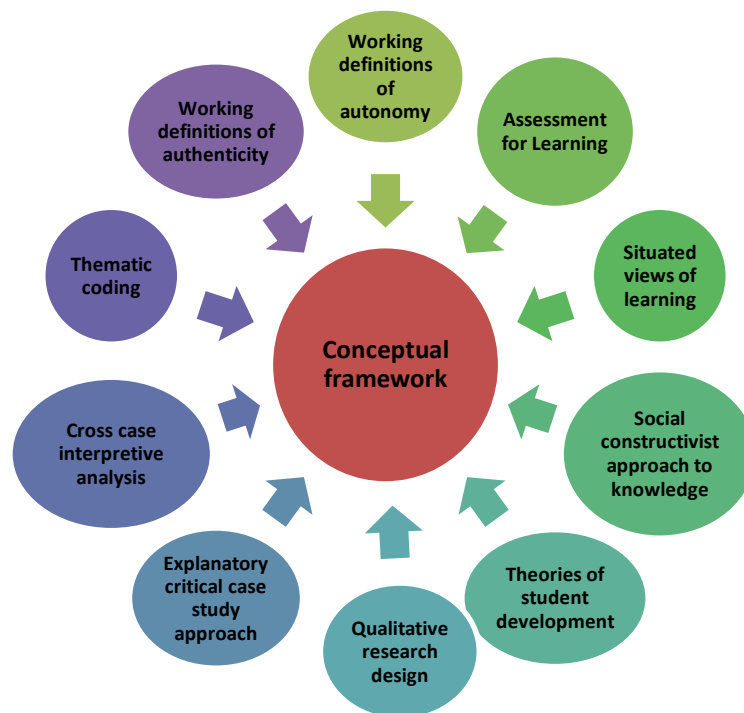


Figure 20: Conceptual framework: Conclusion

## 9.2 A review of the research outputs

The thesis has provided the following research outputs. It has:

- 1) Provided an analysis of teaching and assessment strategies for four academic modules in higher education.
- 2) Observed a range of pedagogic approaches, including: collaborative learning, peer feedback and assessment, field trips, simulations, visiting lecturer activities, interactive games and exercises, problem-solving activities, public exhibitions and involvement in community activities.
- 3) Produced data extracts from researcher observations over two twelve-week periods, including documentary analysis of module material, observation of lectures, seminars and field trips.
- 4) Conducted forty interviews with twenty students and eight interviews with four tutors, providing detailed qualitative material for analysis.
- 5) Presented a detailed, thematic analysis of tutor and student constructions of authenticity and related these to the development of learner autonomy.

### 9.2.1 Introduction to the thesis

The introduction to the thesis gave a rationale for the research and placed the study in a political, social and pedagogic context. The section examined current priorities in higher education, including the national agenda to raise the standards of learning in a social context, which emphasises the development of skills and attributes which will enable learners to 'know how to learn' and to 'compete' within a fast-moving global environment. The introduction raised questions in relation to claims about the inevitability of the development of a global knowledge society which will require learners to develop such skills.

The introduction gave details of the researcher's professional background, providing a context for the study of authenticity and autonomy in learning. Theories of student development and approaches to knowledge construction were discussed in relation to their relevance to learner autonomy. A review of the development of formative assessment in higher education was outlined,

with an introduction to 'Assessment for Learning', a pedagogic approach which was central to the research design and rationale. The concepts of authenticity and autonomy in education were reviewed and placed within the current political and social context of assessment in higher education. The introduction to the thesis, in outlining and reviewing the above concepts, acted as the first 'building block' of the conceptual framework for the research. This included: theories of authenticity and autonomy, theories of student development, situated views of learning, socio-constructivist approaches to knowledge and Assessment for Learning as a central pedagogic framework.

### **9.2.2 The literature review**

The literature review provided a theoretical framework for the research design and choice of methodology for the research. This included a review of literature relevant to the research, a critical review of Assessment for Learning and linked this pedagogic approach to theories of authenticity and autonomy in learning. The section discussed the ways in which different constructions of knowledge and learning may impact on student learning, and reviewed this in relation to current research about student development. The section linked theories of student motivation and engagement to the development of learner autonomy and provided the 'working definitions' of authenticity and autonomy which were used for the research. The literature review provided a theoretical framework for the research, developing the conceptual ideas and epistemological basis which provided the rationale for the research methodology.

### **9.2.3 The methodology section**

The methodology section outlined the research design and gave a rationale for the inclusion of the four cases within the research. This included the working definitions of authenticity and autonomy which were used to select cases and code and analyse the data. The section examined the rationale for the choice of method in relation to the study of learner autonomy, and this involved a review of the two main approaches to research in student learning – 'psychological stage' theories and 'college' impact models. The qualitative research design incorporated a situated approach to learning which allowed

the researcher to observe detailed student responses in learning environments which incorporated a range of authentic learning activities. Data collection included forty-five interviews with tutors and students, classroom observation, site visits and documentary analysis of module materials. The research used an inductive, multiple critical case study approach. This enabled the researcher to analyse the data from the four case studies and develop theoretical models from the data. The research used a 'continuum of authenticity' to select cases, and these were placed at varying points along this continuum, within a sampling framework which summarised definitions of authenticity taken from the literature review. The research used a cross case interpretive analysis approach to analyse the data. Thematic coding allowed themes to be developed across the data. The data analysis moved through a series of six stages, ending with a final cross case analysis of all the data collected during the research. The methodology chapter added new understandings to the conceptual framework and provided the basis for the research design for the study.

#### **9.2.4 Four data analysis chapters**

The research presented four data analysis chapters, consisting of four case studies with individual analysis of each case. The chapters outlined the structure of the cases (modules), including the teaching and assessment strategy and learning aims and objectives for the modules. The four chapters gave details of the teaching and learning activities which took place over a twelve-week period and provided evidence in the form of data extracts from participants under key themes: motivation and engagement, meaning and relevance and pedagogy and assessment structure. The chapters presented research findings from twenty students and four tutors in relation to the key themes of autonomy which were used to code the interviews. These were: procedural autonomy, personal autonomy, critical autonomy and relational autonomy. The chapters discussed the constructions and perceptions of tutors and students in relation to authenticity. The chapters examined the pedagogic approach taken by the tutor and the student response to these approaches.

### **9.2.5 A cross case interpretative analysis of the four cases**

The eighth chapter of the thesis presented a cross case interpretative analysis of the four cases. The chapter used key themes to provide evidence of research findings and examined the links and relationships between tutor and student constructions of authenticity and the display of student's autonomous learning behaviours. The chapter examined the way in which tutor constructions of knowledge and theories of learning impacted on the teaching and learning strategy used during the modules. The chapter presented two models from the data which demonstrated the relationships between tutor and student constructions of authenticity and the development of learner autonomy.

### **9.2.6 Lessons learnt from the research process**

There are a number of issues relating to the research design which didn't progress as expected. I intended to include examples of student learning logs to demonstrate the types of reflection which had occurred during the modules. I asked students' permission, and asked students to send me the learning logs when the modules were finished. Only two students responded and I did not feel that they would be 'representative' to include in the research. I also intended to include students' final degree marks in the research methodology, as an additional means to triangulate the results, to demonstrate that students from a range of abilities took part in the research (this was based on an assumption on my part that students would gain a range of degree classifications, which may not actually have been the case). The majority of students were final year students and had left the university when I emailed the requests and their e-mail accounts had been cancelled, so no results were available.

## **9.3 Conceptual links between the research findings and original contribution to knowledge**

I have outlined below nine points which demonstrate the conceptual links between the research findings and which provide evidence for the thesis' original contribution to knowledge.

- 1) The research has made a contribution to the discussion of autonomy in learning, through particular reference to authentic learning activities in non-vocational subject areas, an area which has not been extensively researched. The way in which authenticity is framed within higher education has predominantly been within vocational education, where authentic learning activities are placed within work settings, with learning outcomes directed towards professional awarding bodies' standards. The move away from examining authentic assessment from purely a vocational angle has yielded some interesting findings. The research has demonstrated that authentic learning activities do not have to be tied to a specific vocational learning programme to produce valuable learning experiences and to be seen as relevant and meaningful to students. The study has shown that authenticity can be viewed as being placed on a continuum, it is multi-faceted, multi-dimensional and can exist equally well in a small-scale classroom based initiative as it can in a completely work-based, immersed type of activity. Learners do not have to be in a work place environment, real or simulated, to gain benefit from authentic learning activities. The positive outcomes which can be gained from authentic assessment are gained not from simply placing activities within a 'real-world' (vocational) setting, and expecting students to 'learn' from this experience, but from the acknowledgment that learning activities need to be framed and conceptualised within a pedagogic structure which places the authentic learning activity within a holistic framework, which addresses the *whole* context of the learning environment.
- 2) The research findings add to research in relation to theories of motivation and engagement and the link between engagement and the development of learner autonomy (Ecclestone, 2002). The research has shown that authentic learning activities can act as a powerful motivator to learners. Activities which engage the interests of the learner, through the development of meaning and context, can act as a 'hook' to draw learners into the activity and, if adequately supported throughout the learning programme, can help maintain



engagement. This engagement with the learning activity is fundamental to the development of learner autonomy.

- 3) The research has investigated the role of authentic learning activities in relation to student motivation and engagement and looked in detail at the way in which tutor and student constructions of the authentic activity affect both engagement and the development of learner autonomy. The ways in which tutors and learners constructed the authentic learning activities resulted in different types of learner autonomy being exhibited. These results were often unintended outcomes, from the tutor's perspective. For example, the geography tutor wanted to develop authentic activities which would aim to develop learner criticality. Whilst learners reported being actively engaged throughout the module, the learners constructed the activities as requiring time management and organisational skills, with the result that procedural types of learner autonomy were predominantly displayed in this module.
- 4) The research has outlined the theoretical relationships between the provision of particular pedagogic strategies and the development of different types of learner autonomy (personal, procedural, critical and relational). The research has conceptualised these relationships within a theoretical framework which pays attention to the situated nature of learning, socio-constructivist views of knowledge and an Assessment for Learning pedagogic framework. The pedagogic strategies which were employed by the tutors resulted in different types of learner autonomy being displayed by students. The authentic learning activity was most effective when attention was paid to a range of different factors. These factors included the tutors' understandings of how people learn, this affected the way in which tutors constructed the authentic learning activity and which affected the types of learning autonomy displayed (outlined above). Secondly, the development of autonomy was influenced by both the amount and the type, of supporting pedagogic strategies put in place by the tutor to assist students in the learning activity. This included opportunities for

questions, opportunities to develop discussions and interact with peers, opportunities for self, peer and tutor feedback and assessment, and opportunities to co-construct the curriculum – the amount of choice and input the students had to the activity and the overall module structure.

- 5) The research found that critical autonomy seemed to be supported by a strong disciplinary ethos and the development of a student identity within the discipline. This was seen most prevalently in the history and politics modules, where both tutors emphasised the situated nature of the authentic learning activity, placing activities within a disciplinary structure which clearly and explicitly linked the activity to disciplinary theory. Further research is needed which looks at ways to develop critical autonomy through the use of authentic learning activities and which links current understandings about the nature of autonomy to theories of motivation and engagement.
- 6) The research has presented two theoretical models in relation to the development of learner autonomy and adds to the body of research in learner autonomy in higher education (Boud, 1988). The two models presented offer insight into the complex theoretical relationships between tutor and learner constructions of authenticity and the development of learner autonomy. The models reveal that the development of learner autonomy is constructed within a framework of inter-related, multi-dimensional factors, which interact at different levels to produce a range of learner outcomes.
- 7) The research has explored the collaborative nature of learning and highlighted the importance of the relational aspects of learner autonomy, as outlined by Mackenzie and Stoljay (2000). Opportunities for learners to collaborate, engage in joint tasks, problem solve and take part in group and peer feedback were fundamental to the development of all 'types' of learner autonomy. The development of relational autonomy was clearly seen in modules where students were given opportunities to take part in the above

types of activity. The research has observed that the development of learner autonomy may occur in a 'layering', and often uneven manner. The development of relational autonomy, therefore, can be seen as a fundamental, intrinsic component in the development of a range of types of learner autonomy.

- 8) The research has revealed that a pedagogic strategy which aims to develop learner autonomy cannot just be about the use of one particular approach, because the learning environment includes too many competing variables. A 'rich' notion of learning is required, which takes account of institutional norms and values, student's motivations and interests, disciplinary cultures and epistemological knowledge. This research has demonstrated that authentic learning activities have the potential to contribute to this 'rich' notion of learning. Authentic learning is multi-dimensional and can therefore be used in a wide variety of ways, in different contexts, with the ability to address a range of learning outcomes. The multi-faceted nature of authentic learning offers considerable flexibility and an appropriate 'vehicle' within which curriculum can be developed which contributes both to student learning and the development of learner autonomy in higher education.

#### **9.4 Implications for practice**

The conceptual framework of this thesis places this research within a particular theoretical paradigm. This paradigm pays attention to the situated nature of learning, socio-constructivist views of knowledge and incorporates Assessment for Learning pedagogic strategies. Assessment for Learning approaches in higher education are based upon a central underlying philosophy. This philosophy views collaboration, transparency of process, negotiation of curriculum and student/tutor equity and partnership as fundamental to learners' educational development. This is only one of a number of alternative discourses within which teaching, learning and assessment are currently conceptualised in higher education. Different political, social and economic factors will act upon higher education

institutions and cultures, resulting in a range of discourse in relation to learning and assessment. This range of discourses have implications for the study of authenticity and the way in which teaching and learning strategies are conceptualised in relation to the development of autonomy.

The way in which 'lifelong learning' is framed within higher education (economic, social, political or culturally based), together with on-going debates about the role and purpose of higher education (Barnett, 2007), will inevitably impact on the way in which learner autonomy is defined and conceptualised. Limited definitions of lifelong learning, with a narrow focus on the development of skills relating to the economy will not encompass the wider implications of the use of authenticity and development of autonomy in learning.

I have outlined five points below, which I believe are important future areas in which to expand/develop the research which has been completed for this thesis. I have included reference to educational theorists who are currently involved in research in related areas:

- 1) Examination of the way in which authenticity and autonomy are constructed within different learning cultures and subject disciplines (Boud, 2008).
- 2) Investigation of the way in which different assessment discourses impact on constructions of authenticity and autonomy (Pryor and Crossouard, 2007).
- 3) Exploration of the way in which lifelong learning is conceptualised by institutions and the impact these interpretations have on tutor and student constructions of authenticity and autonomy (Broadfoot, 2007).
- 4) Study of the ways in which different views and positions in relation to the role of higher education impact on constructions of authentic and autonomy (Barnett & Coate, 2005).
- 5) Exploration of the potential role of authenticity and autonomy in relation to a cultural approach to learning, teaching and

assessment, including research in relation to learning cultures (James & Biesta, 2007).

This research has highlighted that the formation of the learning environment is central to the development of learner autonomy, and that tutors' constructions of authenticity and understandings of the learning process crucially affect learning outcomes for students. The research has demonstrated that closer examination of the social, cultural and political contexts in which learning takes place is necessary if higher education is to provide a learning experience which enables future graduates to develop the problem-solving skills and critical awareness needed to imagine and develop their own futures.

Authenticity in learning has great potential - if the right conditions are in place, authentic learning activities can provide effective pedagogic strategies which support learners in developing a range of 'higher order' learning skills - the development of learner autonomy.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1a: Information for students about the research

#### Student learning Experiences

##### Information for students about the research

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. The following information is provided to help you decide if you would like to take part. Please ask me any questions which occur to you, either in person, or telephone me on the above number, or e-mail me at [gillian2.davison@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:gillian2.davison@northumbria.ac.uk).

Please feel free to ask the other participants in the group their opinions if something is not clear to you.

#### What is the purpose of the study?

##### Who am I?

My name is Gillian Davison and I am currently studying for a research degree at Northumbria University. This study is part of my thesis - the results will be written up and presented for a research degree. The findings of this research may also be used within the organisation where I work – The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Northumbria University. The centre conducts research in teaching and assessment practice in Higher Education.

The rationale for this research is grounded in the National agenda to raise the standards of learning and as such is an important National priority.

I am interested in the ways adults learn and the ways in which teaching and assessment practices affect our experiences (and our achievement) in learning.

I would like to find out what you think about different teaching and assessment approaches, particularly those which:

- Involve 'real life' scenarios e.g. projects and visits outside the University,
- Learning and assessment which is made meaningful to you though situating learning in your own experience – something which is relevant to your own life
- Teaching which places learning in a social context e.g. not abstract theory, but explained as something which you can relate to
- Teaching or assessment which invites you as the learner, to develop your own understanding of what constitutes the criteria for a 'good' assignment.

Teaching and assessment which validates your experiences, your knowledge and builds on this to design learning which you can feel is truly relevant to you and your life at this particular time – teaching and assessment which to you feels 'authentic'.

#### Why have I been invited?

Your University has agreed to take part in the research and you have been invited to participate as part of a group of students identified as taking a module or subject which include elements of the teaching and assessment practices outlined above.

**Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide. We will describe the study and go through this information sheet, which we will then give to you. If you would like to take part, we will ask you to sign a consent form to show that you have agreed to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

**What will be involved if I do take part?**

I would like to talk to you during the course of the module you are taking, at least once and possibly twice. This would be on an individual basis for about an hour each time. There may also be a group discussion with other students.

The study will involve recording the discussion. The findings will be analysed and published as part of my research degree. This will involve one copy being placed in Northumbria University Library, and possibly extracts published in educational journals. Findings from the research may also be disseminated to a wider research audience by The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Northumbria University. You may receive a copy of the completed report if you would like this. You will not be individually identified in any report/publication unless you have given your consent.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

Yes. I will follow ethical and legal practice and all information about you will be handled in confidence. All personal data will be securely held in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). This means that your data is held in confidence and is protected from disclosure to a third party without the permission of the person about whom it is recorded. During and after the research, data will be held securely in computer files (password protected) or locked away securely in filing cabinets in the Centre. Under the Data Protection Act you can withdraw your permission at any time; you can also ask to access the research data at any time. You can contact myself or the Centre Director, Liz McDowell at any time if you have any questions or concerns about the research.

**What If there is a problem?**

Any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study will be addressed. Please contact myself, Gillian Davison on the enclosed number (or e-mail), or if you do not wish to talk to myself, please contact either my supervisor(s), xxx whose contact details are included on this information sheet, or Northumbria University directly.

**What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?**

You are free to withdraw from the study at any point. You as the participant retain the right to decide if any data collected from your group discussion may still be used in the study.

**Who is funding the research?**

The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, at The University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne, is funding the research.

**Who has reviewed and approved the study?**

All research conducted through Northumbria University is approved by a Research Ethics Committee to protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity. This study has been reviewed and approved by the Northumbria Research and Ethics Committee.

## **Appendix 2b: Information for tutors about the research**

### **Student Learning Experiences**

#### **Information for Tutors about the research**

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. The following information is provided to help you decide if you would like to take part. Please ask me any questions which occur to you, either in person, or telephone me on the above number, or e-mail me at [gillian2.davison@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:gillian2.davison@northumbria.ac.uk). Please feel free to ask other participants in the research their opinions if something is not clear to you.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

##### **Who am I?**

My name is Gillian Davison and I am currently studying for a research degree at Northumbria University. This study is part of my thesis - the results will be written up and presented for a research degree. The findings of this research may also be used within the organisation where I work – The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Northumbria University. The centre conducts research in teaching and assessment practice in Higher Education.

The rationale for this research is grounded in the National agenda to raise the standards of learning and as such is an important National priority.

I am interested in the ways adults learn and the ways in which teaching and assessment practices affect our experiences (and our achievement) in learning.

I would like to find out what you think about different teaching and assessment approaches, particularly those which:

- Involve 'real life' scenarios e.g. projects and visits outside the University, where students collect 'data'. This could range from taking photographs to collecting information about community resources.
- Learning and assessment which is made meaningful to students through situating learning in their experience – something which is contextualised and relevant to their own life or community. This could involve simulations/discussions in the classroom, or the use of resources (e.g. newspapers) to stimulate discussion and explain theory.
- Teaching or assessment which invites the learner, to develop their own understanding of what constitutes the criteria for a 'good' assignment.
- Teaching and assessment which validates learners experiences and knowledge and builds on this to design learning which they can feel is truly relevant to their lives at this particular time – teaching and assessment which feels 'authentic'.

#### **Why have I been invited?**

Your University has agreed to take part in the research and you have been invited to participate as part of a group of tutors and students identified as teaching or taking a module or subject which include elements of the teaching and assessment practices outlined above.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide. I will describe the study and go through this information sheet, which I will then give to you. If you would like to take part, I will ask you to sign a consent form to show that you have agreed to take part. You are free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason.

### **What will be involved if I do take part?**

I would like to talk to you during the course of the module you are teaching, at least once and possibly twice. This would be on an individual basis for about an hour each time. There may also be a group discussion with other tutors.

The study will involve recording the discussion. The findings will be analysed and published as part of my research degree. This will involve one copy being placed in Northumbria University Library, and possibly extracts published in educational journals. Findings from the research may also be disseminated to a wider research audience by The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Northumbria University. You may receive a copy of the completed report if you would like this. You will not be individually identified in any report/publication unless you have given your consent.

### **Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

Yes. I will follow ethical and legal practice and all information about you will be handled in confidence. All personal data will be securely held in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). This means that your data is held in confidence and is protected from disclosure to a third party without the prior permission of the person about whom it is recorded. During and after the research, data will be held securely in computer files (password protected) or locked away securely in filing cabinets in the Centre. Under the Data Protection Act you can withdraw your permission at any time; you can also ask to access the research data at any time. You can contact myself or the Centre Director, Liz McDowell at any time if you have any questions or concerns about the research.

### **What if there is a problem?**

Any complaint about the way you have been dealt with during the study will be addressed. Please contact myself, Gillian Davison on the enclosed number (or e-mail), or if you do not wish to talk to myself, please contact either my supervisor(s), xxx whose contact details are included on this information sheet, or Northumbria University directly.

### **What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?**

You are free to withdraw from the study at any point. You as the participant retain the right to decide if any data collected from your discussion may still be used in the study.

### **Who is funding the research?**

The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, at The University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne, is funding the research.

### **Who has reviewed and approved the study?**

All research conducted through Northumbria University is approved by a Research Ethics Committee to protect your safety, rights, wellbeing and dignity. This study

has been reviewed and approved by the Northumbria Research and Ethics Committee.

## **Appendix 3c: Consent form**

### **Consent Form**

#### **Student Learning Experiences**

**Name of Researcher: Gillian Davison**

#### **Aims of Research: To Evaluate Tutors and Learners experiences of Authentic Teaching and Assessment Practices**

Northumbria University Ethics Committee requires your informed consent to allow you to participate in this research. Please could you read the following questions carefully, then if you are willing to participate, please tick the boxes required, then sign and date the form. Thank you.

I have read and understood the purpose of the study

☐

I have had the chance to ask questions about the study and  
These have been answered to my satisfaction

☐

I am willing to be interviewed

☐

I am happy for my comments to be tape recorded

☐

I understand that I can withdraw at any time if I change my  
mind and this will not affect my coursework in any way

☐

I know that my name and details will be kept confidential and will  
Not appear in any printed documents

☐

**Thank you, your participation is very much appreciated.**

**Participant signature:.....Date:.....**

**Researchers signature.....Date:.....**

## Appendix 4d: Interview schedule

### Interview Schedule

**Semester One – September 2008 – December 2008**

Date/Time	Participant	Mobile No.
<b>Tues 30<sup>th</sup> Sept</b>		
10.00		
11.00		
12.00		
1.00		
<b>Wed 1<sup>st</sup> Oct</b>		
10.00		
11.00		
12.00		
1.00		
2.00		
<b>Thurs 2<sup>nd</sup> Oct</b>		
10.00		
11.00		
12.00		
<b>Fri 3<sup>rd</sup> Oct</b>		
10.00		
11.00		
12.00		
<b>Tues 7<sup>th</sup> Oct</b>		
10.00		
11.00		
12.00		
1.00		
<b>Wed 8<sup>th</sup> Oct</b>		
10.00		
11.00		
12.00		
1.00		



## **Appendix 5e: Interview questions**

- 1. How do you feel about the teaching and assessment methods on this module?**
- 2. Have you done anything like this before?**
- 3. How is this module different from other modules you have studied?**
- 4. How do you usually approach your study?**
- 5. What do you think you might get out of this module?**
- 6. Where do you think you are now in terms of your work**
- 7. How do you make sense of new ideas**
- 8. Do you ever question material you hear in class?**
- 9. How do you feel about working with other students?**
- 10. What do you do with your lecture materials/notes when the lecture is finished?**
- 11. Do you feel that you have control over your learning?**
- 12. Do you evaluate your own progress?**
- 13. Do you think about ways in which you might improve?**
- 14. Do you relate what you learn in this module to other modules on the course or to your wider social/community life?**
- 15. How interested are you in this subject?**
- 16. How do you feel about your learning abilities at this time?**
- 17. How do you feel about formulating opinions of the module material for yourself?**
- 18. Do you ever put your own views forward in a seminar?**
- 19. How motivated do you feel by this module?**
- 20. Do you identify your own learning goals?**
- 21. Do you evaluate you own learning?**
- 22. Do you identify goals, set priorities for your own learning?**
- 23. How do you feel about being able to negotiate aspects of the learning process? (e.g. assessment tasks)**
- 24. Do you feel that you use your imagination/work creatively in class?**
- 25. Do you/do you use these skills outside of University? (views of relevancy and meaning)**

## Appendix 6f: Group exercise - Geography

### Talking about pictures in the workshops. (Tutor prepared handouts)

In the workshops you will inevitably have to talk about your pictures This can be nerve-wracking because:

1. You may be nervous of contributing to any tutorial, seminar or similar group work, regardless of the subject.
2. You may not think you have the vocabulary or training to talk about pictures
3. Pictures and your reactions to them are very individual and personal. Talking about someone else's vision of the world (or having yours talked about) can feel more threatening than the familiar criticisms of essays or reports and touches more directly on individual values and creativity.

I still find talking about images odd, even after years of doing so.

### Here are some incentives.

1. Your views matter. I, nor anyone else on the module, has greater expertise than you do about how you see the world and what matters to you.
2. **Practise.** You may never have talked about pictures in detail so it is bound to feel strange. None of us are experts so the more you practise the more familiar this will become.
3. The module is about **geographical and environmental ideas** and how you represent them photographically. You are therefore talking about familiar phenomena and problems which you should be critically engaged with as third year's undergraduates.
4. **Audience reaction** and engagement is a key element of photography. A photograph that is not looked at, does not spark a response or arouse curiosity is a sad thing. So talk is good.

We will practise this in the first workshop with some warm up chatting about pictures exercises.

(Tutor, 2008)

## **Appendix 7g: Workshop: Geography**

### **Workshop 3. My walks. The mysterious geography and environment of your everyday.**

Most people use photography to capture and reproduce special events e.g. weddings and holidays. We take for granted our everyday lives but are familiar with photographic used to depict the everyday lives of people in different circumstances e.g. far away landscapes or studies of poverty and deprivation in the UK.

Your everyday lives are spent, in part, in and around the city centre. It is very familiar, easy to take for granted, not obviously photogenic. Your everyday lives matter. You work in an environment which affects what you do; you have your own geographies of the campus, where you go, what you do, where you do not go.

- We will go on a walk through a nearby part of the city....and you will discover things you have never realised
- You will photograph where we go, perhaps what you do, where do you walk to get there, where do you sit, perhaps how you feel about a place.
- Follow this up by photographing a local walk you do (ideally to campus, but could be shopping or night out) and around the campus

**Before taking the pictures think critically about the environment & geography....use this as an excuse to start to think about your world.**

**Draw up a list;**

- **Where do you go** and what do you do? Which buildings & facilities? The library? The sports centre? The car park?
- **How do you join up the campus?** Which paths do you take? which corridors, which entrances? Do you take the lifts or stairs?
- Think of **the detail**. Which bit of the learning cafe do you sit in? Which PCs in the workshop do you use?

Use the four aspects of visual methodology; composition, content, semiotics and discourse as tools to help turn your ideas into pictures

**Practical point; ethics, permissions, intrusion.**

You may not be able to photograph everywhere you want without asking permission first, e.g. in the library, or photograph other people without causing offence (photography can be a very extractive form of research. Extractive means you take what you want and do not necessarily give anything back). The former we may well be able to arrange, for example digital cameras are very quiet and unobtrusive. Maybe use yourselves as models if you need people.

## Appendix 8h: Seminar: History

### Seminar Two: The Re-Awakening of Europe 1

#### (Ancients and Moderns in the 12<sup>th</sup> Century)

In the module handbook you will find a series of brief extracts from 12<sup>th</sup> century theologians and philosophers. They constitute evidence of a controversy about attitudes towards authorities inherited from the past. Some of the points of view expressed might be termed 'traditionalist', showing a high degree of deference to ancient authorities and sources. Others are more innovative.

For the seminar, please read the texts carefully and think about them. You should ask yourself the following questions:

What, as precisely as you can say, are the different attitudes of the 'innovators' and the 'traditionalists' to the use of the past? How innovative are the former and how conservative are the latter?

How might these differences of attitude be explained and why might they have seemed so important to 12<sup>th</sup> century thinkers?

What *arguments* do the innovators use against the traditionalists point of view? What do the traditionalists claim that the innovators are doing wrong?

The first lecture of the course should be of some help in this. The following secondary sources are also particularly useful: M-D Chenu, *Nature, Man and Society in the twelfth Century* (esp. Chap. 9); T. Stiefel, *The Intellectual revolution in twelfth Century Europe* (esp. Chaps. 4 & 5). These are not however essential reading for the seminar. Your main efforts should be directed to working through the primary sources themselves.

To bring out the force of the controversy as fully as possible, we shall conduct the seminar as a semi-formal debate of our own. This will be a role-playing exercise. Some of you will be designated in the role of the 12<sup>th</sup> century innovators and some in that of the traditionalists. As with all debates, the object of the exercise will be to press your case and to win the argument.

So come prepared!

Module Handbook, (2008).

## **Appendix 9i: Group exercise- Performing Arts**

### **Theatre In context**

Each student should bring a proposal for this work and a brief outline of the first three sessions of a twelve week programme of work for the target group. The sessions for this work are an hour and a half in length working with twelve young people. The student should consider all the specifics of working with the target group and take into consideration that they have a support worker (colleague) as well as teachers in the space with them during the workshop.

### **The Source Material**

Each group must come prepared with a text as the primary tool for the delivery of their workshop. The text must be a Shakespeare text and relate to an issue to be discussed with the target group.

### **The Group**

Either

Excluded young people who are participating in alternative education.

OR

Young offenders.

Tutor (2008)

## **Appendix 10j: Performing Arts: Challenging scenarios**

The following scenarios are based on real experiences and seek to open a dialogue about some of the issues facing artists working in new and sometimes uncertain situations. The idea is for us to work in small groups to act out moments of conflict from them and seek to arrive at possible resolutions (or at least recommendations!) for future practice.

### **1. Don't Leave**

A visual artist is working in a Secondary school with young people (aged 13-14 years) on a video making project in something called the Inclusion Unit. This is a place where those failing academically or unable to maintain concentration in a mainstream setting have been placed and given special tuition. The artist has been working with one group over an eight week period with the support of a teacher who knows the group well. On this occasion however he arrives to be informed that the group he usually works with are unable to attend this week due to other commitments and is asked if can work with another group instead? Reluctantly he agrees and is greeted by an older age range who have no previous experience of this work and who are clearly unprepared/ill disposed towards it. The support worker is also unknown to him. After a difficult start to the session the artist manages to get the group to focus on using the camera. All is well for a while. Then the support worker approached him to say that he has to leave to support another teacher, and that he will be back at the end of the session. Again, reluctantly the artist agrees and continues alone. Very soon the room, despite his best efforts descends into anarchy. The work has to be abandoned as a fight breaks out between three of the boys. Unsure how to handle the situation, he leaves the room. Returning five minutes later with a member of staff, the room is empty. There is no sign of the pupils or his camera.

### **2. An editorial question**

A drama facilitator is working on a project involving adults with learning disabilities. A group has been meeting over the course of two months in a day care setting to take part in workshops that will lead to performance to an invited audience. The theme of the work has been 'empowerment'. Anxious to avoid clichés about 'issue based work' the facilitator has steered the group toward a cabaret type structure, dealing with issues such as financial independence, sexuality and independent accommodation in a comic way. As the rehearsals have progressed she

has been very pleased with the 'product', and has delighted in honing it, putting in jokes and references to popular culture. She has had to cut some of the material that didn't quite fit her 'vision' and because of time constraints not everyone has quite an equal role but she is proud that the piece stands up 'as a performance'. As the day of the final performance nears she is surprised to be called to a meeting between the Day Centre Manager, a female participant and her key worker. In surprisingly formal fashion, she is confronted by a complaint from the participant supported by the key worker, that she has cut out an entire section of the play involving the participant. The participant says that 'She has always wanted to be an actress and now that dream is ruined.' The key worker asks if the section of the play can be reincorporated. A heated discussion ensues covering such issues as the rights of people with disabilities to be listened to, the role of the director in theatre, the notion of 'empowerment' and the tension between process and product. In order to resolve the problem, the Centre Manger suggests that the missing scene simply be reinstated. When the artist refuses, the Centre Manager suggests that they end the meeting giving everyone a chance to reflect. Following the meeting, in private, the manager confides that he doubts very much if the Cabaret can go ahead if the issue is not resolved.

### 3. Different Agendas

A writer and a film maker are collaborating on a project funded by the Youth Offending Team about crime and young people. The lead worker from the YOT is charged with supporting them in group work and to oversee the project from an organisational perspective. At first, the sessions go well and there is a sense of group cohesion among the workers. Cracks begin to show when the YOT worker takes a unilateral decision to exclude one of the young people from the group following a relatively minor incident. The two artists are told that 'he had to be made an example of...' Midway through the process the YOT worker calls a meeting with her line manager and the artists to discuss the progress of the project. Clearly all is not well. The worker says that she can't understand 'where the project is going' and feels that the young people are sending out all the wrong messages about crime. The two artists try to explain that the work is in process and that it is necessary to explore many ideas before you come up with the 'final product'. The writer is quite annoyed by the insinuation that he doesn't know what he is doing and asks the question, 'Do you simply want an advert for the YOT?' After a long pause, the worker says, 'Well, yes.' Following this difficult meeting, the artists agree to keep the Manager updated with weekly plans giving and indication of the projected outcome. Tensions remain



and culminate in a conflict between the YOT worker and the film maker who is asked to re-edit the film shortly before the screening to include the latest government figures on the regional crime rate. The film maker refuses, explaining that it will take too much time to re-edit. She is left under no illusion that the organisation think she is simply being awkward. The project culminates in a successful film, despite the difficulties, even winning an award. At the ceremony, the YOT worker congratulates the artists but also says of the work, 'I just don't get it.'

**Appendix 11k: Author publication: McDowell, L, Sambell, K., Davison, G. 'Assessment for learning: a brief history and review of terminology' in Rust, C. 'Improving student learning through the curriculum' (2009).**

**Abstract**

This paper examines terms which are currently used to describe what has come to be known as assessment for learning. Relevant terms include formative assessment, assessment *for* learning, assessment *as* learning, learning orientated assessment and sustainable assessment. The varying constructions of assessment for learning embodied in these terms are considered. It is suggested that some models focus on only one or two aspects of assessment for learning, often with an emphasis on feedback. More holistic views of assessment for learning are desirable and one such model is presented which has at its heart the improvement of student learning.

**Introduction**

Assessment for Learning has become a popular term at all levels of education and a great deal of activity is centred around it. For example, there is currently a major assessment for learning initiative in the English school system informing the design and delivery of the national curriculum ([http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning/five/assessment\\_for\\_learning/](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/personalisedlearning/five/assessment_for_learning/)). There has been a similar initiative in schools in Hong Kong (Carless, 2005). A number of universities now include Assessment for learning in their learning & teaching strategies or have developed initiatives and projects. Examples include Sheffield Hallam University's Assessment for learning initiative

(<http://www.shu.ac.uk/assets/pdf/2331LTAreportinorder.pdf>) and a programme conducted by the Australian Universities Teaching Committee (<http://www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning/05/index.html>) which aims to 'enhance learning by enhancing assessment'.

Assessment for learning is widely seen as an important way in which to improve student learning. However, Paul Black, one of the most influential proponents of assessment for learning in the UK, has stated that it has become 'a free brand name to attach to any practice' (2006, p.11). This suggests that assessment for learning has become something of a bandwagon which many policy-makers and educational institutions are keen to join. It might be seen as a 'motherhood-and-apple-pie' concept which everyone can sign up to and feel good about but which may not lead to productive action. This leads us to ask questions about what is meant by assessment for learning and how the term is used.

## **A brief history of Assessment for Learning and related terms**

The idea of using assessment to help learners and to advance learning has no doubt been around for centuries. However the use of assessment for learning as a specialist ‘technical’ term which embodies a call to action in educational practice is more recent. The Assessment Reform Group (<http://www.assessment-reform-group.org/>) was formed in 1989 by a group of educational assessment researchers under the auspices of the British Educational Research Association and has been active and influential in promoting the concept and practice of assessment for learning. One of the Group’s members, Caroline Gipps (1994) is often credited with introducing the term to the wider educational community, on the basis of making a clear distinction between assessment *of* learning, which is about evaluating what has been learnt and assessment *for* learning which is about using evaluation to feed into the learning and teaching process and thus improve learning. In this formulation, which is still in widespread use, assessment of learning is equated with summative assessment and assessment for learning with formative assessment. Tracing the history and current usage of assessment for learning is challenging as there are a number of other terms, including ‘formative assessment’, which appear to carry a very similar meaning to the term assessment for learning or at least overlap very substantially with it. Winter (2003, p. 767) wrote of the ‘changing prepositions’ of assessment – *of*, *for* and *as* learning. Carless and colleagues (Carless, Joughin & Mok, 2006) introduced the term ‘learning-oriented assessment’. Gibbs and Simpson (2004) use the phrase ‘assessment that supports learning’. These different terms demonstrate sometimes subtle sometimes quite substantial differences in their usages by different people and in varying contexts.

The term formative assessment has the longest history in the educational literature, usually being attributed to Scriven (1967) and was well-known before the recent rise to prominence of assessment for learning. The definition of formative assessment proposed by Sadler (1989) is very widely used and accepted as a basis for good practice. Sadler states that formative assessment must enable students to understand the goals or standards to be achieved and their own current level of performance and then guide them in taking action to close the gap. This requires students to develop ‘expertise’ in order to make effective judgements about their own performance. They need to develop evaluative skills which enable them to monitor and evaluate their own learning position, determine ‘the size of the gap’ and how to move towards closing it. Sadler argues that these evaluative skills can be developed by developing ‘authentic evaluative experiences’ for students.

Nevertheless, in their influential review of assessment practices across all sectors of education, Black and Wiliam (1998) state that formative assessment ‘does not have a tightly defined and widely accepted meaning’.

In their review, they refer to formative assessment as 'encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged'. They propose that formative assessment is as much about being able to work out, or evaluate what someone is able to learn as to what has already been learnt. Yorke (2003) also claims that there is a need for further theoretical development of the concept of formative assessment which 'needs to take account of disciplinary epistemology, theories of intellectual and moral development, students stages of intellectual development, and the psychology of giving and receiving feedback' (p.477).

Formative assessment is, especially in the school sector often regarded as part of good classroom practice but this is a much less common view in higher education. Angelo and Cross (1993) do promote this approach in universities using the term 'classroom assessment'. They describe classroom assessment as 'learner centred, teacher-directed, mutually beneficial, formative, context-specific, ongoing and firmly rooted in good practice.' They propose seven principles of classroom assessment, which include the development of an active assessment research community, clear teaching goals and objectives, appropriate and focused feedback, faculty involvement in the design of assessments and the development of 'simple tools' to assist teachers in the classroom. The final concept relates to the sharing of assessment experience both with students and colleagues, resulting in what Angelo and Cross describe as 'mutually positive benefits' which can aid and assist the development of an improved learning process.

Black and Wiliam (1998) and many other authors clearly regard feedback as central to the concept of formative assessment or assessment for learning. It is worth noting that, in higher education, formative assessment is often in practice seen in a limited way *solely* as giving feedback to students. Gibbs and Simpson (2004) argue that the range and complexity of the effects of feedback within assessment have not been adequately conceptualised or theorized and outline a set of 'ten conditions under which assessment supports learning' which aim to address this complexity. These ten conditions, seven of which link explicitly to feedback, address levels of engagement with assessment tasks, time allocation, sufficient, timely feedback, the importance of student perception and understanding in relation to the assessment task and the centrality of student action in relation to feedback.

Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick (2006) offer an alternative set of conditions, in the form of a model of assessment and feedback that has learner self regulation at its core. Self-regulation is interpreted as the extent to which students can monitor and evaluate areas/aspects of their own learning behaviours, and

then act on this information to improve their learning. This model makes visible the process of student self regulation from the initial assessment task and review of current knowledge, to individual interpretation and formulation of learning tasks, to the generation of both internal and external goals. The authors state that the outcomes which are then produced generate *internal feedback* which enables the student to re-evaluate goals, criteria and standards, and then compare the current stage of their own learning/understanding to the external standards/goals/outcomes which they wish to achieve. This model of learning leads to seven principles of effective feedback encompassing: clarity as to what constitutes 'good' performance, the promotion of self-assessment, encouragement of peer and teacher dialogue and the promotion of student self esteem and confidence.

Carless (2007) presents the term 'learning-oriented assessment' which has a broader focus and is primarily about developing the *learning* elements of assessment, rather than the measurement aspects, in addition to formative assessment and feedback. He outlines three principles which provide a framework for understanding the conceptual base of learning-oriented assessment:

- 1) Assessment tasks should be designed to stimulate sound learning practices amongst students
- 2) Assessment should involve students actively in engaging with criteria, quality, their own and/or peers performance.
- 3) Feedback should be timely and forward-looking so as to support current and future student learning.

This 'forward-looking' view of assessment is extended by Boud and Falchikov (2006) who propose a model of assessment which supports students learning beyond University and prepares them for a 'lifetime of learning in work and other social settings'. Boud and Falchikov introduce the terms 'learning for the long term' and 'sustainable assessment' in which they argue for a 'reappraisal of the role of assessment'. They argue that assessment for learning is not just about providing timely feedback and improving student learning within the University, but is about whether or not assessment practices adequately prepare students to become effective 'assessors' of their own learning after University and throughout the life course.

### **Assessment for learning – positive or negative?**

Assessment for learning is usually regarded very positively as a means of improving student learning. However there are some who are dissatisfied with it. One reason for the use of the term 'assessment as learning' is dissatisfaction with the narrower conceptions of assessment for learning as

formative assessment/feedback. Earl (2003) regards assessment for learning as more or less synonymous with formative assessment and sees the teachers as 'the central characters' as they evaluate student performance, provide feedback and organise appropriate learning activities based on their knowledge of the students. Earl's interpretation of assessment as learning is that, in contrast, it emphasises the students' role and in particular engages them in self-assessment and as active participants in directing their own learning. The Scottish 'Assessment is for Learning Project' (<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/assess/about/aboutaifl.asp>) makes a similar distinction. Assessment for learning is viewed as a set of processes which provide learners with information about their progress and the outcomes required. Assessment as Learning is viewed as learners being able to manage and take responsibility for their own learning and progress by means of reflection and review. As in the case of Earl, this view emphasises the centrality of the student.

There are other views of assessment as learning. Some authors stress the learning that takes place as students undertake assessment tasks as is the case with Carless (2007). Wolf (1993) was an early promoter of the practice of meaningful and complex assessment tasks that can be 'episodes of learning' (p. 224) in contrast to tests which only set out to measure what has been learnt and often do so in ways which do not encourage productive learning in the period prior to testing. This view of assessment as learning links closely to ideas about authentic assessment (Brown, Collins and Duguid, 1989) and to an aspect of assessment validity, that an assessment should be based on the performance of the knowledge, skills and qualities that are genuinely valued and not a reduced version of them such as might be required by a multiple-choice test.

However there is a further conception of assessment as learning which has negative connotations. This view emerges where assessment systems and tasks are seen as inauthentic and lacking in validity, where 'assessment masquerades as, or substitutes for, learning itself.' (Sadler, 2007, p.388). Torrance (2007) describes assessment as learning as 'the displacement of learning (i.e. understanding) by procedural compliance i.e. achievement without understanding'. In this perspective students and teachers are seen to focus on completing assessment tasks and attaining good marks to the detriment of real engagement with learning (Ecclestone, 1999).

### **Assessment for learning – an integrated model**

A great deal of the considerable research, practice development and academic debate about assessment in HE in recent years draws on concepts related to assessment for learning. However, as the account of assessment for learning above might suggest, this often means a fragmented approach to

assessment for learning with a narrow focus on one or two pertinent features. A number of assessment for learning models are developing towards a more holistic conception. One of these is the work of the national Centre for Excellence (CETL<sup>1</sup>) in Assessment for Learning at Northumbria University. This assessment for learning model has developed from a significant foundation of empirical research on the students' experience of assessment (Sambell, McDowell & Brown, 1997), interrogating the powerful messages that assessment conveys to students and their responses (Sambell & McDowell, 1998). Additionally, we have drawn on a wide range of research and theoretical resources in educational assessment more broadly.

Our model of assessment for learning is characterised by a feedback-rich learning environment that has formative assessment at its core with the intention of enabling all students to enhance their achievements. The notion of feedback is expanded to include not only the 'normal' tutor feedback on student work but also tutor-student dialogic feedback which is part of interactive teaching and learning and peer feedback from a range of formal and informal collaborative learning activities. This interaction enables students to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their own work, rather than simply expecting tutors to do that job for them.

By engaging students as active participants in learning activities and feedback, we induct them into the requirements of their discipline or professional area of study enabling them to understand and subsequently, interrogate and challenge the standards, outcomes, and criteria used for the evaluation of high quality work. Social learning, collaborative inquiry and group discussion are valued and promoted and students increasingly take control of their own learning and its evaluation. These capabilities, where students direct their own learning, evaluate their own progress and attainments and support the learning of others are at the heart of autonomous learning and of the graduate qualities valued by employers and in professional practice.

Assessment for learning provides for verification of student attainment without allowing this summative function to dominate learning and teaching. There will be 'summative-free zones' where learning (and teaching) can take place without some of the direct, negative backwash effects (Biggs, 1991) of assessment for grading. Students are offered opportunities to practice and rehearse skills and knowledge, to make mistakes and to learn collaboratively in a 'low stakes' context (Knight & York, 2003). Assessment for learning challenges the often-voiced assumption that 'if there are no marks attached students won't do it' and enables productive learning to happen without the direct reward of marks or grades. It breaks the downward spiral where marks and grades are used to control student behaviour and, as a response, students deploy effort only when this will be directly rewarded by marks (Biggs, 1991). Here our assessment for learning model seeks to ensure that

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<sup>1</sup> CETL Assessment for Learning is one of 72 centres of excellence established by the Higher Education Funding Council for England in 2005

high-stakes summative assessment is used rigorously but sparingly, so that formative assessment can drive the learning offering students extensive opportunities to engage in the kinds of tasks that develop and demonstrate their learning, thus building their confidence and capabilities before they are summatively assessed.

Both summative and formative assessment must be well-constructed and designed and there may in fact be considerable slippage between the two within the learning environment (Taras, 2008). The assessment strategy must employ a diversity of methods to assess genuine and valued learning. Views of assessment as 'measurement' of capability have left us with a legacy of assessment methods which are excellent for the purpose of producing numerical marks and differentiating between students. These methods are normally of much less value in developing and evaluating authentic and worthwhile performances of understanding, application, creativity and commitment. Assessment for learning requires appropriate assessment tasks - methods which stimulate and evaluate worthwhile learning through the assessment process and foster the capabilities and dispositions for learning in professional and personal life beyond graduation.

The diagram illustrates the CETL Assessment for Learning model in a form that it is used to stimulate review and development of assessment practice.



Fig 1 Cetl Assessment for learning model

## Conclusion

Assessment for learning has been developing over a considerable period of time and continues to develop though sometimes in varying ways in different sectors of education. It remains a contested concept with different models being promulgated. However we are now at a point in higher education where we can begin to draw together the various strands of assessment for



learning and create a more integrated whole that can offer useful and coherent guidance for the practice of assessment in support of student learning.

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**Appendix 12I: Example of an analysed interview. The numbers in red relate to the coding categories developed for the research (see table below).**

Coding categories	Instances
1. Student expectations/knowledge of module	20
2. Student levels of motivation and engagement	28
3. Students perceptions of authenticity/relevance/meaningfulness of activity/tasks to individual lives/academic progress/work/future	36
4. Student views/experience of teaching culture/pedagogy	24
5. Student experiences of autonomy - personal	16
6. Student experiences of autonomy- procedural	41
7. Student experiences of autonomy - critical	10
8. Students experiences of autonomy - relational	35
9. Students and tutors views of the module activities	17

**6 May 2009**

**Thank you very much for coming. We're going to talk about the XXX module today, and at the beginning of the module, we talked about your initial thoughts about what you thought about it. So how have you found the module?**

I think it's fairly good so far because even though the essay question's fairly vague I  
9 think it's been done so we can actually interpret it in our own way, and I've found  
6  
that with the unit, it's not just about, even though we've just got the essay at the end,  
that's all it is really, we've learnt more than you actually needed to answer that  
6  
question, we've actually learnt about the subject rather than just learning to write an  
2 exam from, you can write an essay from, which I think has been fairly rewarding  
6,9 because you're learning about a subject rather than just learning to regurgitate  
just to have a pass; you're learning about it in a broader sense of the knowledge of  
it.

**How have you found the actual playing of the game?**

Fairly good. Had problems going into it due to the fact that different people seemed  
2  
to be coming and going all the time while, especially when it came to Britain, while  
trying to do one thing it's like, there seemed to be a different person each week and  
7  
so I couldn't get anything happening. So what eventually happened was, my pieces  
8  
ended up all over the place and I was having to try and run around and different  
3  
people were talking because they'd come in at different points and so I no longer 4,  
8

had... Well I may have had some sort of plan working with one of the other people 7  
 and the next week they didn't turn up and it was, you know, someone else who was 1  
 8  
 in the group who wasn't there the week before and so it meant that it was pretty 3  
 hard to kind of keep something consistent I think. Whereas, with moving to one way  
 I've got, you know, playing as France you have the British above you, the Germans  
 to the East then you've got the Italians there, around the Mediterranean, and the sea  
 as well, which you've got to worry about. You have to be able to have 8  
 continuous dialogue with all of them to be able to get somewhere and I think that  
 without that, it meant I was kind of backed into a corner. And I did do quite well 2  
 up until a point where I made one move which kind of lost me one piece which  
 meant everything fell apart.

But up until that point I think I was doing fairly well and I think had I had 2  
 continuous dialogue with, probably the British more than anyone else, I would 8  
 have been able to play the game that I wanted to, but because it was a different 8  
 3  
 person I was having to speak to each week, they didn't have any coherence of 5  
 1  
 what they were doing, and so I in turn never knew what they were supposed to 8  
 be doing either. So it wasn't like with the Germans or the Italians where people are  
 playing and I knew 'If I do this, they are likely to make that move' or 'They may say  
 this but they mean that' and I couldn't tell because it was never, you know, of the  
 time there I probably dealt with 3, maybe 4 different people of which there was only 4  
 twice where more than 2 of them were actually in together. And I think because of 3  
 the situation I was in, it effected me more than it would have anyone else because 8  
 I'm having to directly deal with Britain. I was effectively having to isolate Britain 3  
 into its island and so if I knew what they were doing it meant I could free up my fleet  
 to expand into German or into the Mediterranean. But as I didn't, it meant I had to  
 keep everything there, and as soon as I decided, I thought 'Right, I might actually 3  
 give it a go', hoping the person would turn up the week after, move my fleets away,  
 it all fell apart because it was a different person that had come in. And I think, had  
 they been more consistent, I think I would have enjoyed it a bit more or if I'd maybe 8  
 started in a different position with a different country, I think I probably 3  
 would've done better because I'd have had, the other groups would have been 8  
 around you, you'd have had consistent dialogue and while you are able to build up a  
 sort of relationship, game wise, with the people, it meant that I wasn't able to do 8  
 so. And because of that, I could never formulate my own strategy properly.

**Yes. Did you know the people that were in your group before you...?**

Yes, I was with... Sorry, as in the actual module or who I was playing...?

### **The module.**

I'd known a few of them. I'd seen others when I've had other modules, but not 7 8 really spoken to them so I knew who they are but hadn't really spoken to them and there's a few that I'd never met at all.

### **Did you know the people that were in your country?**

Yes, me and XXX and I'd worked with him in another module before.

### **How did you find that?**

I think because I knew what kind of approach he would have had going into the 7 game because we've spoken about things before so I kind of know what kind 6 of a person he's like and you can rationally judge how they are going to play 3 some sort of game. Like XXX with Russia, when you get to know him, he's 8 5 a very smart, shrewd person and he's going to play the game the exact same way. 3 He wouldn't outright tell a lie to your face or anything like that; as a person, he would tell you it straight, but as one of the moves in the game, we all made a deal when one of the teams was out the door to mess them up a bit and then everyone decided to go with that. XXX never actually said he would follow through with this, never said he would actually support it, but just nodded along with agreement of what was 2 being said; he never said he would do it. And so everyone made the moves, moved out and then basically in doing so, he wiped just about the entirety of 3 1 Turkey's possessions that they'd got outside of Turkey straight off, went in 4 and basically took over it straight away. If you'd known what he was like, 6 8 you would've known that because he'd not actually said... Where someone said, 'Oh yeah' and was nodding along, and knowing they'd go with it, if you'd known XXX from other times you'd know that unless he actually said he would do it, 8 specifically, the he hasn't actually given a definite answer so you knew something 2 1 like that was going to happen. See, I didn't know if everyone else would have followed through with the actual plan because I didn't know all of them but I 7 knew XXX. As soon as he said he was going, you know, agreeing to what was 8 being said but never actually agreeing he'd take part in it. He played it very smart. 6

### **How have you approached the work for the module, has it been any differently from any of the other modules?**

The reflective log is a bit different because it's been on the experiences of the 1 actual game and what we've learnt from it and kind of drawings and conclusions to what we've learnt. And I think rather than just a reflective where it's been in some

other subjects where it's just kind of a review on what you've learnt, a bit of  
4  
the teaching style, I think this was more reflecting on personal rather than what's  
2  
been given to you by the lecturer; it's more how you've done something and  
4  
how you've seen it rather than a lot of the other personal reflection, it's supposed to  
be reflective but it's more a case of analysed, how you thought the seminars had gone  
or what you thought of the module, whereas this is analysing how I approached the  
game and what I took from it, so I think it's a bit different in the way it has to  
6  
be approached, which I think is good because it's your way of being able to say how  
you interpreted, what you learnt, how you interpreted and used that in the game and  
whether that actually influenced how you played it.  
3  
And with the essay as well, it's a fairly ambiguous one, which I think is good  
1  
because it's designed to be one where you can answer it from different viewpoints,  
different areas, and I think that's good because it means, with some (unclear,  
possibly 'moderator's card'? 08:14) it's been very closed where it's a question and  
you've got 1  
to write the answer and it's like, that's the answer. While it's good because you know  
what you want to write, it means that you've got to be very good to actually get a  
5  
good mark in it because they've got, you need to hit A, B and C, whereas with this  
6  
one it's more about reading around the subject and exploring it and addressing the  
question, how you've learnt and from what you've found, whereas with the other  
ones, it's a case of, 'Here's the reading list, go and read it and pull out the key ideas  
and then rewrite it in an essay' whereas this is more a case of 'Go out, do the reading  
6  
list, interpret what's been said, read around the subject a bit more than what's  
3  
been given and then analyse that and put it back into the essay' whereas it's more of a  
case, it's more personal, more showing that you've read around the subject more  
9  
on the personal study side rather than just 'Here's a question, now go and answer it.'

### **How do you feel about the process of doing the essay?**

I think there's less control over that in the sense that when you know what 9  
you're supposed to write, it's very easy because you know what you've got to hit, but  
then it's hard to make it, then you've got to worry about the quality of the content,  
making sure you've got everything that needs to be said, whereas with this one, I  
think because of how it's framed, it means it's a bit harder to get start because you've  
actually got to formulate your own viewpoint on how you're going to answer it, 6  
you don't know, 'Well this is the question and this is what they want for the 1  
answer' but I think once you formulate your viewpoint and you've found your  
sources, you are a lot more in control in the sense that you are writing what you want  
to 6

write, not what you think the lecturer wants to hear and I think that's the slight difference. Whether it actually works out like that in the end...

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But when I've had XXX before, the way he's marked, he's a very harsh marker but

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he doesn't mind, he's not like one of these lecturers where you have to write for a viewpoint, or, he doesn't mind if what you say is complete and utter, a pile of

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rubbish, as long as you can support what you've argued and shown that you've actually read and come to that conclusion for some reason other than just, 'I think it's a good idea. And I think if you can do that, it's a lot fairer marking because it means

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no matter what your viewpoint or how you interpret something, you've got a good chance, it doesn't matter how you've done that, it's about the structure, the support

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of the argument and showing that you've read round the subject, which is what's counting, rather than necessarily that you've actually reached the answer the

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lecturer wants and I think it's harder to get started with because you've got to do a

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lot of reading and have actually got to know the subject to be able to do that and

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you can't just read the set 3 or 4 books and ignore the rest of the module and

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still come out with a good essay. You have to know what you're talking about

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and where to go and what to look for. But I think by doing so, because

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your approaching it from an idea you'll have your own views and opinion on it,

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you are able to add more of yourself and your own views into it because you're writing how you interpret it rather than how you want the lecturer to interpret it.

**Thank you. What do you think you've got out of the module, personally, academically or professionally?**

I think it's been a fairly broad module in what it's covered. It's not been, I think

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it's been, 'disappointing' isn't the right word, I think because there's been so much covered it's been very skimmed over the surface of a lot of the issues where you've moved from one to the next to the next to the next, like, all the key points along the timeline, which is good because it gets you into the module. And I think what I

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mean by disappointed is, it's not that I was disappointed in the module but I felt that

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I would maybe preferred it if it was on less, not as wide but a bit more depth. So it was, rather than splitting up, you know, from going literally all the way through from Machiavelli, through Westphalia, Vienna, to modern day, I think if you

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could've focused that probably from Machiavelli to Westphalia, that in itself, there's enough substance there to really get into it. And I think the only problem with it

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being so broad and not deep enough, is that when it comes to actually doing this essay at the end, it's like, some part of it are a bit wasted because where you can draw some of them, it means whole chunks are being missed out because it's not relevant to 6

the end question. Well I think it's good from a personal view to actually learn 4 9  
these things, I felt that if it were narrower and had a bit more depth to it, it meant we could actually get stuck in with the essay and start evaluating some of the things 6

that happened, get some of the substance rather than what we're doing now, we kind of skimmed across the top of everything without getting too far into it. And it means that while it's given me a general oversight of diplomacy I can't put my finger on it and say, 'I know this, I know that' because it's a case of, 'I did a bit on this, a bit 6

on that and not enough on any one specifically...'

**Thank you. What do you think the tutor was trying to achieve for the students by giving you the game and having the seminar?**

I think probably with the actual game, you could probably base it off, you know, 6

if you read The Prince by Machiavelli, it's very much, the arguments he puts forward there is exactly how you play the game. It's about not having, you know, if you start one war, you finish it before moving on, you have to have continuous dialogue, 8 3  
you have to create, you never ally yourself with a stronger power because all that will happen is they will use you to their advantage and then reap the rewards from it. 6 8

And I think that playing the game, that's exactly how the game plays, that you have 4  
to, if you try and start too many wars in one go you get spread out too thinly and then you collapse. As well, if you don't have continuous dialogue, as I find with the Britain, because of the different people there, things fall apart because you 3 8  
know what they're doing and you can't say 'Right, if I do this I'm pretty sure 6 8  
they're going to do this' or 'If they say they're going to do it, can I trust them?' or 'The answer they've given me, does that mean, 'Yes', or does it mean they are agreeing 5  
with what I'm saying and it's too different things. And without continuous 6 4 8  
dialogue, you don't get that. And as well, when allying yourself with a stronger power, I think that happened, I was kind of on equal footing with Germany and then at one point I allied myself with them after I'd lost a couple of pieces due to some things 3

and they were able to use what I'd done and then move in and take off a bit more 8

out of me because they knew I was going to do what was asked and they knew it would leave certain things open so that they could walk in and take bits off me. And I think the game pretty much does play out how Machiavelli writes The Prince and 8  
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all the key arguments that he makes in there and I think that's probably the point 6  
he was trying to make with the game, about rather than just learning about the different things that diplomats have done or how diplomacy has evolved, but to



actually experience it and try and actually have some sort of practical aspect 3

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to it, because you can't really send us off to be ambassadors for different countries around the world and expect that... It just wouldn't work. And so this is the closest we're probably going to get to doing that.

And I think it was fairly good because you kind of, when I read The Prince, the

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first time I would have read it would've been a few years ago, probably as I was starting Uni, and I read it there and I thought 'Yeah, I can see what's going on there' but I never really paid much attention to it. And I re-read it before this module

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and then while actually playing the game I could relate, 'Well this has happened' and I can make a direct relation to what was written and I think that's key, that's the

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key factor in the actual game, being able to relate to the works rather than it just being political jargon or talking about theories here and there and 'Do this, do that...'

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You are actually able to relate to it and can then expand on it in the way you play the game.

**Thank you. How did you feel about attendance for the module? Did your attendance affect you becoming involved in the learning in any way?**

The game side, I think that did help motivate and attend classes. Obviously, if

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you weren't interested in the actual game, then it wouldn't have been a motivation, but I actually liked the fact it was all one, big chunk rather than an hour's lecture and

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you may have just turned up to the game or an hour's slot where you just did

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the seminar and then an hour's slot where you did a lecture, because then you would have found a lot of people probably would have come to the lecture and not

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bothered to turn up for the seminars, in which nothing would have been done,

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and then for the game, the same people would have turned up each week, but the

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same people would've also missed out and they wouldn't bother playing. But 2

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by putting it all into one, it means that you have to, you can't afford to miss any of it. You're going to play the game regardless of whether you like it or not, which I think

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is good because it gets everyone involved and it means you actually, the people that

do want to take part still get that chance to do it properly even if the others weren't

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too interested in doing so because they're still having to play it because they're in

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that (18:54). And the fact that, with the seminars as well, you know, you're

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learning from the lecturers but then also with the seminars it means that 2 8  
the presentations, everyone's going to be there anyway rather than just, with a lot of  
groups you find that have got lectures and then the seminar slot, lost of 8  
people probably turn up for the lecture but won't bother turning up for the seminar, 7  
or vice-versa, they'll come up to the seminar thinking, 'Oh I can just get a couple of  
notes and that's all I'll need.' And I think it was useful having it all in one slot 7  
because it got around all the problems of where people turn up to one and not the  
other because you have to go to it all or you miss it. Now the downside to that is if  
you can't attend it, you've lost out and have a lot of work to catch up with. But I  
think that on the whole, it's probably the better idea.

I think the only thing that maybe could've been done would be to have a bit more 9

than 3 hours. I don't think you could've had more than 3 hours in one slot but I think  
maybe have 2 x 2 hour sessions where you did a bit of everything in each and you  
maybe did it twice a week rather than once a week because I felt that once a 2  
week, especially with some of the disruptions, with the Bank Holiday and Easter and  
everything, that meant it did go pretty quickly and there wasn't enough time, there 1  
was too much time between lectures and then the jump was such a big gap. You had  
a lot of time in between. You're just on one thing, you learnt about it and then 4

you're doing a massive jump, whereas if you maybe had 2 hour sessions or even if 9  
it was 2 x 3 hour sessions, and you did, you know, you probably could've got more  
done, obviously not just with the game but you would have had more seminars, you  
could've had one each session, you'd have learnt more from the lectures and I think, 5

a lot of videos and movies that he showed meant that when we played one of those it  
pretty much wiped off, you didn't get too much time either before or after to 9

do anything, and I think it would've allowed for a bit more to be discussed and  
maybe allow, if it were a bit longer as well, it would've allowed for more depth. So 2

rather than one week being Machiavelli and the next week being Westphalia, you  
could've had two sessions on each in one week so you get into a bit more depth of  
understanding a few more of the key arguments, rather than 'You've got this, this 9  
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and this' you've got to then read the rest, which we're not here to be spoon-fed 6  
at University, but it's nice to be able to have the key arguments and the key 1  
features addressed so that when you are actually looking at the work, actually going  
in and doing your own reading, you know what you are looking for, for a starting  
point, and then you're able to expand on it.

I think with it being fairly shallow in that sense, it meant that when you go to do a 2

lot of the reading, while you can see maybe some of the key points in there, you're  
not sure how to structure it, what the actual arguments are and how to actually draw  
it 5

all together, which I know we've got to do a lot of that ourselves, but I think it'd 6

be nice not being spoon-fed it but being able to actually go into more depth with the  
lecturer so you're able to actually come into a seminar, be able to say 'Right...' and

you're able to actually throw in some arguments and have a discussion on it, which  
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I found, while he tried to make, during seminars he tried to get discussion  
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going, because it was, not many people had done too much reading, or if you  
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had done the reading then it still was just like, well you've done the reading, this  
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is what someone says, you can't really formulate an opinion on it because you  
haven't got enough information. And I think that is the one thing that was lacking,  
the key area that was lacking that should be in it, but apart from that I think it was  
fairly good.

**Thank you. How do you feel about setting goals and reviewing your progress?**

I think with the module I didn't set too many goals for myself and I thought it was  
more because of the actual, when reading the... Normally when I get a module, one  
of the first things I'll do is flick to the essay questions if it's an essay, see what it is  
and 5  
then flick through finding where the key, which one the key seminars or lectures  
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are going to be on, on that question, and I think with this, when I flick to the back,  
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I read it and then I flicked through all of them and was thinking 'Well there's nothing  
quite here' and that's kind of a bit more of an incentive for me to... I'm never one for  
skipping over but sometimes if something comes up then I will prioritise it if  
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it's something for the lecture, where really I probably shouldn't. But I think with this  
one it meant that I always had to prioritise that lecture because I didn't know what  
was actually going to be needed because it was a subject that I didn't really have too  
much knowledge on before, whereas a lot of these ones which I've done, I may have  
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gone into it with an opinion of what I think it's going to be or how I view it. I think I  
didn't with this one. And I think because it's been fairly shallow, I've not really  
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known what to do with it. I've taken the information, I've read it, I've kind of  
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absorbed it, and I've written bits down, but nothing has kind of... Whereas with  
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some of the ones it's kind of sprung to me, 'Ah, this is what I'm going to write. This  
is what I'll write for the essay' I've been doing through thinking 'Yes, I can see how  
this can fit in and this can fit in' but I've got too many how much this can fit in to  
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actually put into 2 and a half thousand words. I've got enough bits to probably write  
another dissertation, not that I'd want to, and it's a case of 'Which one? Where do 6  
I make my...? Which ones actually go together?' so I've got probably 6 or 7 key  
areas that I want to maybe explore in the actual essay, but I need to know which ones  
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I'm actually, which ones actually relate to the other, and I think with that it's been a bit harder in a sense, obviously with this module, because I've not known... Because a lot of the time I've started essays half way through because I know what I'm going to write in them and I'd expand it as I get more material; whereas with this one I

haven't been able to do so and have had to pretty much wait for the end and still in a situation where I'm thinking 'I'm not quite sure what it is, which ones I'm going to use, how I'm going to formulate my argument.'

### **How does that make you feel?**

A bit more stressed in the sense that I know, with some of my essays in the past,

I haven't spent as much time as I should've done on them, but have got away with it because I've known what I've talked about so have been able to do the work very quickly and then I can churn it out and it only takes a day or so to read through it, make the tweaks and necessary changes to it because I know what I'm doing and

I know the subject. And I write it all down, get it done and then go back and make changes, but with this one I'm pretty much having to write it piece by piece and not be able to know at the start what my conclusion is going to be.

### **Is that because, going back to what you said earlier about you having to sort of develop your own ideas more because it was a more ambiguous title?**

Yes, I think that plays a part in it. I think if, for example, you talked about, say if it was the essay mentioned and it was something to do with, say, either (Penack? 27:23) what I was talking about yesterday, I could've gone, 'Right, I'll do a lot of

research there' and then went off to explore around that area, and then I know what I'm going to talk about and then I can just go, any of the other ones which I may think, if I would have an argument, that I could support with someone else's

work from some of the other sections, I can draw in. And that's what I normally do, I normally focus almost on one key issue and then I'll argue around that key issue and then draw in, to show that I've actually read around it, I'll draw in

supporting arguments from the other parts of the unit, whereas with this one it's more of a case of I'm having to take bits from each and try and fudge them together and I think it's good that I'm actually having to read around it because it's meant that I've had to do a lot more work, which no one likes doing work, but I think it's meant

that my knowledge of the subject coming out of it is a lot higher but it's still a lot harder to actually write the essay on.

**Thank you. Now just a few questions really about leaving University. Any thoughts about this particular module, anything that you think you might take with you into your working life?**

I think you can probably spread it across, take it out and actually apply it to working. At the moment I work in a call centre, but it's very office structured, we're split 2 4 into teams and it's not just phone work that I'm doing, there are other bits and pieces in there, and I think it's not like, you can't say, 'Do this and that' but you can see 3 how the interaction between people works and how different goals, not just, 8 you know, with countries and politics, through diplomacy, how they act. And you can pretty much take that into the workplace, and while it's not on as big a scale, you can apply some sort of common... There is some sort of link between the two about 2 how you kind of almost accept work and how with the different hierarchies in 8 3 there, how you approach each different one and how things work there. It's not obviously exactly the same, but you can draw some comparisons I think, from it, but 4 I don't think the module itself has affected how I view the world or outside life, and 3 I don't think it's directly formulated to what I want to do either after University, but 1 I think it's a subject that's useful to know from a more knowledge base because 5 it helps explain relationships between key actors, whether it's at work or whether 8 3 it's to do with states, different groups... And I think without going into the 8 2 sociology side of things, it's a good way of, you know, you're looking at how they 3 6 act and a more political way of doing things, it's a good way of evaluating how people act in life, whereas obviously with sociology they'd get into more depth on it, but it's a very good structure to lay over the top of something to draw the conclusions, even if it is a very crude way of doing it. And I think it does help you evaluate situations or something, you read something in the news and rather than just being a story you 3 6 can kind of think 'Well why are they doing that?' or 'Well are they doing that because I read this story yesterday...?' and you can start putting things together...

### **So that's about analytical skills?**

Yes, I think so, because it helps with the analytical skills but also in the sense 8 because of what it is, you know, the diplomacy and the relationship between 3 actors and when you read around subjects and the reasons why they they've done things, how they've done them, how the actual plans are formulated... I think you can apply that to pretty much, you could bring that down to almost every decision 6 that someone makes. Obviously that's probably too far, but I think it is a good 1 over structure to lay over the top of, you know, where you're looking at maybe key issues with news or events that have happened, maybe you are able to rationalise and able to actually understand maybe why some of the decisions have been made 4 when before you might think 'Well why are they doing that? What's the point? What are they trying to get at?' You can kind of start to understand, without actually 2 going into too much detail, what they actually stand for, what they are planning on doing, and with a little bit of knowledge you can kind of see what their aims are 6 and where they're trying to go, without having to do all the background reading and formulating on something which, to be fair, a lot of people probably wouldn't want to do or couldn't be bothered to do because it's of no interest or significance to you. It just means it helps you with everyday life, just kind of picking up broader 3

general knowledge because you are able to assess situations a lot better.

**That's interesting. What about the seminar logs and the reflection, how would you feel about, talking about your own self-reflection, do you think that's important, an important skill when you go into work or would you use it in work at all?**

I think with self-reflection, it's easier to do it in University than in the workplace. Obviously I've had to do something before and it's very hard to talk about being yourself as an individual and how you approach different things, whereas when it comes to University, you are able to say, you've got the arguments already

there, you can say why you did this and why you did that because you're only talking about stuff that's on paper, whereas when you are actually talking about,

in work life you've got to write your self-reflection on things that you've done and it's like 'Well I've done this and this and that' but how do I write it and what do I do? Whereas bring it back to the diplomacy, 'I played this move and that move on the actual board game' because you've already got the framework, goals and

criteria already set for you so you're just talking about yourself within that criteria and I think as soon as you take it away from University, you no longer have the framework around it and you've then got to, when you talk about yourself it's

like you've got to draw things from here, things from there, 'What have I done and why have I done it? What do they want to hear from me?' and I think it's easy to self-assess when you know what, especially within University, self-assess this module,

as in how you've approached it. Or criteria there in work, 'Do a self-assessment on how your performance has been' and it's a lot vaguer and a lot more about 'What do they mean?' whereas self-assessment on how you've approached and what

you've learnt, say, from the diplomacy board game. It's very simple to answer because it's like, well it's one set thing so 'There you go. Assess that.' But in a work environment it's not just one thing, it's a whole range of things and I think a lot

harder to do and it's... At University you can, you self-assess and you can be very egotistical and still come out with a decent mark because 'As long as you've given us a reason for it...' But you try and do the same in a work environment and it's not

going to work because people are going to think you're arrogant and full of it. And so it's a bit harder to do.

**In context, yes. Any thoughts about what you want to do when you leave University?**

Ideally, I want to get involved with the European Union in some sense. I've been looking at the Regional Development agencies, but actually getting into work with one of those, I am struggling to find things to do from it. And then probably

just going down the route of getting a job and then continue to look at what I really want to do and find something just for the money and then start to actually look at where I want to make my career. Because I want to get involved with the EU but 5 don't really want to move to Brussels or Strasbourg. I wouldn't mind if my 5 work involved travel but I wouldn't want to be based over there, I want to do it more about how it affects the UK in a sense, you know, like Regional Development agencies; they've got the money, they tender the contracts, it's very business 3 like. Although it's not politics directly, from my point of view you're seeing the money come in and you've got to lobby and campaign for the money for the project, or you get people coming in for projects and you've got to select, so it won't be 2 me personally but you know, the actual agency selects the different contracts or 3 the different bids that people want, and then they've got to try and get the money for that from the EU which is then part matched, whatever's been raised before. So there's a lot of work actually with the actual actors and the different people in it and 8 3 that's what I want to do. I don't want to get involved in policy making, I want to get involved in the actual implementation of either policy or of political structures 6 or political networking rather than striving to be an MP or something. That's not my cup of tea really.

**Thank you. And would you be willing to share your results from your diplomacy module with me for my research?**

As in my...?

**The marks.**

Yes.

**And would it be possible for you to email me when it's all been finished, your seminar log?**

My self-assessment? Yes. That will be fine. Do you want a copy of the essay or just a copy of the mark?

**Copy of the essay as well, if you don't mind. That would be great.**

Yes, no problem. It might not make good reading but...

**It'll be very interesting. Thank you. Was there anything else that struck you or that you'd like to add?**

Not that I can think of, no.

**Thank you very much!**

***Ends at 37:40***