Policy, memory and voice:

Re-constructing narratives of widening participation in

higher education in England

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Declaration

I, Iain Jones confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signature

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This study offers two contributions to research and practice on different representations of widening participation as an analysis *of* policy but also *for* policy. The first contribution is methodological. An interpretive methodological framework has been designed by combining narrative policy analysis, institutional ethnography and the concept of bricolage.The framework was used to analyze and interpret policies and practices within six national and institutional policy texts, interviews with seven national and eight institutional policy actors and a diary of field notes and critical events. The methodology and methods enabled me to ask what the discourses and narratives of widening participation were in higher education in England, between 2004 and 2014, how these were interpreted and whether they could be re-constructed and re-cast.

In the second contribution, narratives were incorporated into an explanatory typology of widening participation derived from a re-construction of 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives and an 'extended' metanarrative. National policy actors, and those within the institution where I work, constructed different narratives of widening participation embodying various notions of transition, of their organisation and their own places within organisational stories. These suggested widening participation and transition are not simply problems to be managed but a set of recurring and complex dilemmas to be problematized.

The typology may enhance research on the complexities of policy and practice by going beyond 'the student lifecycle'. However, 'extended' metanarratives are not a compromise or comparison between 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives. The typology is not designed to reduce complexities to distinct and static categories. Instead, by interpreting struggles between narratives, an 'extended' metanarrative may offer a starting point in a re-casting of policy and practice and the typology a possibility for further research on widening participation.

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Reflective statement

The following statement is divided into three sections. First, I summarise why I applied to join the EdD programme. Secondly, I review my portfolio of four essays, the institution focused study and thesis and how these elements have related to one another. Finally, I reflect on how the programme has contributed to my personal and professional development.

I applied to join the EdD in July 2010. My application reported on an externally funded small-scale research project that I co-ordinated between January 2009 and January 2010. The project was the first stage in exploring how widening participation was interpreted in a specific institutional setting. My application built on this preliminary work. A recurring question for me, since joining the EdD, has been how I can contribute to research, policy and practice on widening participation that extends beyond an essentialist representation of 'the student lifecycle' and a rational metaphor of transition. This tension, between different narratives of widening participation, embodying different ways of framing policy, has been a thread running through my studies. If I began the Doctorate with this research problem, the different elements of the EdD have enabled me to refine *how* to interpret the problem through research and other working practices.

There are parallels between my critique of a rational model of policy making and my own experiences of the EdD. On one level, I progressed through each stage of the programme with support from

lecturers and, particularly, my supervisor Professor Ann Hodgson. I have reflected on feedback I received and refined the focus of my research. In work for my portfolio, IFS and thesis I progressively focussed on three dimensions of policy on widening participation: *what* the tensions are between a technically rational paradigm of policy and 'messy' and contested processes and practices of policy and policy making; *how* to interpret these tensions and *why* they may matter. However, in another sense, my own experiences of learning have also been iterative and 'messy'. Research has woven together the planned but also the unexpected. The following section of the statement reviews what I have learnt at each stage of the EdD and how each of the elements of the programme related to one another.

Foundations of Professionalism

"The construction of professional identities and practices in relation to discourses of widening participation within higher education"

In my first essay for the EdD, on Foundations of Professionalism, I started to reflect on what for me were new ways of interpreting tensions between rational and other forms of policy and professional identity. I reviewed Miller's notion of 'the autobiography of the question' (1995) and asked how the dilemmas I brought to the research may relate to the specific problems I was concerned with. I also began to explore other methods for analysing tensions between different interpretations of widening participation. I did so by applying the work of Woods (1994; 1996) and Cunningham on critical events (2008) and Hoyle (1974) and Hoyle and John (1995) on restricted and

extended forms of professionality to preliminary work on the construction of professional identities and practices.

Methods of Enquiry 1

"Discourses of widening participation and identities in higher education: A critical ethnography to explore complexity "

In MoE1, I focused on the rationale and design for a small scale research project. This second essay enabled me to review ways of interpreting the identities and experiences not of lecturers but of a particular group of students. My argument was that whilst policy texts fixed and labelled the identities of students, a critical ethnography may be used to interpret and analyse the complexity of their agency. The module also enabled me to clarify the inter-relationships between research questions, design and methods.

Post Compulsory Education, Training and Learning

"Critical pedagogy and its place within an undergraduate Education Studies curriculum"

In my essay for PCETLL, I explored dimensions of critical pedagogy and reviewed the implications of this form of pedagogy for lecturers and students. My purpose was to evaluate the place of critical pedagogy within a specific higher education (HE) curriculum. I analysed its principles but also reviewed its limitations and strengths within a transformative discourse of widening participation. The essay deepened my understanding of the conditions of possibility for a critical pedagogy by reflecting on theory and how this related to specific examples of situated practice. This reinforced my understanding of

praxis: the recurring processes of action and reflection leading to further action. Critically analysing critical pedagogy, and its manifestations in a specific context, enhanced my awareness of how it may relate to widening participation within the curriculum. However, I also reflected on the tensions between critical pedagogy and an HE system in which marketization and performativity shape, in part, the experiences of students and those who teach them and possible inter-relationships between Freire's notions of 'epistemological curiosity' and 'creative subjects' (1985).

Methods of Enquiry 2

"Critical pedagogy within an undergraduate Education Studies curriculum: An exploration of methodological approaches in preparation for the Institutional Focussed Study"

The final essay in my portfolio built on my work for PCETLL. I reflected on a small scale pilot study on critical pedagogy I undertook. This was based on a critical ethnography I designed in MoE1. In MoE2, I explored how the conditions, principles and practices of critical pedagogy were shaped by the experiences of a group of students and their teachers within a specific undergraduate module. I concluded the underlying paradox emerging from the pilot was a tension between the principles of critical pedagogy and restricted and extended notions of student voice. These were bound up in affective responses to different forms of assessment used within a specific module. However, the critical ethnography also enabled me to understand how the identities and experiences of this purposive sample of lecturers and students

were mediated by other institutional but also wider social, political and economic factors too.

The four essays I wrote, between 2010 and 2012, formed my portfolio that critiqued particular discourses and narratives of widening participation, the identities and practices of lecturers and students and place of critical pedagogy within HE. A specific theme, emerging from this initial work, was that lived experiences of students (and lecturers) were more complex than representations in policy texts suggested. I concluded by arguing the underlying issue was a tension between restricted and extended notions of student voice. This then shaped notions of performativity for those who teach research and manage in HE. This was the starting point for the Institution Focused Study (IFS) that I wrote in 2012-13.

Institution Focused Study

"Discourses of 'the student experience' and of engagement within a higher education institution: A critical ethnography"

In the IFS, I asked how discourses of 'the student experience' were conceptualised and mediated within an institution. A critical ethnography was designed to understand the complex experiences of students and lecturers and how these were mediated by institutional but also wider factors. This enabled me to understand how identities were framed and embodied within different notions of experience. In turn, I considered how discourses and routine practices affected lecturers too.

From Institution Focused Study to thesis: Other contributions to my professional development

The portfolio and IFS were part of my personal entry into the thesis. My interest in the inter-relationships and tensions, not separations, between policy formulation and enactment built on this earlier work and was threaded through my thesis. I wanted to build on this earlier work by extending the research and refining my research questions. My aim was to understand *how* national policies and practices were framed, *why* policies and practices within the institution took particular forms and *whose* voices were included and excluded from processes of policy making within the institution.

Although these research problems did not change, my ways of conceptualising and interpreting 'the problem' within the thesis did. My thesis proposal in October 2013 began with a focus on policy, memory and voice. However, two other concepts emerged and these refined my methodological framework. Firstly, the concept of bricolage was explicitly cited by the second national policy actor interviewed in March 2014. This metaphor became central to my recurring analysis of policy and how national and institutional policy actors 'pieced together' policy. Secondly, my iterative and emerging analysis of the relationships between narratives, institutional ethnography and bricolage led me to focus on narrative policy analysis.

The professional relevance of the programme: How it contributed to my personal and professional development and knowledge.

The relationships between the EdD and my personal and professional development have been complex but productive. In essence, the purpose of my thesis, and earlier work, has been to contribute to research *on* and *for* policy. On reflection, I can identify three benefits of the programme.

First, combining full time work and Doctoral study has been an intense but enjoyable experience. However, this has not only been a process of 'managing' time but also a question of 'making sense' of time and policy. For example, within the thesis my argument is not based on a narrow view of policy, or of the roles of organisations, policy actors and texts, as organised, coherent and stable. Instead, the juxtaposition of analysing and interpreting rational and linear representations of policy compared with senses of flux, and even frenzy, were embodied within the narratives of national and institutional policy actors and my own narratives too.

Secondly, the thesis enabled me to interpret tensions between different forms of professionalism, management and policy. This analysis has been used by me, and others, to sensitise interpretations of practice within the institution and the recurring tensions between managerial, imaginative and democratic forms of professionalism. These forms are analysed and explored in chapters 4 and 5 of the thesis.

Finally, the metaphor of 'piecing together' practices not only applies to other policy actors. It also relates to my own research practices within the Doctorate and my other work designing modules, teaching and developing practices with others situated within a specific institution. Since beginning the EdD in 2010, I have re-designed existing modules and written a series of new modules for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes within the institution where part of my research was conducted. Each of these practices was informed by recurring stages of the EdD. My research has also influenced practice in other ways too. For example, my earlier work for my IFS on 'the student experience', which reviewed Fielding's a typology of student voice (Fielding and Moss: 2011), provided a theoretical context for the first phase of a joint student: staff institutional research project on enriching the curriculum in 2014. This practice is analysed and interpreted in chapter 4 of the thesis. It, in turn, has influenced two further pieces of work on widening participation, the curriculum and transition I am developing with other colleagues and students in 2016-17. One relates to reviewing and developing earlier work on the curriculum, which is analysed and interpreted in chapters 4 and 5 of the thesis, by re-designing modules for 2017-18. Whilst the other focuses on supervising work by mature students on how their experiences as parents relates to institutional practices. This work is designed to enhance induction but also other practices too. Both resist

rational and linear models of transition by exploring spaces and places for new possibilities for widening participation within the institution.

On one level, these two examples of practice reinforce the stance or position I took in relation to widening participation at the start of the Doctorate in 2010. However, the recurring, iterative and 'messy' processes of learning have deepened my understanding of contested processes and practices of policy and policy making, *how* to interpret these tensions and *why* these may matter. In this statement I have reflected on how my portfolio of essays, the IFS and thesis have refined my analysis and interpretation. The thesis has enabled me to trace how policies and practices within an institution are shaped by wider social and political contexts and to refine the argument, I now present, which makes the case for 'piecing together' narratives and reconstructing an explanatory typology of widening participation in higher education in England.

Chapter 1: Introduction

> (M)assification implies more than an increase in numbers.....The contestations are about what can be said and thought about higher education, who can speak, when, where and with what authority, and about who has the power to translate argument and policy into practice and to determine the shape, size and access to higher education (Davies, Williams and Webb, 1997 in Williams et al, 1997:1).

> (P)olicy...is not taken to be an object, a product or an outcome, but rather a process, something on-going, interactional and unstable (Ball, 2013:8).

I began the Doctorate, in 2010, with two recurring problems and a dilemma. First, a sense of 'policy amnesia' (Higham and Yeomans, 2007), within an institution, in which there was a lack of policy memory (Higham, 2005) about the possibilities of widening participation. This led to the second problem. The parameters of institutional policy and practice marginalised, or even excluded, what widening participation was or could be (Greenbank, 2006, 2007; Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever, 2010). I became interested in both recurring problems as a research problem too. Asking what was and what remains problematic for me and others, within a specific institutional setting, was my 'entry' and starting point in the study (Smith, 1988; 2002 and 2006). The dilemma was how national and institutional policy actors interpreted policy and texts on widening participation and how particular policies, practices and problems were framed and constructed within a specific political era (Hodgson and Spours, 2006).

The study addresses inter-related parts of these problems and this dilemma. Different conceptions of widening participation and

transition are analysed to illustrate how a variety of policy actors constructed various narratives of policy, practice and research, of their organisation or institution and their own places within its 'organisational stories' (Cortazzi, 2001). By reviewing debates about policy and professionals, and following Ozga's concern in wanting to remove policy from its pedestal (2000:2), the study has a dual purpose as an analysis *of* policy but also *for* policy. It has been designed to make a distinctive contribution by asking if forms of widening participation could be re-constructed and re-cast and, if so, what the implications of this may be for policies and practices in the future.

The study compares a rational and instrumental paradigm, embodied in the metaphor and 'problem' of 'the student life-cycle' (BIS, 2014), with a critical policy analysis that asks how narratives and 'problematizations' of widening participation have been constructed (Bacchi, 2000; 2012). I do so by contrasting research on the place of students, lecturers, managers and other policy actors in widening participation and asking who, and what, is included within, and excluded from, policies and practices (see, for example, the work of Williams, 1997; Burke, 2002 and 2012; Jones and Thomas, 2005; Maringe and Fuller, 2006; Gorard et al, 2006; Greenbank, 2006, 2007; Lynch and Field, 2007; Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever, 2010; Finnegan, Fleming and Thunborg, 2014; Field and Kurantowicz, 2014 and Gale and Parker, 2014).

Whereas other research on widening participation has analysed institutional, national or international practices, the study follows Williams (1997), Greenbank (2006; 2007) and Finnegan, Merrill and Thunborg (2014), by interpreting complex inter-relationships between institutional and national policies and practices in a specific political era. In particular, it asks how widening participation was framed in national and institutional policy texts and by national and institutional policy actors. My main research question asks what the discourses and narratives of widening participation were in higher education in England, between 2004 and 2014, how these were interpreted and how they could be re-constructed and re-cast.

The two dates derive from the establishment of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA), in 2004, and the publication of the *National strategy for access and student success in higher education* in 2014. This text was written by OFFA and HEFCE and published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS, 2014). Three specific research questions, their research focus and corresponding research methods follow from this overall research question. They are summarised in figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Research questions, focus and methods

Research Question	Research Focus	Research Methods
1. How were national policies and practices on widening participation in England, introduced between 2004 and 2014, interpreted by researchers and national policy actors?	Policy and its context: Widening participation in HE	Analysis of national policy texts. Interviews with national policy actors.
2. How do institutional policy actors, structures and processes frame policies and practices on widening participation and why does this matter?	Policy actors and framing policy	Analysis of institutional policy texts. Interviews with institutional policy actors. Diary of critical events.
3. Who gets to speak about policy and practice and why does this matter for widening participation in the future?	Voice in policymaking and why it matters	Analysis of policy texts. Interviews with institutional policy actors. Diary of critical events.

1.1 The basis of a critical analysis of widening participation

The following introduction summarises how and why three strands of a methodological framework were combined in a critical analysis of narratives of widening participation. Each strand of narrative analysis, institutional ethnography and bricolage, introduced here, is then explored in greater detail in Chapter 3. In essence, my ontological position is that social reality is made up of social actors whose interpretations or constructions of that reality are embodied in stories or narratives (Mason, 1996:11). Accordingly, my epistemological stance is that texts and interviews enabled me to generate data on those accounts by talking with and listening to policy actors and their constructions of policy (Mason, 1996:40).

First, Sutton argues a narrative can be part of a discourse if it describes a specific 'story' which corresponds with the broader set of values and priorities of a discourse (Sutton, 1999:7). However my stance, following Ball (2013), contrasts narratives representing policy as clear and fixed compared with other interpretations of policy as contested and in flux. Here is the tension between Roe's conception of policy narratives, which underpin and stabilise policymaking, with 'those flash points where policy narratives are criticised most vehemently' (1994:34).

However, secondly, Slade notes an institutional ethnography 'begins with a disjuncture' (2012:462) between lived experiences and wider social processes. As such this study was designed to enhance

research on the complexities of widening participation and, in particular, how it was interpreted and framed by national and institutional policy actors. I did so by building on the tensions between stability and critique (Roe, 1994) and asking 'what's the problem represented to be?'; a question posed by Bacchi in her analysis of the construction of policy 'problems' and processes of 'problematization' (2000;2012).

My research started with a 'problem' and dilemma in everyday practices in the institution where I work. This was one dimension of the research. I then traced how stories and narratives related to not only organisational policies and practices (Taber, 2010:9) but also relations outside of the institution too. Walby (2013) emphasises this connection. A purpose of interviews, in institutional ethnography, is to learn about what individuals do and how they work with texts but, in turn, how they may be 'regulated through the organisational processes in question' (2013:143): how their location within the institution, and beyond, could affect their individual standpoints.

Finally, the metaphor and concept of bricolage was also generative in shaping recurring processes of analysis and interpretation. Bricolage, originally derived from Levi-Strauss (1966), has been used by Freeman (2007), for example, to interpret how policy actors 'piece together' different forms of evidence to 'make' policy. However, whilst work by Freeman is cited in relation to health policy, explicit reference to bricolage and *bricoleur* in research on HE is

limited. This study asks why the gap may matter. In order to address it, a bricolage 'pieced together' narratives and this contributes to the critical policy analysis of widening participation presented. My methodological and epistemological position is that each policy actor in the study combines assumptions and experiences that form elements of stories and narratives they construct.

However, the typology of 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives and an 'extended metanarrative' of widening participation I then describe, in the final section of chapter 3, has not been designed to reduce the complexities of these experiences, policies and practices to distinct, separate and static categories. Rather, the typology enabled me to interpret how narratives and dominant meanings were not only constructed, circulated and shaped by 'subtle micro politics' (Burke, 2012:155) but also national policy contexts too. The typology I present, based on these narratives, is more than a heuristic device. The complexities of widening participation that emerged from iterative and recurring processes of analysis and interpretation enabled me to ask how institutional experiences, embodied in different individual stories and narratives, were 'pieced together' but also shaped by wider social and political contexts (Smith, 1988; DeVault and McCoy,2006). In chapter 4, I build on Roe's notion of 'small-m metanarratives' (1994:52) and explore tensions between dominant 'restricted' and 'reformist' counter narratives and ask how an 'extended metanarrative' may, in this instance, re-cast widening participation.

Whilst widening participation, and different conceptualisations of transition, are the specific focus of this study these interpretations are situated within wider questions and debates about professionalism and performativity. These questions relate to whether particular forms of policy and practice are privileged and made visible in how widening participation is interpreted and framed. The debates relate to notions of professionalism, managerialism and performativity (see, for example, Hoyle, 1974; Hoyle and John, 1995; Nixon et al, 2001; Sachs, 2001; Power, 2008 and Cunningham, 2015), and these are woven through the study. A sense of 'performing management' encapsulates, for Nixon et al (2001), a crisis and fabrication of professional identities in which managerialism and regulation produce 'different and often incompatible structures...with different groups occupied on different tasks and often pursuing different interests' (2001:230).

Whilst power relations in policymaking may act to limit who can speak and what can be spoken (Molla, 2014:230), policy is not only an object. It is also an unstable process (Ball, 2013:8). Each policy actor constructs a narrative that embodies different chronological, narrative and generational representations of time (Biesta, Field and Tedder, 2010). These are used to sensitise my interpretation of these constructions.

However these problems and dilemmas, I began the study with, also raise ethical questions explored further in Chapter 3. In summary, the standpoint I brought to the research explicitly raises a series of

questions about ethical procedures, processes and principles. They include the overall research design, in terms of data gathering, analysis and dissemination, based on guidance and questions in the Institute of Education (2010) and BERA (2011) documentation on ethics. My responsibilities as a researcher, in accordance with BERA guidelines and procedures, emphasise an ethic of respect (2011:6) and consequentialist questions that, in essence, explore principles of non-maleficence. I have had to consider participants' voluntary and informed-consent, the right of participants to withdraw, and an awareness of the detriment that may arise from their participation in the research. However, Murphy and Dingwall (2001) also ask a further set of questions about other dimensions of ethical practices too: whether and how the process and outcomes of the research may benefit participants, and others, and what the value of the research may be. The question of what the research is for, leads to a consideration of the possible value of the study. This raises issues of how the thesis seeks to make distinctive and specific contributions to professional and academic knowledge about widening participation. These are outlined in the following section of the chapter.

1.2 Value and potential contributions of the study to academic and professional knowledge

The study offers two contributions. First my methodological contribution to research on widening participation in HE is based on my argument that a critical policy analysis of widening participation is enriched by combining a narrative policy analysis with institutional

ethnography and the concept of bricolage. My second contribution is a re-construction and 'piecing together' of a typology based on 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives and an 'extended metanarrative' of widening participation. Both have implications for future policy, practice and research that critically analyses the complexities of widening participation.

These contributions build upon Greenbank's analysis of the perspectives of institutional middle and senior managers (2007). By asking how national policies are interpreted by national policy actors and secondly, exploring how notions of 'institutional practice' are framed by senior and cross institutional managers, my thesis follows Greenbank. However, in addition, I also compare these perspectives with those who lead subject areas or academic departments within the institution where the ethnography was conducted. This enables me to ask whether, and if so how, the framing of widening participation differs from other diverse perspectives within the institution, including my own. I argue why the possibilities of 'reformist' narratives and 'extended metanarrative', as well as 'restricted' narratives, may matter for problematizing widening participation by building on the work of Davies, Williams and Webb (1997); Maringe and Fuller (2006); Greenbank (2007); Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever (2010); Fuller, Heath and Johnston (2011); Burke (2012) and notions of transition in the work of Field, Merrill and Morgan-Klein (2010); Finnegan, Merrill and Thunborg (2014); Gale and Parker (2014) and Scott et al (2014).

1.3 Institutional context

Before summarizing the overall structure and purpose of the study, the following brief description of the higher education institution that is one of the primary contexts for the research, outlines its geographic, historical and organisational contexts. Central University occupies a single site, on the south-west edge of a major city, six miles from its centre. It was officially opened in October 1968 with a specific mission to prepare teachers for schools in the region. Its status has since changed from College to College of Higher Education and then from University College to University. Degree-awarding powers were obtained in 2007 and, in February 2013, Central was one of 10 specialist University Colleges awarded a University title and status by the Privy Council. It differs from some other higher education institutions in the sub region. Whilst one HEI is a member of the Russell Group, and others are members of the Million+ Group, Central, along with two other institutions in the sub region, is a member of another national organisation which is one of two recognised representative bodies for Higher Education in the UK.

In 2014-15, the academic year in which institutional policy actors were interviewed and the institutional ethnography conducted, its organisational structure was based on three Schools. One was a Graduate School whilst the other two were both sub-divided into a series of subject areas. One of these Schools combined initial and postgraduate teacher training with a wider range of other Education and Early Childhood Education and Care programmes at

undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The other School offered a mixture of Arts and Social Science courses, including English, History, Psychology and PE and Sports Science also at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

Data supplied by the institutional planning team summarised its student profile at the start of that academic year (2014-15). Of 2,273 students enrolled these were sub divided as follows: 93 were Foundation Degree students, 1,785 were undergraduates (including 32 European Exchange students) and 395 were postgraduates. Of these 1,936 were full time and 337 were part time. 24% were Initial Teacher Training (ITT) students (including 310 undergraduate and 240 PGCE/School Direct students) and 76% (1,723) were non- ITT students. Data relating to young (18/19 year olds) students, provided by the institution (Central, 2014-15), indicated that 42.5% of young full-time entrants in 2014/15 were classified in NS-SEC classes 4-7. No equivalent data was presented in the text for students aged over 21.

1.4   Summary of chapters and purpose of the study

Following this brief institutional context, the final section of the chapter outlines the four further chapters. Chapter 2 reviews debates about the origins of widening participation within HE and its policy contexts and considers different interpretations of its purposes and positions. It does so by asking whether there are dominant contemporary narratives of widening participation and transition, whilst others are either marginalised or absent from these debates.

Chapter 3 analyses the methodology and methods used in the thesis and my first contribution to research on widening participation. I outline how and why I have re-constructed narratives of widening participation. I explain how a combination of narrative analysis, an institutional ethnography and the concept of bricolage have been applied to this process. In the final section of Chapter 3, I describe the typology I have designed and how this provides the basis for my analysis and interpretation in Chapter 4. I argue why and how a typology of 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives were re-constructed from this bricolage and an 'extended metanarrative' from a re-casting of the other two narratives.

In Chapter 4, the contested meanings and debates about what widening participation was, what it is and what it could be are reviewed. The typology, which forms the basis of my second contribution to research on widening participation, is used to analyse narratives of widening participation and how these findings differ from, relate to or build on literature reviewed in Chapter 2. My thesis is that a critical analysis of widening participation can be enriched by 'piecing together' different narratives within policy texts, semi-structured interviews and critical events and interpreting these using the typology I have designed. The chapter concludes with an outline of the features of an 'extended metanarrative' and the possibilities it may offer for re-casting widening participation.

Chapter 5 has several functions. I first review the aims, problems and dilemmas I began the research with. I then analyse how I have answered my research questions and what my thesis is. My contributions to knowledge and the implications of my study for theory, policy and practice are then reviewed. Finally, I outline the basis for future research which builds on this study and my thesis.

Chapter 2: Framing and interpreting widening participation

The overall aim of this study is to analyse the development of policies and practices on widening participation in HE in a specific period, between 2004 and 2014.The dates mark the establishment of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) in 2004 and the publication of the *National strategy for access and student success* in 2014 (BIS,2004). The following chapter positions my research on widening participation within the literature on this and related fields. It specifically reviews debates on the three elements of my overall research question asking, in turn:

- what the discourses and policy narratives of widening participation have been;
- how they have been interpreted; and
- how they have been produced and shaped.

In 2006, David Watson wrote a discussion paper for HEFCE posing a fundamental question: what does widening participation mean? This chapter addresses his question and critique that widening participation 'can be a portmanteau concept' (Watson, 2006:4). I do so by reviewing its contested meanings. The review first considers different perspectives on the history of access and widening participation and then compares contemporary research on widening participation. Secondly, I extend my analysis by focusing on how 'the student lifecycle', a recurring metaphor and specific example of widening participation policy and practice, has interpreted notions of

transition. Thirdly, I argue why the contested concepts of widening participation and transition need to be understood in relation to debates about institutional context but also performativity and professionalism if we are to interpret how policies and practices have been produced. Finally, the fourth section of the review considers how discourses and narratives of widening participation and transition could be re-imagined and re-cast were a more nuanced understanding of 'voice' developed in relation to notions of 'institutional amnesia' (Pollitt, 2000) and 'policy memory' (Higham, 2005).

2.1 Contested interpretations of widening participation in higher education: Policy contexts and contemporary research

Before focussing on contemporary debates about access and widening participation, this first section of the chapter places these debates in a historical context by reviewing the work of Scott (1995; 2005), Kettley (2007), Morgan-Klein and Osborne (2007), Fuller, Heath and Johnston (2011) and Holmwood (2014). This analysis of the main imperatives for access to HE and widening participation draws on the spatial metaphors of policy 'milestones' to situate developments within their broader political and economic contexts.

Policy contexts: Historical milestones in the development of access and widening participation

Scott, in his earlier review of the notions of mass higher education (1995), argues three 'decisive shifts' created demand and shaped the development of HE in Britain, and more specifically

England, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (1995:12). Similarly, Kettley (2007) also dated concerns about 'access' inequalities to the late nineteenth century. He argued these related to demands to extend educational opportunities whilst the franchise was being broadened (2007: 334).This juxtaposition of political and economic factors led to the rise and demands of what Scott termed 'a professional society' manifest in the development of professions and a bureaucratic state that created its own training needs (1995:12).

Subsequently, Morgan-Klein and Osborne (2007) cite McGivney (1990) and argue imperatives for widening access and participation from the mid twentieth century onwards have been a shifting combination of social justice, different forms of economic growth and development and demographic changes. These factors fundamentally parallel Scott's earlier review. These factors, in turn, have shaped milestones in the development of post war HE including the Robbins Report (1963), the Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997) and Browne Review (2010).

The 'Robbins principle' recommended an expansion of Universities based on individual demand: 'courses of higher education should be available for all those who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and wish to do so' (Committee for Education, 1963:8). However, this individual demand was combined with public benefit, as Holmwood argues:

> In this context, the Report identifies four aims, or public benefits, that warrant public higher education. These are the public benefit of a

skilled and educated workforce (1963, para 25), the public benefit of higher education in producing cultivated men and women (1963, para 26), the public benefit of securing the advancement of learning through the combination of teaching and research within institutions (1963, para 27) and the public benefit of providing a common culture and standards of citizenship (1963, para 28) (2014:66).

Holmwood emphasises developments in English HE can be placed in a wider historical and international context too. He argues they relate to the importance of social mobility and post war access to primary and, different forms of, secondary and university education combining the social rights of citizenship with economic needs (2014:64).

From the late 1970's these concerns, and commitment to public benefits of HE, produced a further range of activities and organisations associated with different types of second chance provision and access to HE. For example, at a national policy level, the launch of the *Journal of Access Studies* in 1986, the work of NIACE (National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education) and UDACE (Unit for the Development of Adult Continuing Education) each contributed to debates about access and curriculum design for adult learners. For instance Woodrow (1986), specifically writing about the development of Access courses, cited her own earlier argument critiquing

> [T]he illusion that everything that is needed for the acquisition of knowledge can be reduced to a series of mechanical skills absorbed through a set of routine exercises and loaded into a study skills pack (1983:209).

In a subsequent discussion paper, on *Developing Access* (1988), the Access Development Group of UDACE then addressed the

design of a 'coherent accessible system' encouraging 'the development

of effective collaboration between the potential learners and the

providers' (1988:1). Finally, a further paper by NIACE *Adults in Higher

Education* (1990) included two recommendations with resonance for

my focus on contemporary narratives of widening participation,

transition and 'voice':

> 1.9   Institutions should review their curricula from the point of view
> of adult students, to reflect their ability to be self-directed. In
> particular, there should be more opportunities for students over
> 21 to negotiate their own programmes of study.
> 1.10   More open learning should be employed, wherever adult
> students are present in significant numbers. *Curricula should
> be built more around students' experiences*
> (1990:2) (emphasis added).

Scott, in a review of 'Mass higher education-ten years on'

(2005), subsequently argued:

> Today we see things very differently. For example, social inclusion is
> much less about social justice than about enabling people to
> participate effectively in the labour market. The fifty per cent
> participation target was devised not as a social ideal, another
> extension of democratic opportunities, but as a workforce target based
> on the projected demand for graduates by 2010 (2005:71).

Both Morgan-Klein and Osborne (2007), and Fuller, Heath and

Johnston (2011), also trace other dimensions of this shift in policy. For

example, since the late 1990's, provision has increasingly been

targeted at 18-21 year olds, rather than mature students. Morgan-Klein

and Osborne place these policy changes in the context of global

competition and debates about skill levels and argue an emphasis on

equality of opportunity and the expansion of HE can be read as a

response to concerns over economic development and competiveness (2007:75). For example, Tony Blair's speech at the 1999 Labour Party conference setting a 50% target rate for young adults to progress into HE was then formalised into a target of 50% of 18-30 years olds by 2010. This target was echoed in the 2003 White Paper *The Future of HE*. HE was to be expanded with (increased) fees capped and monitored through the creation of an Office for Fair Access (OFFA) established by the Higher Education Act (2004). Heath, Fuller and Johnston also note these policies were formalised in two other ways in 2004 (2011:3). First, through the establishment of AimHigher and, secondly, through Lifelong Learning Networks emphasising vocational pathways and progression in further and higher education (F/HE). However, these also focused on 'standard' 18 year old students, rather than on mature students over the age of 21.

Whilst these imperatives for widening access and participation attempted to combine social justice with the implications of demographic changes and need for economic development, processes of commodification and marketization have been woven through these policies. Shifting policies on student fees exemplifies these processes. The Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997) recommended means tested up-front fees of £1,000. In 2004, the Labour Government extended this by introducing a maximum fee of £3,000 and, in December 2010, the Coalition Government raised fees further from £3,375 to £9,000 for undergraduates who began their courses after September 2012. This commodification of HE, as a private benefit to individual student

consumers (McGettigan, 2013:9), has been combined with income contingent repayment loans and other further diverse forms of marketization.

The Browne Review (2010), tasked with reviewing the funding of HE, recommended HEIs be able to charge higher and differential fees on the proviso they 'show improvements in the student experience' (2010:3). The Executive Summary of the White Paper (2011) accepted 'the main thrust' of the Browne Review: those who benefit from HE should make a greater contribution to the costs of that system (2011:4). Nine of the twenty four recommendations in the Executive Summary of the 2011 White Paper, *Students at the Heart of the System* (BIS, 2011), subsequently emphasised 'improving the student experience' with the assertion that 'the challenge they [HEIs] face is putting the undergraduate experience at the heart of the system' (2011: *ibid*).

This brief review of various historical, economic and political contexts for access and widening participation in England, suggests policies for social justice have been juxtaposed with imperatives for economic growth and development. Although, as Scott (2005), Morgan-Klein and Osborne (2007), and Heath, Fuller and Johnston (2011) each argue, these policies were increasingly predicated on participation in the labour market.

I now consider further debates about contemporary policy and practice and Maringe and Fuller's argument that 'WP is a difficult concept to pin down' (2006:4). They refer to Osborne, Gallacher and

Crossan (2006:527) and suggest their argument that lifelong learning is 'a rainbow concept' may also apply to widening participation too. I consider this argument, in the following section of the chapter, by reviewing different perspectives on competing discourses of widening participation; asking why notions of 'institutional culture' and 'barriers' are contestable and emphasising why patterns of inequality and participation are significant.

Competing contemporary discourses of widening participation?

Whilst discourses of widening participation are contradictory and contested (Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever, 2010) these tensions and debates, between the establishment of OFFA in 2004 and the *National strategy for access and student success in higher education* (BIS, 2014) are not new. For example, Davies et al (1997) reviewing the development of mass HE, between the 1960s and 1990s, asked who had access to that system and their argument, cited in chapter 1 of this study, is fundamental to this review of contemporary policy :

> The contestations are about what can be said and thought about higher education, who can speak, when, where and with what authority, and about who has the power to translate argument and policy into practice and to determine the shape, size and access to higher education (Davies, Williams and Webb, 1997 in Williams (ed), 1997:1).

This debate about notions of widening participation and transition relates to Bacchi's work on 'what's the problem represented to be?' (WPRB), policy 'problems' (2000) and processes of 'problematization' (2012).

Bacchi's notion of 'what's the problem represented to be?' (WPRB) focuses on 'problem representation' and can be applied to a phenomenon or problem in a specific site or wider context (2012:4). Her argument is that a policy proposal can be examined by 'working backwards' and tracing how a policy problem has been produced. In Chapter 4, Bacchi's WPRB analytical approach is applied to the specific example of 'the student life-cycle' and the analysis of a policy text (BIS, 2014), its origins, strategic relations and politics that have produced it and how it was interpreted within an institution (2012:5).

In a 'policy-as-discourse' approach to policy analysis, as summarised by Bacchi (2000:47), 'problems' are created and then shaped by proposals. Bacchi develops her argument further. As such policy is not a *response* to existing conditions but a discourse 'in which both problems and solutions are *creat*ed' (1996: 67. My emphasis added). Her analysis of 'problematization' (2012) develops this argument further. For example, by studying a specific dimension of HE, in my case representations of widening participation and transition, this process   analyses the contested framings of policies.

In a further example, David emphasises a shift in policy from concerns with equity and diversity towards those of social mobility (2008; 2012:22), in which the entry of working class students into elite institutions had a 'high visibility' (2008:7; 2012:22). Whilst Maringe and Fuller, in their earlier review of policy on widening participation (2006), identify a recurring debate and tension rather than shift between

widening participation's economic imperative and those of equity and social justice. This exemplifies Hall's 'double shuffle' (2005). It is this tension between the perceived economic benefits of widening participation and the demands of equity and social justice that is also central to those debates Burke addresses (2012).

Burke critiques a dominant emphasis placed on the economy and marketplace, rather than notions of social justice, as being central to the project to widen participation. In this discourse, key policies are framed in economic terms emphasising individual advantage. Whilst this reflects one rationale for widening participation Burke argues overlapping discourses of 'expansion', 'massification' and 'access', combined with those of economic growth, act to obscure inequalities experienced by some who participate in HE, as well as others who do not.

In earlier work Jones and Thomas (2005) also review how discourses of widening participation are limited too. They compare 'academic' and 'utilitarian' strands of policy and compare these with a third strand based on a 'transformative' alternative. Their argument is that discourses of widening participation conceptualised as 'academic' and 'utilitarian' place little, if any, emphasis on how structural factors, including social class and ethnicity, shape patterns of participation. Nor, from this perspective, do these discourses emphasise institutional or curriculum reform. As Quinn (2003), cited by Jones and Thomas,

argues: 'the curriculum is not viewed as problematic and remains unchanged' (2005:617).

Three points follow in response to Jones and Thomas' argument (2005). Each of these strands of policy were also being re-interpreted and re-worked in current contexts too. For example, the 'academic' strand of widening participation, defined by successive previous New Labour government policies (1997-2010), labelled some young people as 'gifted and talented' students. During the Conservative-led Coalition Government (2010-15), the emphasis of what was the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the work of the Sutton Trust and Russell Group, for example, continued to perpetuate this narrow focus. They did so by framing widening participation in terms of the 'fair access' of a select few 'disadvantaged young people' into elite forms of HE rather than defining and debating widening participation within a diverse system of 'mass higher education'. Instead, notions of 'WP' framed the debate in narrow terms of (limited) access into elite institutions.

The second 'utilitarian' discourse also continues to resonate and form part of a dominant narrative focusing on forms of pre- and post-entry support within HE. In a further example, Jones and Thomas (2005) identify activities that may be at the periphery (e.g. student support) of an institution and argue

> [W]widening participation initiatives in utilitarian influenced higher education institutions are <u>more or less 'bolted on' to core work,</u> for example mentoring and guidance activities, learning support

mechanisms (via 'study skills centres', etc.) and stand-alone student services (2005: 618. My emphasis).

However, twelve years later, these spatial forms and organisational characteristics continue to be evident in the institution where I work, the national and institutional policy texts reviewed in this chapter and the thematic analysis of interviews, texts and critical events discussed in Chapter 4.

Contested notions of 'institutional culture/s' and 'barriers'?

Jones and Thomas argue, by contrast, that what distinguishes a third and 'transformative' discourse of widening participation, from the 'academic' and 'utilitarian', is it is not based on a deficit model of the student, or of those working with them, but rather is:

> [C]oncerned with <u>creating an institutional culture</u> that does not require participants to change before they can benefit from higher education. Furthermore, it perceives diversity as a definite strength...Rather, <u>all of an institution's activities are to be underpinned and informed by valuing and learning from difference and diversity</u> (Jones and Thomas, 2005:619. My emphasis).

Although, Greenbank (2006; 2007) and Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever (2010) emphasise *how* specific policies and practices are formed and framed, they also argue these cannot be separated from the institutional conditions within which they have been constructed. For example, one interpretation of the HEA *Retention and Success Programme* 2008-11 (Thomas, 2012), premised on a conception of 'institutional transformation', is that ironically those specific practices critiqued in a 'utilitarian' discourse of widening participation (Jones and

Thomas, 2005) were sustained by this later Programme. A number of consequences follow. Processes of 'transformation' may still be framed in terms of a deficit model of what individual students may 'lack' when they enter HE. Equally, the responsibility for addressing that 'deficit' may still be framed in terms of 'support', situated at the periphery of organisations, rather than in the work of those who teach and work with students each day.

By contrast, in Chapter 4, I analyse how 'organisational stories' (Cortazzi, 2001) are constructed by those with specific responsibilities for marketing, student support and academic practice. These may frame, but mis/recognise (Burke, 2012), widening participation within notions of marketization and 'support'. I also consider how the role of lecturers, who work with students daily, are positioned and may be marginalised, or silenced, by dominant discourses and narratives within an institution.

Earlier work by Gorard and colleagues (2006) reflected and reinforced, rather than critiqued, these different forms of marginalisation in their review of research on institutional and other practices in relation to widening participation. For example, only 14 of the 170 pages of their review explicitly referred to learning and teaching in HE. Of those 14 pages, three reviewed research on the learner, eight on teaching and a further three pages were devoted to curriculum development and assessment. Of the 'gaps in research' in the final section of the review and the five 'fundamental questions'

posed, none referred to curriculum or pedagogy. In a subsequent list of topics, curriculum development was tenth in a list of 15 bullet points (2006:118). However Gorard and colleagues did question whether the metaphor of 'barriers' to participation suggests an explanation for differences in patterns of participation between socio-economic groups and whether the solution was the 'removal' of situational, institutional and dispositional barriers (2006:5).

Fuller et al (2008), Burke (2012) and Hinton-Smith (2012) subsequently build on and critique this notion of 'barriers' (2012:141). Fuller et al. acknowledge the earlier work of Gorard (2006). However, they focus their research on how the notion of (non) decision making may be embedded in the understanding of local and regional stakeholders and 'networks of intimacy' (Heath and Cleaver, 2003) of those with level three qualifications who have not participated in HE (2008:8). They report on the two phases of their project and its findings. Interviews with stakeholders reinforced the assumption barriers existed and their removal would lead to be more representation in HE (2008:10). By contrast, following interviews with adults in their case studies they conclude:

> [P]atterns of participation in HE are anchored socially, historically and biographically in ways which are far more complex to explain and overcome than the barriers discourse would suggest (Fuller et al, 2008:16).

Burke agrees with this conclusion and argues that national and institutional policy texts (citing HEFCE, 2001; 2009) construct a

dominant 'derogatory discourse'. Burke also challenges the notion of 'barriers' and argues it combines processes of gate-keeping and exclusion. She cites the examples of admissions policies and practices and privileging forms of knowledge and ways of knowing at an admissions stage and then during HE. Further, Hinton-Smith (2012:9) argues another consequence of the emphasis on 'barriers' is that practices of categorisation become part of processes of 'othering' and a 'catch-all' or construction of 'WP' and 'non-traditional' students. These practices and processes act to obscure the diversity of experiences and multiple identities of students but also the inequalities in overlapping discourses of 'expansion', 'massification' and 'access' (Burke, 2012:13). These inequalities are examined in the following section of the chapter.

Patterns of inequality and participation

Universities UK (UUK, 2013) reported, in the period between 2003–04 and 2011–12, that the total number of students at HE institutions in the UK increased by almost 13.5 per cent. However, differential patterns of participation in HE, in England, are reviewed below and analysed in relation to examples of social class, modes of study, gender and ethnicity.

Vignoles (2013) summarised the research of Chowdry et al (2012) and Ermisch et al (2012) and concluded there is a substantial gap in patterns of participation in HE (2013:115). Students from the bottom 20% of the NS-SEC (socio-economic) distribution are 40 percentage points less likely to progress to HE than a student from the

top 20%. Vignoles also reported those students whose parents have a degree are 2.8 times more likely to participate in HE than those with parents who do not have a degree.

The latest data from UUK (2015) reported on further trends in 18-year-old entry rates by UK country and background between 2004 and 2013. Whilst they concluded demand for HE from 18 year olds remained high, they also identified the differentiation Vignoles reported. UUK specified how the entry rates varied by student background. For example, there was a gap of up to 32 percentage points between those 18-year–olds from areas which have the highest levels of participation in HE (POLAR2 quintile 5) compared with those in the lowest POLAR2 quintile (UUK, 2015:10). This combination of research and specific data exemplifies Field and Morgan-Klein's argument (2013:162) that socioeconomic inequalities persist despite the expansion of HE systems.

In the period, between 2003–04 and 2011–12, whilst the total number of students at HEIs in the UK increased by almost 13.5 %, and the number of full-time students increased by over 44,000, the number of part-time students decreased by over 48,000. The same report (UUK, 2013) summarised a further dimension of difference in patterns of participation by age. Whilst the number of students aged under 30 increased by 388,000 between 2003–04 and 2011–12, the number aged 30 and over decreased by 79,000. *The power of part-time: Review of part-time and mature higher education* (UUK: 2013) detailed

this decline in part-time student numbers. The number of students entering undergraduate part-time courses in England fell by 40 % in two years (2010–11 to 2012–13). Further data in UUK (2015) confirmed 'Part-time first degree entrants fell by 12.2% over the whole ten-year period, with much of the decline between 2011–12 and 2013–14'.

The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU), in their annual statistical reports (2013; 2015) on *Equality in higher education*, noted other trends too. Between 2003-04 and 2011-12, there was a consistent pattern of more female students than male students entering HE. Although the proportion of male students increased from 42.7% in 2003-04 to 43.6% in 11-12, a difference of 12.8% between male and female students remained. In the introduction to the Runnymede Trust report *Widening Participation and Race Equality* (2010), Weekes-Bernard noted a further dimension of inequality (2010:4). Figures for 2006-07 reported black and minority ethnic students made up 17.2 % of all those studying in HE. However, in earlier work Connor (2004) reported comparative participation rates of students from Black Caribbean and Bangladeshi backgrounds were half the rates of those of Indian and Black African students. How has this changed since 2013? On the one hand, in 2015, ECU reported the proportion of BME students in HE has increased each year since 2003-04 increasing from 14.9% in 2003-4 to 20.2% a decade later (ECU,2015:117). Although, in latest data reported in 2015 the report also confirmed previous patterns of differentiation. For example, of the proportion of all first year BME

UK domiciled students whereas 22.6% were Black African 7.3% were Black Caribbean and whilst 16.7% were Asian: Indian by contrast 12.5% were Asian: Pakistani and 4.5% of all BME students were Asian: Bangladeshi (ECU,2015:118).

I now extend this analysis of the complexity of widening participation by focusing on how 'the student lifecycle', a specific example of widening participation policy and practice, embodies a rational form of transition obscuring multiple and intersecting patterns of inequality outlined above.

2.2 'The student life-cycle': A rational form of transition?

Processes of managing transition are a recurring feature of HEFCE (2001) and BIS (2014) on 'the student life-cycle' and widening participation. Whilst my focus is on BIS (2014), Greenbank (2006) traces the origins of this specific usage of 'the life-cycle' to HEFCE (2001). HEFCE (2001) define the student life-cycle in terms of six stages: raising aspirations; preparation for HE; admissions; first steps in HE in semester one; moving through the course and support for students in HE and, finally, progression into employment. By comparison, OFFA/HEFCE's perspectives in the *National strategy for access and student success in higher education* (BIS, 2014) reduce these to three 'broad stages' framed in a life-cycle of 'access', 'student success' and 'progression' (2014:3).

In Chapter 4 I analyse and compare 'grey literature', research on transition and my own findings. However, here I specifically compare

'grey literature' on 'the student lifecycle' with the limited references to 'life cycle' and 'student life cycle' in the British Education Index (BEI). For example, in 2016 in an advanced search of the BEI, combining 'life-cycle' and 'higher education', the largest single category of sources , (9:38), related to '*product* life-cycle'.

In 1965 Levitt, writing in the *Harvard Business Review*, exhorted readers to '*exploit* the product life-cycle'. What is striking, reading this now, are the parallels between the stages of HEFCE (2001) and BIS (2014) and Levitt's premise of 'passing through certain recognizable stages': the development stage, the growth stage, the maturity stage and the decline stage of the product life-cycle. The parallels between Levitt's work, and specific stages of 'the student life-cycle', relate not only to contemporary commodification of 'the student experience' but also the pre-determined stages within the cycle framed in terms of categories of 'access', 'retention and student success' and 'progression' (see, for example, BIS, 2014:99). However, the generative metaphor and organisational device of 'the life-cycle' can be critiqued and sensitised using the work of Lakoff and Johnson (2003); Lynch and Field (2007); Field, Merrill and Morgan-Klein (2010); Jones, (2013); Gale and Parker (2014); and Scott et al (2014).

Lakoff and Johnson analyse the construction of the conventional coherent narrative with its distinct features that embody parts, stages and a linear sequence (2003:173) but Lynch and Field argue transitions are 'relational and multi-faceted, rather than fixed and linear'

(2007:2). My own earlier research (Jones, 2013) supports this conclusion. In this work I report on findings from focus groups conducted with students about their diverse experiences of HE. These suggested they were complex and in 'flux'. Transition was not 'smooth'. This reflected Lynch and Field's argument that conceptualising transition, as a series of events, has 'the effect of flattening life trajectories in order that they become more measurable and controllable', (2007:10). There is also a paradox that Field, Merrill and Morgan-Klein identify (2010) in their analysis of national and institutional policy and representations of transition. They conclude experiences and forms of studenthood are neither fixed nor linear. Instead, these may be shaped by earlier memories and identities, as school pupil or college student, and other current experiences such as part- time worker, carer or parent (2010:3).

Gale and Parker (2014) extend this analysis. They identify three categories of transition as 'induction', 'development' and 'belonging' whilst acknowledging these are neither distinct nor rigid but 'relatively fluid and permeable' (2014:735). Although their review was of practices in Australian HE they also conducted a further review of literature from the USA, Australia and the UK. Their categorisation and questions apply to England too. They note the majority of the literature on transition frames it in two categories of 'induction' and 'development'. These are seen as serving the needs of the institution. The emphasis on 'induction' may be of student orientation to institutional expectations and 'development' marked by progression from one stage of a

programme of study to another. Whilst, by contrast, the value of 'transition as becoming' is that it has more potential for new thinking about transitions in H.E in socially inclusive ways. For example, by addressing questions about curriculum design and forms of pedagogy that may be developed given the diverse needs and interests of students. However, neither of the first two categories of transition necessarily captures the diversity of student lives nor of their experiences of university (2014:745).

Conceiving of student transition in H.E. in the singular, does not address its complexity and uncertainty. This is significant for contested discourses and narratives of widening participation too. For example, my earlier research with students (Jones, 2013) suggests multiple identities shaped by inter-sections of gender, class and ethnicity. This, in turn, relates back to the contested idea of transition and 'institutional change'. As Quinn argues, 'there is no such thing as <u>an</u> identity, or <u>a</u> discrete moment of transition' (2010, 127; emphasis added). This position, which I share, is fundamental to implications of diversity for institutions, curriculum design and pedagogic practices. Gale and Parker explore this further too. Citing the work of Zepke and Leach (2005), on the 'emergent discourse of adaptation', they argue this is not about individuals or groups *adapting* to institutions, or the incorporation of individuals into the cultures of an institution, but a transformation in teaching practices and curriculum within the institution. This is a question of education systems and institutions taking account of the 'multiplicities of student lives' (Gale and Parker, 2014:745). This

argument echoes that of Shanahan who argued that to understand students' diverse experiences:

> [T]he question of access must be inverted: it is not only a question of access of the excluded into universities, it is also a question of access of universities into the knowledge of the excluded (1997:71).

These critiques have two implications for my study. Different ways of conceptualising transition represent tensions between the label of a student 'being' a consumer or a 'non-traditional' or 'WP student' and 'becoming' a student (see Barnett, 1996:76). In turn, this has implications for students, those who teach and others who work with students. In chapter 4, I ask how institutional policies and practices framed widening participation: whether an emphasis on 'the student lifecycle,' and the status and condition of 'being' a 'non-traditional' student, embodies practices of objectifying and process of labelling that may frame the parameters of a 'restricted' notion of widening participation and of transition, rather than the formative process of 'becoming' a student.

Having provided a context for this analysis, by reviewing representations of widening participation and transition and how the 'problem' can be 'problematized', the next section of the review argues these debates relate to a broader context that also shapes discourses and narratives of widening participation in HE.

2.3 Widening participation and transition: questions of context, performativity and professionalism

The third section of the chapter extends this review of the contested concepts of widening participation and transition by arguing why these also need to be understood in relation to other research on context, professionality and professionalism and performativity in HE. I argue the formation and framing of specific policies cannot be separated from either institutional conditions (Davies, Williams and Webb, 1997; Greenbank, 2007; Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever, 2010) or the political era they have been constructed within (Hodgson and Spours, 2006). I ask how these different perspectives on institutional conditions, and the formation and framing of policy on widening participation, relate to research on professionalism, professionality and performativity in HE (Hoyle, 1974; Nixon and colleagues, 2001; Sachs, 2001; Ball, 2003, 2004 and 2012; Barnett, 2008; and Burke, 2008).

In the introductory chapter of their work, Davies, Williams and Webb (1997) emphasise why discourses construct social meaning. They argue any interpretation of the meanings of H.E., and who has access to it, cannot just ask questions about the language used to represent practices in that system. It also needs to examine institutional practices and the positions of those within the institution that speak or are marginalised.

The work of Greenbank (2007) extends this analysis and interpretation of context. He does so by analysing inter-relationships between institutional processes, contested ideas of 'institutional culture'

and approaches to widening participation. Greenbank identifies a series of factors, based on interviews with senior and middle managers, and how these influence each institutional approach. They include the history of the institution, its location and organisational cultures. He argues a 'culture of widening participation' is often *not* embedded throughout an institution. Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever (2010) develop this conclusion further. From their perspective they argue that because the national policy context and rationale for widening participation is not clear, it follows it will 'remain the preserve of committed individuals and at the local level' (2010:105).

However not only national context, but also the notion of 'institutional culture', is also contested. For example Greenbank notes, in his study, that amongst senior managers there was an assumption this culture was an 'integrated entity' not an amalgamation of competing sub-cultures (2007:216). Whilst Greenbank's interviewees were either senior or institutional managers, from three contrasting institutions (a college of HE, a 'new' university and an 'old' university), my analysis, in Chapter 4, is of the complex inter-relationships between two sets of interviews with seven national policy actors and eight interviews from within one institution. In addition to the pilot interview, those institutional interviewees were a senior manager, three institutional middle managers (two of whom contributed to the institutional Access Agreement) but also three Heads of academic Subject Areas. This enabled me to build on Greenbank's analysis of influential factors by considering the significance attached to these, and

other factors, in the framing of discourses and narratives about widening participation. By extending Greenbank's twin perspectives of senior and middle managers, to also include the perspectives of those who teach and lead subject areas, I was able to ask whether, and if so how, their perspectives on widening participation differed from other perspectives within the institution and why this may matter.

The significance of complexity and uncertainty is now extended to include a review of research on different forms of professionality, professionalism and professional identity. These were analysed by Hoyle (1974), Hoyle and John (1995) and Sachs (2001) and I ask how these relate to research on performativity by Ball (2003; 2004), Barnett (2008), Burke (2008) and Cunningham (2015). This work is significant for my analysis of institutional narratives in Chapter 4. I am not just asking *what* discourses and narratives of widening participation there were but also *how* these were shaped and produced within particular forms of policy and practice.

In Jones (2011:5), I reviewed how Hoyle's 'restricted' and 'extended' models of professionality (1974) provide a continuum and heuristic device for interpreting practice. Whilst recognising that Hoyle's models were a heuristic device, that relate to school teachers in a different political era, my argument is that they can also be used to analyse the data I have gathered and which I interpret and discuss in chapter 4.

'Restricted' forms of professionality are characterised by skills derived from experience, a perspective limited to an immediate time and place and a perception of each event in isolation from others. By contrast, 'extended' professionality is framed and mediated between experience, theory and perspectives that place events in a broader social and political context. Reflecting on these models, Hoyle and John (1995) distinguish between three levels of professionality and professional responsibility: knowledge and skills; the capacity to exercise 'sound judgements' and capabilities for making those judgements. In turn, these capabilities are defined in terms of professional development, reflection and ethics. Hoyle and John compare ethics in terms of behaviour towards students and colleagues but also a distinction between accountability and responsibility. For example, whereas accountability is framed in terms of meeting the needs of students, responsibility is conceptualised more broadly. Hoyle and John cite the work of Eraut (1992) and argue responsibility includes a professional obligation to self-monitor and periodically review one's own practice (1995:127). Cunningham expands this notion of an 'extended' professional further. Suggesting practice may deliberately connect with that of others (2015:151), Cunningham places the possibilities of inter-professional working in HE in a broader context of 'flexible' and 'nimble' working experienced in FE. He does so by asking whether HE professionals will increasingly be subject to such pressures (ibid).

Earlier research on professional identities in HE addressed this question. For Burke, 'Complex, multiple and shifting identities, are produced within educational sites' (2008:134). Senses of time in flux and of intensification are reinforced by Barnett who identifies 'swirling discourses, the currents of which may flow in different directions' (Barnett 2008:205). These narratives relate to the work of Sachs (2001) who compares the tensions between competing discourses of 'managerialist' and 'democratic professionalism' in her focus on teachers' development in Australia. This research, along with that reviewed on transition, raises questions for contemporary policy and practice in HE in England.

For example, Sachs argues that whilst managerialist discourses are generated both from outside of the institution, but also from within, the second 'democratic' discourse is produced within the profession itself (2001:149). Consequently the identities of the teacher or lecturer, and their professional lives, are not fixed but are formed, in part, by recurring interactions between these two discourses. They are also shaped by the context lecturers' work within, how they work with others and how they make sense of their work within that setting. However, their capacity to exercise agency may be shaped by external and internal conditions and those managerialist discourses that circulate, swirl and may become embedded within an institution.

Ball summarises further implications of managerialist forms of professionalism and how they may relate to notions of performativity.

These are embodied by the 'faux professional' (Ball 2003) who plays the system and engages in cynical or strategic compliance 'performing professionalism' displaying symbolic gestures that meet the requirements of specific forms of accountability. Ball also argues these reconstituted and contemporary meanings of either 'new' or 're-professionalism' are not forms of professionalism at all (2004:5). In these instances, practices are reduced to rule-following and managerialist forms of widening participation that have implications for notions of 'voice' and who gets to speak about policy and under what conditions.

2.4 Re-casting widening participation: Questions of voice and policy amnesia?

The fourth section of the chapter now considers these questions by reviewing practices and theorisations of voice (see, Fielding, 2001 and 2012; Couldry, 2009; Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felten, 2011; Fielding and Moss, 2011 and McLeod, 2011) and asking how the previous review of professionality, professionalism and performativity may relate to notions of voice and memory. Specifically, I ask why a lack of policy memory (Higham, 2005; Keep, 2009 and Hodgson, 2015) and notion of 'institutional amnesia' (Pollitt, 2000; 2008) may matter for questions of voice. Although none of the authors explicitly refer to widening participation, their research has implications for how it could be re-cast.

Davies, Williams and Webb argue debates about access and widening participation are not just about the purposes of policies and

practices but who can speak about policy and when, where and with what authority (1997:1). Moreover, voice is not only about who may speak, about widening participation and transition, but what is spoken and whether voices are heard. The dilemmas Fielding and Moss (2011) and Fielding address (2001; 2012) relate to my focus on voice and policy making. For example, asking whose voices are heard, whether there is an 'obligation to listen' (Couldry, 2009:590) and the value of conceiving of the rights of students and lecturers, rather than simply their goodwill in managing quality assurance practices, are each analysed in the final section of Chapter 4. These recurring dilemmas address my third specific research question on who gets to speak about policy and practice and why this may matter for widening participation in the future.

In previous work (Jones, 2013), I reviewed Fielding and Moss' six-fold typology of student voice (2011) and inter-relationships between students as data sources, active respondents, co-enquirers, knowledge creators, joint authors and inter-generational learners in education. Whilst their examples are drawn from early childhood and secondary education, I suggest these could also be applied to analysing and theorising widening participation in HE too. For example, conceiving of students as 'creative subjects', rather than as data sources in a dominant discourse of 'the student experience' that restricts widening participation, takes us back to the distinction made by Shanahan (1997:71), reviewed in section 2 of this chapter, on access, exclusion and universities.

For example, the scope for students as co-enquirers in work on pedagogy and curriculum is also explored by Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felten (2011). As education developers their position is that lecturers should not merely consult with students or, in Fielding and Moss' terms, relate to them as 'data sources' or 'active respondents'. Instead, they should review ways for students to 'become full participants' as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design or of curricula (2011:1). These questions relate to an analysis and interpretation of interventions at Central University which I also reflect upon in the final section of Chapter 4.

I now conclude this final section of the chapter by arguing why these contested notions of 'voice' may relate to a lack of 'policy memory' and my focus on voice in policy making. I do so in two ways by reviewing research both within and outside of education and asking why these may be mutually beneficial. Firstly, Higham's review of the 14-19 curriculum (2005) and Hodgson's analysis of professionalism in FE (2015) emphasises *why* this conjunction of voice and 'policy memory' may matter. Higham argues a lack of memory; processes of re-organisation and a wider policy context reinforce one another:

> This institutional and personnel discontinuity mitigated against the development of forms of 'policy memory' in the institutions which is probably necessary for the development of policy learning. Initiatives arose in response to a variety of perceived issues and problems, some specifically educational, others grounded in the broader context (2005:4).

Hodgson also emphasises why policy memory is important. In a blog posting, in June 2015, she concludes 'We need to capture the

'policy memory' that resides with those who have worked or researched in the FE sector over many years, in order to avoid repeating past mistakes' (Hodgson, 2015).

Secondly, Pollitt's work (2000; 2009) relates to both this imperative and my research. In his work on processes of 'constant re-structuring', Pollitt asks whose voice is called upon, who is listened to and what is remembered and forgotten in each institutional context. He argues:

> Public organisations are nowadays hung thick with task forces, project teams, working groups and quality circles. Much of the crucial innovatory work is expected to proceed from these spearheads for change. <u>Yet it is precisely in these types of 'special forces', rather than in the more settled and routine operational divisions and units, that precedent and the past are likely to have their weakest influence</u> (2000:9. My emphasis).

In turn, Pollitt suggests different manifestations of 'speed' and 'time' (2009:203) may include an acceleration and fragmentation in careers in which 'doctrines of radical change' embody both 'contempt for the past' (2009:207) but also the notion of 'compressed time' (Sabelis, 2002 cited in Pollitt, 2009:208). Consequently, in a state of 'haste' and 'being busy' (Sabelis, 2002:91), Pollitt suggests 'seasoned judgement' may not be part of this 'compressed world' (2009:209). Two questions follow as to why (a lack of) institutional memory may be problematic. These questions, in turn, relate to the problems and dilemmas with which I began this study.

For example, the absence of 'policy memory' may matter because policies could be introduced with either little or no reference to

what has gone before. Pollitt identifies the phenomenon in which there is a 'declining ability- and willingness- of public sector institutions in many countries to access and make use of possibly relevant past experiences' (2000:6). However, paradoxically, institutions may also have difficulty in 'letting go' of procedures that may not be suitable for their original purpose. Consequently, different forms of what Pollitt calls 'cognitive and behavioural conservatism' may be juxtaposed with 'a quite radical loss of touch with the past' (2000:8).

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed debates on the three elements of my overall research question and compared different perspectives on the history of access and widening participation, contemporary research and identified a recurring debate between widening participation's economic imperative and that of equity and social justice. This exemplifies Hall's 'double shuffle' (2005): the tensions between the perceived economic benefits of widening participation and the demands of equity and social justice. Burke (2012) critiques this dominant emphasis on the economy and marketplace, rather than notions of social justice, as being central to the project to widen participation. In turn, she argues that overlapping discourses of 'expansion', 'massification' and 'access', combined with those of economic growth, obscure inequalities experienced by some students in stratified and diverse forms of HE. My review then focused on why 'the student lifecycle', a generative metaphor and specific example of widening participation policy and practice and transition, is problematic

because this recurring metaphor frames dominant narratives of policy and practice. This relates to my argument that the contested concepts of widening participation and transition need to be understood, in turn, in relation to debates about institutional context, marketization, performativity and professionalism.

However, I also concluded the review with questions of 'voice' and 'policy memory' and how these can be understood by combining the work of Fielding and Moss (2011) and Pollitt (2000; 2009).These questions relate to the two recurring problems I began my study with: a sense of 'policy amnesia' (Higham and Yeomans, 2007) within an institution and a lack of policy memory (Higham, 2005) about the possibilities of widening participation. This led to the second problem and my interest in exploring how institutional policies and practices marginalise, or even exclude, other possibilities of what widening participation is or could be (Greenbank, 2006, 2007; Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever, 2010) and the wider contexts that shape these enactments of institutional policy and practice.

These problems have acted as a guide and 'entry point' (Smith, 2006) in discovering how national and institutional policy actors interpreted policy and texts on widening participation and how particular policies, practices and problems were framed and constructed. The next chapter outlines the methodology and methods used to analyse and interpret these problems and the 'problematization' of widening participation.

Chapter 3: Methodology and methods

The following chapter has three aims. First, I argue *why* the methodological framework I designed provided the basis for investigating my research problem and answering my research questions. Secondly, I review *how* this framework was applied to my research design, the methods used and the iterative-inductive approach to analysis (O'Reilly, 2009). Then, finally, I present the typology and outline *how* this was used to analyse and interpret my research problem.

The overall research question, guiding the study, asked what the discourses and narratives of widening participation in higher education in England were between 2004 and 2014, and how have they been produced, shaped and interpreted. Figure 1, in chapter 1, summarised my three specific research questions, their focus and the corresponding methods used. The methodological framework I have designed addresses these questions and my focus on how to interpret policy and its context, policy actors and framing policy and 'voice' and policy making. I now review *why* narrative policy analysis and institutional ethnography were combined with the concept of bricolage and *how* this enabled me to analyse and interpret policy within specific national and institutional contexts.

3.1 Methodological framework

In this first section of the chapter, I make the case for *why* I developed this methodological framework combining narrative policy

analysis (Roe, 1989 and 1994; Fischer and Forester, 1993; Garvin and Eyles, 1997; Sutton, 1999; Cortazzi, 2001 and van Eeten, 2007), institutional ethnography (Smith, 1988; 2002 and 2005) and bricolage (Levi-Strauss, 1966; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Kincheloe, 2005 and Freeman, 2007). I ask why this combination enabled me to analyse and interpret discourses and narratives of widening participation given my ontological and epistemological positions introduced at the beginning of chapter 1.

3.1.1 *Narrative policy analysis*

In this study, I compare narratives representing policy as 'clear, abstract and fixed', with ones in which policies are 'awkward, incomplete, incoherent and unstable' (Ball, 1997:265.sic). For example, whereas a narrative could be constructed to establish a readable and coherent plot, by contrast, different characters (or policy actors) may construct a variety of other plots embodying various notions of 'the institution' and their own places within its 'organisational stories' (Cortazzi, 2001). Here is the tension between Roe's conception of policy narratives stabilising policymaking compared with the notion/metaphor of 'flash points' (1994:34). Yet both sets of narratives are plotted. As Biesta, Field and Tedder (2010) argue, citing the work of Polkinghorne (1995), a plot provides structure and order in a story by selecting events that are relevant to it (2010:321).

The power of narratives relate, in turn, to the argument of Roe that 'bureaucratic stories' and narratives are the form managers and policy actors may use to 'structure the ambiguities attached to

important policy issues (and) transform these uncertainties and complexities' (1989:263). Fischer and Forester (1993) agree. They emphasise the notion of a policy 'frame' relating to the construction of narratives that 'participants are disposed to tell about policy situations' arguing that narratives are 'constructed around generative metaphors' (1993:11). Rein and Schon (1993) argue, in their use of these terms, that 'framing' is 'a way of selecting, organising, interpreting and making sense of a complex reality' and such metaphors 'provides guideposts for knowing, analysing, persuading and acting' (1993:146). This position builds on the work of Gamson and Lasch (1980) on the notion of policy 'packaging' which refers to how a central organising idea circulates in a policy narrative, is expressed through metaphors or slogans and then embedded as a 'conventional metaphor' (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003).

These questions of framing lead me to a comparison of two positions on metanarratives as a specific dimension of narrative policy analysis. On the one hand, three pieces of recent research conceptualise a 'metanarrative' as being either *the* dominant narrative or *a* central narrative in various contexts. For example, Thornton (2008) critiques how a market metanarrative frames equal employment opportunities in HE and Greenlaw (2015) analyses the assumptions underpinning 'the Skills Movement'.

By contrast, Garvin and Eyles (1997), van Eeten (2007) and Hampton (2011), building on earlier work of Roe (1994), emphasise the

significance of a metanarrative as being a narrative with the power to *re-frame* and *reconstruct* policy, despite the complexity and uncertainty of an issue. Roe's concern, which I share, is with 'small-m metanarratives' (1994:52) not seeking to homogenize or stifle conflict. Instead, small-m metanarratives are those recognising differences in a controversy but then working towards a 'way of making sense of an issue that makes it more amenable to policy intervention' (Garvin and Eyles, 1997:48). van Eeten (2007) summarises Roe's approach (1994) based on a series of stages: identifying the dominant definition of a complex issue; 'stories' that run counter to that narrative; a metanarrative generated by comparing and contrasting the two and, finally, why this metanarrative recasts or reframes the issue. van Eeten (2007) emphasises that this notion of a developing metanarrative is concerned with *re-constructing* and *re-casting* competing and conflicting narratives. However, whilst Roe's concern (1994) is with 'small m metanarratives', in the following section of the chapter, I combine narrative policy analysis with institutional ethnography and argue why inter-relationships between narratives and policy need to be placed in wider contexts too.

3.1.2 *Institutional ethnography*

Dorothy E Smith, in her pioneering work on institutional ethnography and the social organisation of everyday life (1988), and subsequent work (2006), emphasises the importance of 'looking up' in order to understand lives within a specific setting. Smith argues institutional ethnography is not, in one sense, about studying

institutions at all. She argues it 'doesn't begin in theory but in people's experiences' (2006:2). Citing her earlier work Smith emphasises:

> Institutional ethnography begins by locating a standpoint in an institutional order that provides the guiding perspective from which it will be explored. It begins with some issues, concerns or problems that are real for people. These guide the direction of inquiry (2002: 23).

Notions of 'entry', 'standpoint' and 'ruling relations' are essential elements of institutional ethnography. They were also significant for my own purposes and positions too. To re-iterate, two 'problems' guided this study. First, an apparent 'policy amnesia' (Higham and Yeomans, 2007) or lack of policy memory about the diverse possibilities of widening participation was evident in narratives within an institution. Secondly, particular forms of policy and practice were instead privileged in 'occupational stories' (Cortazzi, 2001) constructed in compliance with the dominant narrative within national policy texts.

I became interested in both as an institutional 'problem' and phenomenon but was also troubled by these tensions between policy texts, dominant institutional practices and the spaces for other possibilities too. For example, a group of eight of us from within a single Department had previously undertaken a small- scale, externally funded research project (HEA, 2009). This initial phase of research in 2009 preceded my Doctoral studies and was followed by further preliminary work and a subsequent Institution Focused Study (Jones, 2013) that were both part of my Doctorate. This later research suggested another apparent consequence of this problem of 'amnesia':

the simplification of context and reduction in the complexity of policy. Being confronted with such practices, and negotiating how to respond to them, are recurring daily dilemmas but also fundamental questions of value and reflexivity in practice and research:

> Values, culture, and social positioning are not dynamics that can be removed or isolated whenever it is convenient. Rather, all the participants are entrenched in the historical, geographical, political, personal, economic, psychological and social dynamics of the moment, shaping their interpretations, perceptions and ways of knowing (Burke, 2002:40).

This reflexivity shaped the values I brought to the study and the assumptions and judgements informing my positions at each stage of the process. Campbell and Gregor (2004) argue these 'entry points' act as a guide and enable the researcher to trace features of the institution as a social organisation and of the places of particular policies, practices and pieces of research within it. It is this form of ethnography that enabled me to not only analyse critical events but also to interpret how practices and narratives were constructed by policy actors but also socially organised in wider settings too.

Smith proposes that by interpreting 'The everyday world as problematic' (1988), the institution and its local setting can be interpreted through a wider web. She advocates 'a sociology that does not transpose knowing into the objective forms in which the situated subject and her actual subject and location are discarded' (1988:153). Rather, Smith argues why the local institutional experiences of

subjects, and their location, need to be woven and 'pieced together' into a wider context.

3.1.3 Bricolage

The following section builds on this introduction to narrative policy analysis and institutional ethnography and summarises how they relate to the third element of my methodological framework: the concept of bricolage. This has been applied in two ways using the concepts of methodological and epistemological bricolage (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Kincheloe, 2001 and 2005; Freeman, 2007 and Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009).

A *methodological bricolage* represents how I 'pieced together' policy texts, interviews with national and institutional policy actors and the critical events I reflected upon in my research diary and field notes. Analysing and interpreting these narratives and asking how dominant meanings were constructed, circulated (Bacchi, 2000 and 2012) and shaped by national but also 'subtle micro politics' (Burke, 2012:155), has been a recurring and iterative processes. In terms of specific practices and preparation, Levi-Strauss argues materials may be collected, and kept, because they 'may always come in handy' and have more than one use because they 'each represent a set of actual and possible relations' (1966:18). For example, I 'pieced together' and used a range of sources in different ways at various points in the research. These included the yellow A4 folder, dated '1989', with typed and handwritten notes I wrote over 25 years ago, as part of planning for a new Access to HE curriculum I co-ordinated. These sources were

used in the first section of chapter 2 but other sources were also used as part of my preparation before interview and during the interview itself.

The concept of *epistemological bricolage* enabled me to analyse policy and the roles of each policy actor by analysing texts and interviewing policy actors and listening to them and gaining access to their accounts and articulations (Mason, 1996:40). Freeman's work on bricolage and the *bricoleur* (2007) relates to these interests and may also enhance other research on HE too by asking how national and institutional policy actors, 'piece together' their narratives of different kinds of policy, evidence and research.

Building on the work of Freeman, I argue that the policy actor, as *bricoleur*, negotiates between different practices and forms of evidence and research to produce different ways of knowing. Freeman reviews three strands of literature about policy and learning: rationalist; institutionalist and constructionist (2007:478-480) and contrasts these with three modes of learning in practice*:* rational; institutional and situated (2007:481-484). He concludes that the notion of *epistemological bricolage* (2007) can be used to sensitise the act of interviewing policy actors but also the recurring stages of analysing and interpreting how policy actors may draw upon, and 'piece together', these different kinds of learning about policy.

First, a rationalist account of policy learning emphasises conditions of stability and time for policy problems and goals to be

defined. Freeman, citing Rose on 'lesson drawing' (1993), argues this account assumes a programme or policy designed elsewhere can then applied in another setting (2007:479). By contrast, an institutionalist account is based on two further interpretations in which an organisational account emphasises the notion of difference: of different organisations and types of information processed in different ways (2007: ibid), whereas an ideational account reviews the cognitive and individual beliefs and ways of thinking within an organisation. Finally, a constructionist account emphasises policy problems are what we believe them to be but that learning begins and is situated in practice (2007:480).

Freeman then contrasts these accounts of policy and learning with three modes of rational, institutional and situated learning in practice (2007:481-484). In interviews with public health officials, Freeman notes they combine a rational use of academic and 'grey' literature to standardise and benchmark practice combined with a sense of whether research related to them in their institution (2007:483) and how they could learn from colleagues elsewhere. Using the metaphor of learning as bricolage, Freeman suggests that:

> [W]hat is interesting about these policy-makers' accounts is the way they describe working across different epistemological domains. As one respondent put it, learning consists in 'piecing together' what they know from different sources in different ways (2007:485).

I conceptualise those I interviewed as *bricoleurs*. In these instances policy actors, as *bricoleurs*, may negotiate between practice,

fragments of evidence and different forms of research and ways of knowing (2007:488). National and institutional policy actors actively chose what to include in their narratives and how they made sense of policy in their interviews with me. My analysis is of how each national and institutional policy actor chose to 'piece together' their interpretation and framing of policies and practices. But this represented not only their knowledge, and sense of *what* policy was but also their interpretation, and mine, of *how* they re-presented memories, themselves and their roles as policy actors in these processes. By combining narrative policy analysis, institutional ethnography and bricolage the mixture of the three elements of my methodological framework enabled me to 'move freely between different analytic techniques and concepts' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009:233). However, the use of the three concepts was not designed to be eclectic or adhoc. Instead, the combination and mixture was designed to enable me to address my research questions and discover how 'rich descriptions' of policies and practices of widening participation were interpreted and framed.

The opening section of this chapter has stated *what* my research problem was and made the case for *why* I designed a methodological framework combining narrative policy analysis, institutional ethnography and the concept of *bricolage*. I have also highlighted my awareness of my positions within the research. The next section of the chapter now builds on this introduction. It outlines *how* this framework was applied to my research design, the research

methods used and the research conducted to analyse and interpret what widening participation was, is and could be.

3.2 Research design, methods and analysis

The following framework, outlined in figure 2, summarises the design of the study. It is adapted from Smith (2006:4) and the schema proposed by Diamond (2006). In the corresponding sub sections of the chapter each issue is addressed in turn.

Figure 2: Schema for research design

Key Issues	Summary
Personal entry and experiential standpoints	• Prior experiences • My position/s within the study and how these shaped the research 'problem'
Problematics of the research and knowledge explored	• Questions of ethics and the dynamics of 'insider' and 'outsider' research • National and institutional contexts
Research methods	• National and institutional policy texts • Two sets of interviews with institutional and national policy actors • Field notes and research diary of critical events
Sequences of production: 'piecing together' a typology of widening participation	• How narratives were analysed and interpreted: Processes and practices of interpreting and framing policy

3.2.1 Personal entry and experiential standpoints

The first issue I re-address are my personal entry points into the study and 'the autobiography of the question' (Miller, 1995). I ask how

the dilemmas I brought to the research relate to the specific problems I was concerned with by reflecting on how my experiences shaped my standpoint and position/s within the research.

My critical reflexive stances during the thesis were shaped by different experiences of democratic and managerial professionalism (Sachs, 2001) that I brought to Central University in 2008, and the EdD from 2010 onwards. My first memories of widening participation are of return to learn and access to H.E provision I contributed to at Northavon College between 1985 and 1993. These began from a different premise, and starting point, compared with the more recent emphasis on the 'aspiration raising' of young people who may have to 'aimhigher' if they are to widen their participation.

Field (1986) in an interim review of the national REPLAN initiative (1984-87), designed to expand educational opportunities for unemployed adults, reflected my own experiences of this work between 1985 and 1987. Analysing the Dearne Valley project in Yorkshire, and other projects too, Field argues 'Most of the local development projects disclose the enormous, if normally latent, demands for learning opportunities among unemployed adults' (1986:3). Although ultimate control of the project I contributed to was with the local authority adult education service, and the FE College where I worked, the work 'sought to involve unemployed adults from the area in making their own demands upon the resources of the institutions, and to open up those resources to the communities' (Field,1986:4). This stance echoes the

perspective of Shanahan, reviewed in chapter 2, who argues that understanding students' diverse experiences needs to invert the questions of access by beginning with the 'knowledge of the excluded' (1997:71). This standpoint has been fundamental to how I frame widening participation.

However, reflecting on the majority of practices at Northwestern University, where I subsequently worked between 1994 and 2008, have different memories for me. Cunningham argues that 'what renders critical an event in professional life is its propensity to create a disturbance in our professional *equilibrium'* (Cunningham, 2008:165). Reflecting now on a range of critical incidents emphasises mundane but also significant events (Woods, 1994; 1996). In some instances, the restricted practices and interpretations of individuals were a form of 'performing management' in which meeting externally imposed targets was privileged by them. Although, in other instances, work between the University, local Colleges and local authorities was characterised by collaborative curriculum development which exemplified a form of 'extended professionality' (Hoyle, 1974; Hoyle and John, 1995) and the complexities of enacting and researching policy (Barnett, 2008; Burke, 2008; Ball, 2013 and Molla, 2014)

3.2.2 *Problematics of the research and knowledge explored*

In the Autumn of 2008 I began work at Central University. My starting point in this study has its origins in a small scale study I co-ordinated there in 2009 (Jones, 2010) and further work I subsequently

completed for my Doctoral studies (Jones, 2011 and 2013). However, what remained problematic was how policy texts were called upon, referred to and used within the institution. As Ozga argues, each text tells 'a story about what is possible or desirable to achieve through education policy' (2000:95). In this study, texts provided contexts and starting points for my analysis before, during and after each interview I conducted. Although mine was not a narrow view of policy texts, the actions of policy actors or the analysis of policy as organised, coherent and stable.

In terms of what I explored, three dimensions of policy and its context, policy actors and the framing of policy and the question of why 'voice' and policy making matter, first emerged in earlier work for my IFS (Jones,2013). But, whilst I began this study with three specific research questions, in figure 1, and a corresponding focus for each question, these were not understood as categories to be laid over and imposed upon my analysis and interpretation. Instead, they were a starting point in my recurring iterative inductive approach that has asked how national and institutional contexts and policies and practices were interpreted and framed within narratives of widening participation.

The following section introduces questions of ethics, and the dynamics of 'insider' and 'outsider' research, and how these related to the problematics of the research and knowledge explored. I then outline where research was conducted, before analysing the research methods I used given my overall and specific research questions.

Questions of ethics and the dynamics of 'insider' and 'outsider' research

O'Reilly emphasises the importance of resolving ethical issues through a continuous process of 'reflexive dialogue between researcher, other research participants, other academics and friends, and the field context' (2009:63). Whilst I recognised 'concerns must be addressed on a case-by-case (moment–by-moment) basis' (ibid), the overall research design and ethical principles shaping the conduct of the study were first informed by guidance and questions in the *Ethics Approval for Student Research Projects: Planned Research and Ethical Considerations* document (Institute of Education, October 2010) and BERA (2011) *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research*. Then, at different stages of the research, I reflected on the work of Mercer (2007) and Sikes and Potts (2008) on 'insider' and 'outsider' research

My multiple positions on the 'insider'-'outsider' continuum, within and outside of the institution, were significant. They are introduced here and considered further in the next section of the chapter where I reflect on ethical dilemmas and issues that arose during and after specific interviews. Mercer in her review of 'insider' research, argues that

> the more we conceive of insiderness and outsiderness as an either/or duality, the more we are tempted to judge one as better than the other. Conversely, the more we conceive of them as points on a continuum, the more we are likely to value them both (Mercer, 2007:13).

However, she also suggests these relationships are not static. Dynamics fluctuate depending on time, setting and the place/s of the researcher within the study (2007:25). Three brief examples illustrate this. First, my readings of national and institutional policy texts were not 'neutral'. When I interpreted a specific policy text memories shaped my analysis, interpretation and experiential standpoint in relation to that text. From that standpoint, I was an 'insider'. However, secondly, when interviewing national policy actors I was paradoxically both an 'insider' and 'outsider'. Whilst I brought a diversity of experiences of access and widening participation to each interview, I had never met any of the interviewees before. Nor was I familiar with the settings where each interview took place. Thirdly, another dimension of the complex positions of 'insider' and 'outsider' relates to my position/s *within* my own institution. For example although familiar with the language of those being interviewed, my empathy 'because of in-depth understanding' (Sikes and Potts, 2008:177) of them or their position/s was often fluid, not fixed, because of shifting positions some of them adopted. This sense of fluidity and change also manifested itself in national and institutional sites of policy I researched.

I follow Ball, who cites the work of Grek and Ozga (2010), in wanting to

> escape from the artificiality of 'levels' as distinct boundaries of political activity… and instead emphasise the interdependency of actors and the movement of ideas in the framing of problems and policy directions and conceptions (2016:550).

Rather than attending to 'levels' and 'boundaries', my emphasis on 'multiple sites', opened up possibilities for sensitising my analysis and interpretations of 'national and local unevenness and frictions and different speeds of change and moments of possibility in different localities' (ibid). I now conceptualise the inter-relationships between the seven national policy actors interviewed and the seven organisations they represented.

National and institutional contexts

Seven national policy actors, each representing seven different organisations, were interviewed between March and June 2014. Two of the seven organisations in my purposive sample were 'arms-length' agencies or NDPSB (Non Departmental Public Sector Bodies). Scott, in a review of the 2010-15 Coalition Government reforms of HE (2013), analyses the roles of some of these national organisations as part of the HE 'regulatory environment' (2013:46) albeit with different and possibly conflicting responsibilities. Scott concludes that one of the other organisations was part of a 'more ragged continuity' between New Labour governments and the Coalition in 'providing policies designed to enhance learning and teaching and improve the student experience' (2013:43).

In my analysis of how the national policy actors interpreted policy, I conceptualise each of them, and their organisations, as being part of a policy network. The policy actors knew one another and the relationships *between* individuals and groups are examined in chapter 4 (Rhodes, 1997). I also discuss Rhodes' argument that a 'policy

network' denotes inter-dependence in delivering services and exchanging resources. However, Newman recognises that networks are 'fluid' and have 'shifting membership and ambiguous relationships and accountabilities' (2001:108). This further dimension of policy networks is also discussed in chapter 4 too.

However, rather than mapping out the whole of a policy network or institution (DeVault and McCoy,2006), the research I report upon focused upon particular problems within specific sites and, given my research questions, how these were interpreted and framed. The institutional ethnography was designed to do so 'in ways that make visible their points of connection with other sites and courses of action' (2006:17 in Smith, 2006). Consequently, this dual notion of 'problems' and 'connections' was applied in two ways. First, to interpret narratives *within* national sites of policy and then, secondly, inter-relationships *between* those national sites and various dimensions within an institutional site too.

My interest, following Smith, was in work of policy actors in these specific sites and, more particularly, in 'the socially organised relations' in which experiences arose (2002:31). Smith, in turn, traces inter-connections between individual experiences and their wider contexts:

> We can begin to locate people's everyday lives in the institutional order, in changes in it, in shifts in government policy, and in more general changes in economic organisation that are taking place. It is also possible to locate specific possibilities of change (Smith, 2002: 33).

Institutional context/s

Central University was the institutional site where research was conducted. The site was introduced in 1.3 when its geographic, historical and organisational contexts were outlined. Another dimension of these changes was that since July 2010 £20 million had been invested in its campus. This is a specific example of an institutional response to processes of marketization in HE that was reviewed in the first section of chapter 2. For example, major modifications to the campus have been made. This physical re-organisation of the campus includes a new entrance and Atrium, library, teaching rooms and a separate management suite within a new building. The Senior Management Team (SMT) consisting of the Vice-Chancellor/ Chief Executive, two Pro Vice Chancellors, Director of Finance and the Registrar are all based in this space. Each has her/his own Personal Assistant. During 2014-15, the academic year in which the institutional fieldwork was undertaken, the SMT formally met once a week and, in addition to this group, 14 further members of an institutional management group met with the SMT fortnightly.

The room, adjoining the management suite, used by senior managers for the majority of their meetings overlooks the Atrium, the central meeting place on campus for staff and students. These changes to the fabric of the campus may firstly be understood as a response to and reflection of marketization. Perhaps they can also be interpreted in another way too. Whilst my focus in this study is on written texts, research on space (Hillier and Hanson, 1984; Lefebvre,

1991) and emerging research on the significance of the built environment for HE (Temple, 2009) suggests it is also productive to read buildings as texts and consider how they may embody the activities of people and their work too.

3.2.3   Research methods

Having addressed the first two key issues in the schema for the research, and outlined its national and institutional contexts, the following section of the chapter analyses the three research methods used in my research design. The place of national and institutional policy texts, semi-structured interviews with national and institutional policy actors and field notes and a research diary are each analysed in turn.

The place of policy texts

The texts provided a context and starting point for analysing different perspectives on policy and how it was variously framed and activated. The following section reviews the sample of texts chosen for analysis and how this was undertaken (Ball, 1998; Ozga, 2000). The sample was constructed in two stages. First, in my thesis proposal, I identified national and institutional texts that provided me with a basis for analysing policies between 2004 and 2014 and their contexts. In my proposal, I confirmed that specific texts were chosen because of their explicit significance as policy texts on widening participation and my interest in how students and lecturers were framed within them. In terms of national policy, the Higher Education Act (2004), and the White Paper (2011) *Students at the Heart of the System* were included

in my initial sample and analysed in the first section of my literature review in Chapter 2.

The second stage of sampling policy texts built on this preliminary work. It was based instead on texts identified by the policy actors themselves. Appendix 1 lists the 31 different policy texts cited by the seven national policy actors during my interviews with them. Four texts were cited by more than one policy actor: the *Dearing Report* (NCIHE, 1997); Access Agreements (first submitted in 2006-07), the final report of the '*What Works? Student Retention & Success programme*' (Thomas, 2012) and finally the *National strategy for access and student success in higher education* (BIS, 2014). The narrative, or 'story', within this fourth text embodied 'the dominant story that develops over time' (Garvin and Eyles, 1997:48). It did so by building on the other three texts. Each national text is analysed in Chapter 4.

Initially, in terms of institutional policy texts, a programme review document (Central, 2013-14) and website (Central,2014) provided contexts for analysing and interpreting organisational change. Although, in the second stage of sampling, my prime focus was narrowed to an analysis of how a national policy text (OFFA, 2013) was interpreted in two corresponding institutional policy text/s (Central, 2013-14; 2014-15.

The analysis of the narrative, or 'story', within each national and institutional policy text was then based on the following questions posed by Ozga (2000:95):

- Source: Whose interests are served by the text and whose are excluded from it?

- Scope: How does the text frame the policy? Who are the participants and what are their relationships within the text?

- Patterns: How does the text relate to other international, national and local policies? How does it build on or alter other organisational forms?

However given my use of institutional ethnography, and focus on specific national and institutional texts, Ball's argument highlights that

> One of the tensions which runs through all varieties of policy analysis is that between the need to attend to the local particularities of policy making and policy enactment and the need to be aware of general patterns and apparent commonalities or convergence across localities (and) the processes of translation and recontextualisation involved in the realisation or enactment of policy (1998:119).

In this instance, Ball is comparing local and international policies. But my concern, analysed in Chapter 4, is with the inter-relationships between the narratives within a national text and those policies and practices embodied in specific institutional texts. Each of these provided a context for my focus on policy and how it is framed because

> they tell a story about what is possible or desirable to achieve through education policy. They are thus able to be read as any narrative is read: they may be scrutinized for their portrayal of character and plot, for their use of particular forms of language in order to produce impressions or responses; they may have an authorial 'voice' or seek

to convey the impression of multiple viewpoints (Ozga, 2000:95, my emphasis).

Although my understanding and interest, following Ozga (2000), was in the processes by which how texts were called upon, referred to and used by interviewees nationally and within the site of the institutional ethnography - which is my workplace. As such my position reflected Gerrard and Farrell (2014) who, in their research on curriculum policy and teachers' work, argue that institutional ethnography enables them to trace 'the intersections between policy texts and policy-makers' understandings and uses of them' (2014:640) through interviews.

Semi structured interviews

The following outline of how I used interviews, as the second method of research in the study, clarifies who I interviewed, the purpose of the interviews, how they were designed and the recurring processes used to analyse and interpret each interview. Walby's review of the place of texts within institutional ethnography, and the relationships between texts and interviews (2013), summarises how work on a text is a process of interpreting 'practices of inscription' (2013:143). Walby emphasises that institutional ethnography 'is a method of inquiry that explores *how* everyday life is co-ordinated *through* organisational processes' (2013: 142, my emphasis added). DeVault and McCoy build on this point about institutional ethnography in their review of the use of interviews to investigate 'ruling relations' (2006). They argue institutional ethnography is driven by the search to

discover how events happen. Their underlying assumption is that individual experiences and institutional practices are tied into extended social relations, or chains of action, many of which are mediated by documentary forms of knowledge (2006:19). From my standpoint, the purpose of the interviews followed Smith's earlier argument. My aim was to discover how practices of 'reading, interpreting and writing from an institutionally derived frame–make up and construct the 'truth' of an event' (Smith, 1999:216), or 'a' truth.

In my original proposal for the thesis, in November 2013, I suggested that I would conduct interviews with national, regional and institutional policy actors. However, by January 2014, following feedback on the original proposal, I narrowed my focus to national and institutional policy actors. A purposive sample of participants was constructed in three stages. In January 2014, I identified six national policy actors with specific expertise and significant roles in widening participation. They had each contributed to a national conference on widening participation in 2013. I wrote to each of them on 24 January 2014, via email, attaching a two-page information sheet briefing them on the purpose of the interview (see appendix 2). Each accepted my invitation. Two replied by the end of the day, three others within a week and the final participant within a month. I reflect on how the speed of responses could be interpreted in the subsequent section of this chapter on field notes and my diary of critical events.

A pilot interview was conducted in March. I used the interview guide (see appendix 3) to trace the inter-relationships between the biography of the interviewee, organisational milestones and his/her interpretation of contemporary developments within the institution. The interview was valuable in three ways. Firstly, on reflection, it exemplified Biesta, Field and Tedder's argument (2010), about the construction of narratives within interviews. Understanding narratives in their chronological but also narrative and generational forms has subsequently been used to sensitise my analysis and interpretation of narratives within interviews in chapter 4. Secondly, whilst the perception of the interviewee in the pilot was that 'Those questions work well', they also suggested broadening the sample but not the number of other institutional policy actors to be interviewed.

In addition, following a meeting with my supervisor in March, two further interviews were also organised. One was with a senior manager within my institution and the other a senior representative of another national organisation. By the middle of June 2014, nine interviews had been completed. Two interviews were conducted with institutional policy actors in March and May 2014 and a further seven interviews with national policy actors between March and June 2014.

Then a second set of interviews within the institution, where I work, were planned in October 2014 and completed between November 2014 and January 2015. This second purposive sample was based on two further groups of interviewees. The first were three

Heads of academic departments, from the two main Schools within my institution, whilst the second group were three members of the institutional management group, also from within the institution where I work. This second group were selected because each had management responsibility for specific areas of policy identified in the OFFA/HEFCE *National Strategy* document (BIS, 2014) and institutional Access Agreement (Central, 2013-14; 2014-15).

Prior to these interviews all six participants were also sent a copy of the same briefing document that had been previously sent to the national policy actors (see appendix 2). Again each invitation was accepted. The three Heads of academic departments replied within three days, two members of the institutional management group agreed to participate on the day they were sent an invitation and the other within a week.

The purpose of the interviews

The semi-structured interviews with national and institutional policy actors enabled me to analyse and interpret the meanings participants attributed to specific texts, to policy and to their specific roles in the construction of policy. Whilst Colebatch argues that 'There is less written about what policy participants actually do than almost any other aspect of policy' (1998:100), my interest was in the inter-relationships, not separations, between policy formulation and implementation. The analysis presented in Chapter 4 is of *what* policy narratives were re-presented and *how* these were constructed and framed. Although I do not conceive of the policy process as *formulation*

at a national 'level', and *implementation* at an institutional 'level', Gale notes this separation is significant because

> the distinction lives on in the minds of many and in hegemonic ways that serve to privilege some policy actors and their activities in particular contexts at the expense of others (2007:233).

In my study I conceptualise the policy actors I interviewed as bricoleurs (Freeman, 2007). Although how they choose to 'piece together' evidence in interviews represented not only their knowledge and sense of what policy *is* but also of *how* they re-presented their memories and constructed narratives about themselves as policy actors in these processes. Consequently, each interview had several purposes. These included beginning to understand interpretations of the formations of policy and the political era within which specific policies and practices had been framed. My aim was to listen to the narrative, or 'story', each policy actor constructed about their personal understandings and interpretations of:

- Policies, practices and research on widening participation to include; who they are, their roles, their contributions to policy, practices and research and their interpretations of what factors shape policy

- Context: Economic, political and social factors that shaped policies, practices and research on widening participation

- Policy and policy making: Perspectives on meanings of policy and practice

- Relationships and inter-relationships between policy actors within national and institutional sites of policy making on widening participation

- Policy structures and processes: How they frame policies, practices and research on widening participation.

Prior to each interview, I completed a guide for my own purposes (see appendix 3). The overall organisation of the guide followed the same structure whilst specific prompts related to different interviewees. All interviews began with the same question. However, the interviews were semi-structured and, after the opening question, the sequence in which questions were asked depended on the responses of the interviewee. The introduction to each interview began with me re-iterating its overall purpose. I emphasised that the interview was designed to review the significance of the role of the interviewee, and of the institution, in the development of policies and practices on widening participation in HE. I then also emphasised key points in terms of ethics, transcription and analysis. The interview was to be transcribed and I confirmed that each interviewee could be sent a transcript of the interview so any factual errors could be corrected by them. I also emphasised that I respected their right as a participant not to have information included in the study if, in retrospect, that was their wish. Alternatively, I confirmed that whilst they may consent to having information included in the study how that was to be anonymised could be agreed before any information was included in my analysis. At this point in each interview, I paused, asked interviewees if they had any questions and, if not, they completed and signed the ethics form. I confirmed the interview would be for 45-60 minutes. I then began the interview.

The design of the interview: When did widening participation begin for you?

Whilst my research questions explicitly referred to 2004-2014, from the creation of OFFA to the *National strategy for access and student success in higher education* (BIS, 2014), I began each interview by summarising my own first memories of widening participation. At the beginning of each interview, I gave a brief context about my own first roles in access and widening participation, beginning in 1985, and my milestones of working with the WEA and REPLAN, then the co-ordination of Access to HE, between 1988 and 1993, and work as an Access to HE Moderator for 10 years after that.

After this summary of my own experiences, each interviewee was asked the same opening question: 'When did widening participation begin for you?' After the pilot interview in March, I decided to use this as my opening question in each interview. Starting each interview with my biography had several functions. In part I wanted to establish my credibility as an 'insider' but I also wanted to see where each interviewee began in constructing and re-presenting their biographies and how they interpreted the place of widening participation within this.

Following this question each interviewee was asked to review other work and previous experiences before reflecting on their current role. A series of 'plot questions' (Cousin, 2009) included what widening participation meant for them in each role/s. Then, if necessary, I asked each interviewee to think about specific events, their significance and

what these may tell us about their role/s. My aim was to understand their perspectives on how policy was constructed and their places within these processes.

Analysing and interpreting interviews with policy actors

The analysis of each transcript and comparison of the narratives of national and institutional policy actors began with the recurring stages and activities in the figure below (Cousin, 2009: 104-107).

Figure 3: Preliminary analysis and interpretation

1. I wrote a short summary of each interview- without listening to the recording of the interview. Each summary was between three and five pages long. The themes that I subsequently present in Chapter 4 were first identified in these initial analyses of each interview.

2. Then listened to the recording of the interview. My aim was to gather *what* was said including

    o   Differences between my summary and what the interviewee said
    o   What I had privileged but also omitted
    o   Quotations that supported or challenge my first account

3. Transcribed interviews. In Chapter 4, when I analyse a theme or include a specific quotation from an interview, the policy actor and transcript are identified by national or institutional policy actor and the number allocated confirms the place of the interview in that set (eg NPA1 or IPA 2).

4. Listened again focusing on *how* the story was told and what language was used. Reviewed and asked

    a. what held this story together
    b. what the links were between *what* was said and *how* the story was told
    c. what were possible 'conundrums' and contradictions in the narrative?

5. Worked across transcripts and asked

    a. what are the cross cutting and shared themes?
    b. what did not fit? what was incongruent?
    c. what was not said? what were the silences?

I then extended and deepened this process of analysing each interview and the construction of the narrative. My ontological position is that the narratives in chapter 4 are not 'transparent carriers of experience' (Burke, 2012:75) but that policy actor's interpretations are 'meaningful properties of the social reality' (Mason, 1996:39) they each construct. As Burke emphasises, narratives are understood as 'social products created within specific social, cultural and historical locations' (ibid) in which institutional problems and practices are situated in a wider web (Smith, 1988). Whilst the procedure in figure 3 provided me with clarity, in terms of stages to follow in my analysis, Savin Baden recognised earlier the tensions between recurring process of analysis and interpretation (2004: 369-370):

> In the process of *data analysis* there is a tendency to want everything to be tidy, when it is not, whereas *interpretation* appears to be a position where the researcher begins to embrace the complexities in the data. There is a sense of a shift away from categorisation of

various sorts towards a different and overarching perspective that can take account of multidimensionality. Often such shifts require reconfigurations of our meaning perspectives in the research process (2004:370. Emphasis added).

Consequently, Cousin's framework (2009) was extended by building on Savin-Baden (2004) and combining her work with that of Atkinson and Silverman (1997); Kvale, (2006), Biesta, Field and Tedder (2010) and Sprague (2016).

Moving back and forth and beyond gathering and analysing data, further recurring iterative and inductive processes sensitised and deepened my awareness and understanding. Three inter-related dimensions, introduced below, emerged from this process. These are used in chapter 4 to problematize narratives of widening participation and how they were interpreted and framed.

Three dimensions of interpretation: The place of the interview and the construction of narratives

The first dimension, evident in the interviews, was how policy actors constructed their narratives and presented and re-presented themselves. Savin-Baden emphasises the importance of understanding the subtext of an interview. She suggests, for example, reflecting on what the other person is arguing for, probing what their position may be and recognising and then 'piecing together' the organising principles they used in an interview (2004:361). Savin-Baden argues these are

> categories used by people to justify, explain, defend and define themselves. So another way of interpreting data is to explore how people choose to categorise themselves, how they talk about themselves in relation to the issues under study (2004:375).

Earlier interpretations of the place of the interview, notion of the 'interview society' (1997:309) and 'invention of the self' (1997:319), derived from Atkinson and Silverman (1997) relate to this first dimension.

Atkinson and Silverman challenge the notion that an interview offers either an 'authentic gaze' (1997:305) or 'neutral medium' for the collection of data (1997:310). Citing deVault's earlier work on talking and listening from women's standpoint (1990), they argue this and other feminist perspectives emphasises the asymmetry of interviewer and interviewee. Atkinson and Silverman also place their critique of the place of the interview in the wider context of concerns with the phenomena of 'the interview society' and what they characterise as rituals of self-revelation and transformation.

They ask whether the interviewer and interviewee are engaged in the revealing the predictable or a process of 'inventing the self' (1997:319). As such 'Reminiscence incorporates past experiences into the present performance' (1997:313) – but what is being revealed? Their argument is that the 'work' of biographical authentication is just that. It is a construction: 'Life narratives, whether they be retrospective or prospective accounts, are always pastiche, as it were. They are pieced together, always changeable and fallible, out of the stock of mementos' (ibid). Consequently, in their critique of 'the interview culture', they conclude that

> We take at face value the image of the self-revealing speaking subject at our peril…We should not allow a renewed sensitivity to the narrative

organisation of everyday life to result in an un-theorised or uncritical endorsement of personal narratives themselves. They are not, in other words, any more authentic or pure a reflection of the self than any other socially organised set of practices (1997:322).

Rather, as Burke argues narratives are understood as 'social products created within specific social, cultural and historical locations' (2012:75). However, to re-emphasise Slade's argument (2012) the entry point of an institutional ethnography is that 'disjuncture' between a specific lived experience, in a specific context, and the wider social processes that shape it.

Intersections of gender and social class exemplified this first dimension and why un-theorised self-revelations within interviews would be problematic. It was evident, for example, that *what* the policy actors shared of their biographies, what they revealed and *how* they told these personal and policy stories, within each interview, differed. How they dated the significance of widening participation for them, and their organisations, varied markedly in emphatic but also subtle intersections of gender and social class. For example, when the three male national policy actors were asked my first question, about when widening participation began for them, each explicitly positioned themselves and their identities and biographies in terms of their own social class and schooling. One began their narrative at the age of seven, another at 17 and the other at 18.

By contrast, of the other national policy actors, only one of the four women emphasised experiences outside of her current workplace. Whilst one policy actor began by reflecting on being a mature student

in HE, two of the other three women framed their narratives in terms of significant experience of paid work in access and widening participation but not their own wider or earlier biographies. At the point of interview, one of these other policy actors had been in her current role since 1998 and the other had joined her current organisation in 2001 and worked on widening participation projects in HE before then.

Feminist critiques of qualitative methodology sensitise my interpretations of these differences between male and female participants in my study (see, for example, Sprague 2016). In essence, this critique emphasises that 'research relationships heighten the salience of gender, race and class' by structuring the setting and interactions within each interview (2016:147). Sprague emphasises that

> Potential identities, projected identities, available cultural scripts for a situation and prior experience are all powerfully shaped by gender in interaction with class, race/ethnicity, immigrant status, ability/disability (2016:149).

However a second dimension shaping the identities of policy actors, and evident and embodied within each narrative, was their saturation in different representations of 'time'. Whilst Biesta, Field and Tedder (2010) review chronological, narrative and generational time, and use these representations to analyse the learning biographies of 117 adults, I use their work in this study to sensitise how time and policy were interpreted and framed within narratives. As Atkinson and Silverman argue an untheorised or uncritical treatment of time within an interview is problematic, but Biesta, Field and Tedder's dimensions of

'chronological' time sensitises this analysis. They outline the inter-relationships between the form and content of the narrative and what is selected:

> On the one hand there is the question of the selection of form, that is, the selection of the chronological representation of time as the form in which to represent one's life. On the other hand there is the question of the selection of content – the question as to what is included and what is left out (2010:319).

Their second representation of 'narrative' time is not only used to analyse *what* event was selected but also *how* an event functions within a story (2010:321). Finally, a third representation of 'generational' time is used to ask whether events were included in a shared or collective experience, or not, and if they were shared how those events were framed, referred to and marked within different narratives (2010:323).

Whilst the first two dimensions, introduced here, sensitise my interpretation of the narratives of others in chapter 4, my aim in this final section on research methods is to reflect on how my field notes and research diary deepened my reflections on my positions within the research and my roles as a researcher. This third dimension also sensitised how I problematized narratives of widening participation and analysed the different ways in which these were interpreted and framed by me and other participants.

Field notes and a research diary of critical events

My third method of research combined field notes and a diary I wrote at each stage of the research. These entries were used to reflect on processes of research and critical events. Initially some notes were handwritten 'scratch notes, rough notes and cryptic scribbles' (Mills and Morton, 2013:79) whilst, on other occasions, notes were typed into my mobile phone or iPad and I then emailed these to myself. Most notes were a page, or two pages long, whilst others were much shorter. In A4 or A5 notebooks, I recorded experiences and often wrote entries on the left hand side of a double page and then reviewed these by recording further notes on the right hand page either at the time or within a week of the first entry. Initially, the notes were descriptive but in the recurring review my interpretations developed further (Atkins and Wallace, 2012:156). In this sense field notes, in the first form, were 'less emergent findings than raw musings, food for analytical thought and work' (Mills and Morton, 2013:88). I then used these in three further ways.

First, the notes were part of my preliminary analysis and recurring interpretation of the interviews. For example, in April 2014, having completed five of the seven interviews with national policy actors I presented my preliminary analysis at a BERA seminar (Jones, 2014). One of the recurring issues, in discussion, was how to problematize an apparent 'ease of access' after contacting the policy actors and requesting an interview. I had not met any of the national

policy actors before. However, in rough notes I wrote on the day of the seminar, I reflected on two issues that related to both chronological but also narrative representations of time. First, should I have been surprised by the time and speed in which the policy actors replied to my initial request for an interview? Was there was an explicit 'story' that each wanted to tell? For example, one of the participants at the seminar asked if there was a sense of the policy actors wanting to 'right' or 'write' a wrong and how this may relate to the preparation and publication of a national policy strategy on widening participation (BIS, 2014). I then built on these observations in refining the analysis and interpretation of the narratives of national policy actors presented in the first main section of chapter 4.

The second national policy actor made explicit reference to bricolage. I recorded these in my field notes and diary entries written at an early stage of my emerging analysis. This was the starting point for 'piecing together' my interpretation in which evidence produced by this iterative process was then compared with other emerging themes in other interviews. As Walby outlines, in institutional ethnography

> The primary data dialogue …is between the interviewer or participant observer and one or more persons that the researcher talks with or observes. A secondary data dialogue occurs between the researcher and the interview transcript and/or the field notes (2013:141-142).

My subsequent interpretation of other themes within interviews drew on further field notes. These enabled me to explore two other issues in the schema outlined in figure 2. In terms of 'knowledge to be explored', and the recurring 'sequences of production' and processes

of 'piecing together', I reflected on further evidence. For example, in interviews with national and institutional policy actors I discovered how policy embodied senses of stability, control and compliance, but also of 'flux' and 'frenzy', and these were constructed differently by various policy actors.

Thirdly, the field notes formed the basis of my research diary of critical events. My conceptualisation of such events, and what made them 'critical', was informed by my previous uses of the method in my earlier Institution Focused Study (see Jones, 2013:27). In this work I reviewed the perspectives of Woods (1994 and 1996) and Cunningham (2008) on how events may be conceptualised. Woods argues that methodologically 'it is difficult to study critical events as they are happening' (1996:119), but understanding the meanings and context of the event can be explored in retrospect. Cunningham agrees and argues 'what renders critical an event in professional life is its propensity to create a disturbance in our professional equilibrium' (Cunningham, 2008:165). However, Cunningham adds that rather than conceiving of events in the singular it may be helpful to extend this notion to a series of events (2008:168). These interpretations are combined together because their views are not in opposition but are elaborations of one another. Both are used in the second section of chapter 4 to sensitise my interpretations of specific critical events within the institution and how these relate to my second and third specific research questions on framing policy and voice.

Having reviewed the three methods of research used in the study, the recurring processes of analysis and interpretation and the three dimensions of interpretation that emerged from this process, I conclude the chapter by outlining how the narratives were 'pieced together' to form an explanatory typology of widening participation.

3.2.4 Sequence of production: 'Piecing together' a typology of widening participation

Using this iterative-inductive research design (O'Reilly, 2009), and a spiral of recurring cycles of research, narratives were 'pieced together' to form a typology of widening participation that I present in this final section of the chapter. The cycles, in figure 4 below, emphasise that the overall research design was not based on a single linear sequence of preparation, planning, data collection and analysis and interpretation but, instead, an iterative process and series of recurring stages.

Figure 4: Five cycles of research design: August 2013- March 2017

Cycle 1:
August-
December
2013

Cycle 2:
January-
August 2014

Cycle 3:
September
2014-
January 2015

Cycle 4:
February-
November
2015

Cycle 5:
December
2015-
March
2017
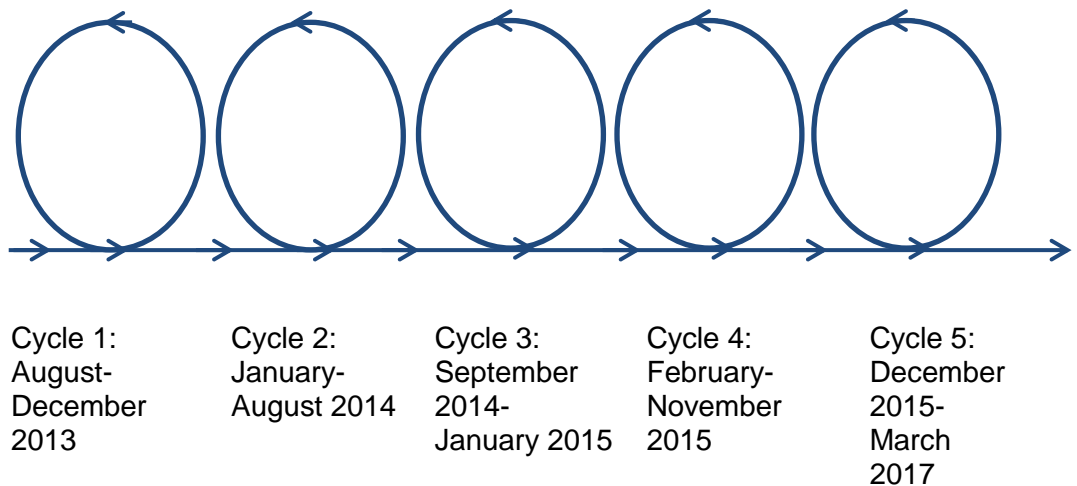
Within each cycle data was collected, analysed and then interpreted (O'Reilly, 2009:15). In the research I moved back and forth between preparation and planning, summarised in cycle one; initial data collection, findings and analysis in cycle two and further data collection, and another cycle of findings and analysis, in cycle three. In two final cycles of analysis and interpretation, in cycles four and five, I reviewed and refined my thesis. Appendix 5 summarises research conducted within each cycle.

The typology has two functions. It firstly summarises literature reviewed in chapter 2 and then structures my analysis and discussion of findings that is presented in Chapter 4. Secondly, the typology has implications for my own professional practices, and those of others, within the contexts of specific institutional settings. These are reviewed in Chapter 5.

The purpose of the typology

The three dimensions and four questions that provide the basis for the typology relate to my overall and specific research questions. The typology is then used in Chapter 4 to structure my analysis and interpretation of the inter-relationships between these questions and the narratives that have been re-constructed from data gathered. The proposition introduced here, and explored further in Chapter 4, is that these narratives of widening participation and transition are not simply *problems* to be managed but a set of recurring dilemmas to be *problematized* (Bacchi, 2000:2012). Bacchi argues that policy 'works' by a process of problematizing a phenomenon and then providing a

'solution' to it. The question that follows is 'what is the problem represented to be, for which this policy is the answer?' In 2012, Bacchi developed her position on 'problematization'. She argues that the main purpose of studying processes and practices is to 'dismantle' objects and show how they have been constructed (2012:2).These uses of the typology are also shaped by Yanow's argument:

> [I]nterpretive forms of policy analysis have shifted attention from the search for (and belief in the promise of finding) *one correct policy formulation* (correct in its definition of the policy problem, a narrative which entails the seeds for problem resolution) *to engage, instead, the possible multiplicities of problem definition resulting from different interpretive communities' experiences and perceptions* (Yanow, 2011:14, my emphasis).

However, these narratives are not just about the specific purposes of policies and practices, and how they are framed, but also who speaks about such policies and practices too. The typology, in figure 5, does not assume narratives are fixed. Rather, it is a heuristic device used within this study to enhance research on the complexities of widening participation and tensions between the 'problem' of widening participation and its 'problematization' within specific national and institutional contexts.

The design of the typology

My categorisation of 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives, and the re-casting of an 'extended metanarrative' of widening participation in HE, are shaped by earlier work for my Doctorate (Jones, 2011; 2013). Hoyle's models of 'restricted' and 'extended' professionality (1974), and Hoyle and John's subsequent work on three forms of

professionality (1995) were heuristic devices. Whereas Hoyle emphasised the models had no empirical support (1974:17) in my earlier research these were first used to sensitise a preliminary analysis of identities and practices within higher education (Jones, 2011). I now propose that this continuum can be used to sensitise and critique widening participation using the questions in my typology.

My thesis combines the notion of 'restricted' and 'extended' with Roe's argument (1994) in which he emphasises that 'small-m metanarratives' do not seek to homogenize policy. Instead, by recognising differences in a controversy, competing and conflicting narratives are re-cast. van Eeten (2007) summarises Roe's approach (1994). It is this I followed in the process of preparing, drafting and producing the typology. Combining the following four steps I designed the typology presented in figure 5. Firstly, by reviewing literature and then 'piecing together' narratives in policy texts, interviews with national and institutional policy actors and critical events a dominant 'restricted' definition of widening participation was identified. Secondly, 'reformist' 'stories' that ran counter to the dominant narratives were 'pieced together' using the same recurring process. Thirdly, a metanarrative was generated by comparing and contrasting the other two narratives. Finally, in chapter 4, I make the case for why a metanarrative recasts or reframes these narratives. van Eeten (2007) concludes that this notion of developing a metanarrative is concerned with *re-constructing* and *re-casting* competing and conflicting narratives.

In Chapter 4, I present my analysis and interpretation of how dominant 'restricted' and counter 'reformist' narratives of widening participation frame policies and practices differently. I explore how 'restricted' narratives emphasise 'the student lifecycle', a linear progression from access to 'student success' and progression (BIS, 2014), and these are reflected in activities framed in terms of dominant narratives of recruitment, 'support' and employability. By contrast, I also ask how 'reformist' narratives frame 'the student lifecycle' differently as a starting point in conceptualising transition but then critiquing its limitations. Finally, I argue why the third category of an 'extended metanarrative' is not a compromise, between the 'restricted' and 'reformist', but instead may offer a starting point for re-casting policy and practice. As such I argue an 'extended metanarrative' critiques 'the student lifecycle' and rejects how it frames transition by acknowledging and celebrating the complexities of students' lives and the implications of these diverse experiences for their studenthood (Field, Merrill and Morgan-Klein, 2010; Finnegan, Fleming and Thunborg, 2014).

However, the typology has not been designed to reduce the complexities of policy and practice to distinct categories. Instead, it is a device that enables me, and possibly others, to distinguish between policies and practices in specific contexts and discuss how these have been interpreted and framed differently. Consequently, the typology may be used by others to debate how differing narratives of widening participation are not just about the specific purposes of policies, and

who speaks about policies and practices within an institution. They are also part of a wider critique of contested notions of widening participation and transition (Davies, Williams and Webb, 1997; Burke, 2002 and 2012; Field and Kurantowicz, 2014 and Gale and Parker, 2014).

Figure 5: An explanatory typology of widening participation

	Dominant restricted	Reformist	Extended metanarrative
What is 'the problem'?	AimHigher (2004-11) Access Agreements (first submitted in 2006-07) Final report of the 'What Works? Student Retention & Success programme' (HEA/Paul Hamlyn, 2012). 'The student lifecycle': Access; student success and progression (HEFCE, 2001; BIS,2014)	'The student lifecycle' as a starting point in conceptualising transition	Imagining what could be in the future based on past policies and practices Critiques 'student lifecycle' and rejects how it frames widening participation and transition (Burke,2012;Hinton-Smith,2012)
What is 'the problem' represented to be?	The institution', 'An institutional culture' and 'institutional transformation' (HEA,2008-11 and BIS,2014) Institutional Access Agreements (Central, 2013-14; Central, 2014-15) Access of the excluded into universities (Shanahan,1997)	Piecing together' practices and how they may relate to one another 'Double shuffle' (Hall,2005): Economic imperative and equity and social justice (Maringe and Fuller,2006)	Multiple identities and moments of transition (Quinn,2010) Access of universities into the knowledge of the excluded (Shanahan,1997)
How are policies and practices framed?	'Barriers' (Burke,2012) 'Deficit' model : Pre and post entry core 'support'	Critiques how the place of mature students is marginalised Developing specific additional examples of practice	Complexities of students' lives and implications for studenthood (Field, Merrill and Morgan-Klein,2010) Developing range of examples of practice as starting point in 'piecing together' multiple identities

	Transition as induction (Gale and Parker, 2014:739) 'Restricted professionality' (Hoyle, 1974:17)	Transition as development (Gale and Parker, 2014:741)	Transition as becoming (Gale and Parker, 2014:743) 'Extended professionality' (Hoyle,1974:18)
Who gets to speak and why it matters?	'Managerialist professionalism' (Sachs,2001) Contested idea of 'institutional culture' (Greenbank,2007)	The 'imaginative professional' (Power,2008) Committed individuals within an institution (Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever,2010)	'Democratic professionalism' (Sachs,2001) Professionalism defined in terms of values and practices not status and self-regulation (Nixon et al, 2001; Nixon, 2011). The 'imaginative' professional combined with 'democratic professionalism': Spaces for 'imaginative' professional (Power, 2008) and 'extended' professional (Hoyle, 1974) working collaboratively (Cunningham, 2015).

The significance of the typology and how it could be used by others

Framing widening participation and transition within an institution is specific and situated. Each narrative is created within specific social and cultural settings. In Chapter 4, I analyse struggles between narratives of widening participation and how to interpret these. However, by analysing national policies and practices I ask how its national contexts shaped 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives and framed policies and practices within a specific institutional setting. I ask

whether there are other spaces and possibilities for re-constructing an 'extended metanarrative' of widening participation within this context too or if widening participation is bound by a 'double shuffle' (Hall,2005).

I build on this metaphor (Hall, 2005), introduced in the first section of the literature review, where I summarised Hall's argument that New Labour was a hybrid regime (2005:329) in which neo-liberal strands were in a dominant position whilst other social democratic strands were subordinate to it. In chapter 4, I consider if this notion of 'double shuffle', and competing strands, may exemplify a hybrid of policies and practices in which 'restricted' narratives of widening participation are in a *dominant position* whilst 'reformist' and 'extended' narratives are *subordinate* to these.

In chapter 4, I also ask whether dominant narratives of 'the student lifecycle', and of transition, may not only frame and categorise students but could also define parameters that limit and position lecturers and other staff too. Deploying the typology I have designed enables me to analyse the complexities of widening participation, for those who manage, teach and work with students, and ask what the implications of these tensions between narratives may mean for professionals and notions of policy.

Conclusion

In this chapter, my aim has been to justify why the methodology I designed, and research methods used, enabled me to explore policy and its context, how policy actors interpreted policy and 'voice' and policy making was framed. The methodological framework, and combination of methods I crafted, are designed to offer a distinctive contribution to the study of widening participation within a specific political era and context. They also provided the basis for the analysis, interpretations and possible reconstructions of widening participation that are woven through the following chapter.

Chapter 4:

Constructions and re-constructions of narratives of widening participation

The following chapter is divided into three main sections. These address my overall research question, each of my specific research questions and their corresponding focus. My argument, introduced when presenting my typology of widening participation at the end of chapter 3, builds on the work of Roe (1994). Following Roe, I propose that the construction of competing and conflicting narratives can be analysed, interpreted but then re-cast. Having analysed national and institutional narratives and why these are 'restricted' or 'reformist', I offer an 'extended metanarrative' that re-constructs and re-casts widening participation.

My focus, in each of the corresponding sections of the chapter, relates to my research questions and in turn, their respective focus on contexts for policy, policy actors and framing policy and voice in policy making as outlined in figure 1. First, part one of the chapter focuses on policy and its context by analysing and interpreting national texts and interviews with national policy actors. It asks what the narratives were, how they were constructed and why dominant narratives were 'restricted'. Secondly, part two of the chapter focuses on institutional policy texts, interviews with institutional policy actors and my diary of critical events within the institution. This focus enables me to analyse the diverse ways in which policy was framed within this institutional context and the tensions between 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives. Finally, the third part of the chapter analyses interviews with national

and institutional policy actors and reflects on my own diary of other critical events. Each represents different dimensions of 'voice' and the recurring tensions between 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives and the starting points for an 'extended metanarrative'.

4.1 Policy and its contexts: National policies and practices and the construction and framing of narratives

The first section of the chapter analyses discourses and narratives of widening participation in higher education in England, between 2004 and 2014, and focuses on policy and its context by reviewing national policies and practices and how these were constructed within national policy texts and by national policy actors. I do so by analysing the four questions, that are the basis of my typology, and interpreting the complex interactions between these texts and organisational practices, policies and the experiences of seven national policy actors in my interviews with them (Taber, 2010:9).

4.1.1 National policy texts and widening participation: From Dearing to the 'National strategy for access and student success in higher education'

By asking what 'the problem' is, what 'the problem' is represented to be and how policies and practices are framed (Bacchi, 2000; 2012), my analysis of national policies combines Bacchi's work with Ozga's argument that thinking about policy texts 'as carrying particular narratives' emphasises the story they tell 'about what is possible or desirable to achieve through education policy' (Ozga, 2000:95).

Appendix 1 summarises the 31 different policy texts cited by the seven national policy actors in my interviews with them. Four texts were cited by more than one policy actor and, on this basis, the following texts were selected for analysis: the Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997); Access Agreements (first submitted in 2006-07) and the final report of the 'What Works? Student Retention & Success programme (HEA/Paul Hamlyn, 2012). I argue that the narrative, or 'story' within the fourth text, the *National strategy for access and student success in higher education* (BIS, 2014), formed a narrative of widening participation that embodied 'the dominant story that develops over time' (Garvin and Eyles, 1997:48). It did so by building on the three earlier texts.

The overall scope of widening participation, in the foreword to BIS (2014), defines it in terms of 'three broad stages' (2014:3). These represent *particular* notions of access, 'student success' and progression (2014:9) embodied within the 'student lifecycle' and a particular set of meanings of 'outreach', 'support', 'representation' and 'engagement'. However, whilst Greenbank's (2006) review of the significance of the Dearing Report (NCIHE, 1997) highlights how three of its features shaped subsequent policy, this argument also applies to BIS (2014) too.

First, what Greenbank calls a 'deficit' or 'victim blaming' model labels students for failing to access HE because of a 'lack' of qualifications or aspirations and a 'fault' in their decision-making

(2006:145). Secondly, Greenbank argues that Dearing did not engage with 'ordinary university teachers' (Trow, 1998:96). This, and his critique of the Dearing recommendation emphasising the need for institutions to develop strategic plans for widening participation (NCIHE, 1997:107), both have a contemporary resonance. The Office for Fair Access (OFFA) and Access Agreements are central to these processes.

OFFA, an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, was established by the Higher Education Act 2004. In October 2004, the then Secretary of State for Education and Skills defined the original remit of OFFA and the regulatory function of its first Director. Its roles were defined as

- Regulating the charging of fees by ensuring no HEI can charge fees above 'the standard level' without an Access Agreement

- Being given the discretionary power to identify 'good practice around fair access' and provide 'advice' on this to publicly funded institutions (DfES, 2004).

Its original remit was also to ensure that:

- The introduction of higher tuition fees in 2006-07 did not deter people from entering higher education for financial reasons

- Universities and colleges were explicitly committed to increasing participation in higher education among under-represented groups.

The role of OFFA, in being 'better equipped' to monitor and review institutions' Access Agreements, was also highlighted in the 2011 White Paper *Students at the Heart of the System*. Its role and

resources to do this were defined in recommendation 17 (2011:7) and summarised in section 5.24 of the text:

> *We will strengthen OFFA, so that it can provide more active and energetic challenge and support to universities and colleges*. We will want to work with the Director on the size and structure of OFFA but will make significantly more resources available, increasing capacity up to around four times its original level. This would *equip OFFA to use fully its powers to monitor and review Access Agreements and identify and promote best, evidence based, practice* (2011:60.emphasis added).

A third text, cited by several national policy actors, was the report of the 'What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme' (HEA/ Paul Hamlyn: 2012). Its final report, *Building student engagement and belonging in higher education at a time of change* (Thomas 2012) defined the problem and framed notions of 'at risk students', retention and success:

> It has become increasingly clear *that 'success' means helping all students to become more engaged and more effective learners in higher education*, thus improving their academic outcomes and their progression opportunities after graduation (or when they exit higher education). In line with this understanding of success and underpinned by the What Works? findings the study advocates a mainstream approach to improving the retention and success of all students (2012:10. My emphasis.).

Yet, analysing this text and the assumptions made about 'all students' becoming 'more engaged' and 'more effective', Thomas does not refer to the implications of students' multiple identities. Dewey argued that 'it ought not to be necessary to say that experience does not occur in a vacuum' (1938:39). However Sabri argues this is what the discourse of 'the student experience' does.

For example, Thomas reviewing the Paul Hamlyn/HEA programme argues:

> The findings of this programme present a compelling case that in higher education, *belonging is critical to student retention and success*. Although other studies have pointed to this and many staff in universities would readily accept this contention, we argue that the implications are very often not addressed in institutional priorities, policies, processes and practices. Where *strategies are employed to boost student engagement*, they are often focused on narrow groups of students, and situated outside of the academic domain, thus failing to meet the needs of the much larger number of students that the What Works? programme indicates may be at risk of withdrawal or underachievement. (2012:10-11. emphasis added).

However, in these discourses of 'engagement' and 'belonging' students, ironically, are the *objects* of intervention. Despite this dominant discourse of 'engagement', and 'belonging', students' diverse experiences are shaped by their social class, gender, ethnicity, age, religion and sexual orientation (2011:664) and diverse experiences as parents and carers for their children or as carers for other members of their family. Restricted narratives do not recognise the complexity of these experiences.

The following analysis of the policy narrative within the fourth text, the *National strategy for access and student success in higher education* (BIS, 2014) produced by OFFA and HEFCE, suggests it built on these other texts by defining 'the problem' of widening participation within a 'restricted' narrative of widening participation framing the student as an object, rather than subject, of policy and emphasising specific notions of monitoring and evaluation. The overall scope of widening participation, in the foreword to this text, framed it in terms of

'three broad stages' (2014:3) that represented *particular* notions of access, student success and progression.' For example, the text emphasised:

> Widening participation to higher education is about ensuring that students from disadvantaged backgrounds can access higher education, get the support they need to succeed in their studies, and progress to further study and/or employment suited to their qualifications and potential (2014:6, emphasis in original).

The aims, scope and definition of this trajectory framed widening participation in terms of

> Access
> [T]he wide gap in participation rates between people from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds in society, and between students with different characteristics, particularly at the most selective institutions.
>
> Retention and student success
> [T]he differences in experience and attainment for different student groups, for example, the persistent gap in the attainment rates for students from different ethnic minority groups, that cannot be explained by their entry profiles; the high non-continuation rates for part-time students intending to complete a full programme of study; the high non-continuation rates for full-time students at a number of institutions.
>
> Progression to further study or to/within employment
> [T]the clear differences in experience, outcomes and progression to further study or graduate employment for different groups of students in higher education (2014:9).

This framing was coupled with a 'student lifecycle' and a particular set of meanings of 'outreach', 'support' and 'representation and engagement'. Firstly, outreach was defined in the glossary of the *National Strategy* as an

> activity that helps to raise awareness of higher education, aspirations and attainment among people from disadvantaged backgrounds, for example, summer schools that give a taste of university life, homework clubs for pupils who may not have anywhere to study at

home, or universities forming and sustaining links with employers and communities (2014:110).

There were 36 explicit references to 'outreach' in Chapters 1-4 of the text. These were combined with further explicit references to the place of 'marketing' within the text and the implications of changes in funding (see, for example, summary in BIS, 2014:14):

> Because each student now represents teaching income, many HE providers have refocused their recruitment systems more heavily towards marketing and there is increased competition to attract students, particularly those with the highest grades. The introduction of higher fees and increasing competition between HE providers make it more important than ever to safeguard and promote access and student success (2014:14).

Whilst the majority of access agreement expenditure remains focused on financial support, the text also suggested that the balance needed to shift further towards outreach (2014:40). 'What works' and 'implementation' of outreach were framed in terms of a notion of 'improvement' predicated on a 'genuine partnership' between organisations and 'improved collaboration within institutions' (2014:4). However, in these references to particular forms of outreach, notions of collaboration referred to either other organisations, or

> [I]mproved collaboration within institutions: for example, between widening participation teams, those developing the teaching curriculum, student services, and marketing and recruitment teams (2014:4).

Yet, engagement with prospective or current students was absent from this narrative.

Secondly, representations of 'support' in the text constructed policy by framing 'the student' in relation to particular forms of transition. For example, the foreword to the *National strategy* emphasised '*receiving* study support' (my emphasis) as part of 'student success':

> Our approach also recognises that widening participation should encompass the whole student lifecycle: preparing to apply and enter higher education; *receiving study support* and achieving successful completion; and progressing to postgraduate education or to/within employment (BIS, 2014:3).

The notion of 'support' was also based on a trajectory that was framed in terms of 'stages'

> The strategy considers how higher education providers and stakeholders can make improvements across these three broad stages – access, student success and progression (2014:3).

Thirdly, constructions of policy and framing students (and lecturers) embodied particular forms of 'representation' and 'engagement' in the *National Strategy*. There were six references to 'representation' and 'under-representation', 17 references to the National Union of Students (NUS) and 37 references to 'engagement' in the text. The 17 further specific references to the NUS were grouped into six sets of references relating to either specific policy issues or groups of students. These combined student finance, postgraduate study, employability and engagement, but also made specific reference to students as carers and mature students. Engagement was framed within the overall introduction to 'The strategy for improving retention and student success'. This was defined in terms of institutions,

including students' unions, developing 'more effective and comprehensive student engagement and partnership approaches' and the assertion that 'By engaging with all aspects of their learning experience, students will be active partners in securing the best outcomes for themselves and progressing successfully to postgraduate study or graduate employment' (BIS: 2014:11). However, this perspective did not recognise how multiple responsibilities outside of HE, including the need for either part-time paid work and/ or work as a parent and/or carer, shape capacities to engage with 'learning experience' within and outside of the institution.

Finally, the text emphasised particular conceptualisations of 'evaluation' 'effectiveness' and 'impact' in how institutional monitoring and evaluation were framed:

> It is essential to understand which approaches and activities have the greatest impact, and why. An improved evidence base, and a robust approach to evaluation, are critical in helping the sector and partners to understand which of their activities are most *effective* and have the greatest *impact* on access, student success and progression, so enabling effort to be focused on these areas (2014:9. emphasis added).

This reinforces earlier guidance by OFFA on how to produce Access Agreements (2013:3) emphasising the importance of monitoring and of

> evaluation of your access measures right from the start so you can maximise the effectiveness of your efforts. We appreciate that evaluating the outcomes of access activities is not always easy but it is vital if we are to improve understanding of *what works best* (2013: 3. emphasis added).

BIS (2014) presented data on the 'problem' of students, transition and policy framed in terms of differences in the rates of retention and achievement within HE. These representations of access and widening participation are problematic. Emphasis is placed on students as *objects* of intervention (see the earlier definition of 'widening participation', 2014: 6) rather than *subjects* who may shape their own experiences and identities. As such, in these 'restricted' narratives, processes marginalise the diverse needs of students. Here transition defines the parameters of a 'restricted' set of policies and practices by misrecognising students and emphasising 'derogatory discourses of deficit and lack' (Burke, 2014).

This opening section of the chapter, analysing the 'problem' and 'problematization' of widening participation (Bacchi, 2000; 2012), has focussed on how 'restricted' narratives were represented and framed within national policy texts and particularly in BIS (2014). The next section of the chapter asks how these and other narratives, were then interpreted by national policy actors and how this analysis of their narratives enabled me to focus on my first specific research question that addresses policy within specific national contexts.

4.1.2 Widening participation and how it is interpreted by national policy actors: Restricted and reformist national narratives?

My aim is not to decontextualize this analysis. I follow Smith in wanting to preserve the standpoint of those interviewed (1988:182) and the wider social and political contexts shaping their stances on

widening participation. In particular, Smith highlights the complex relations mediated by texts that act on bureaucracies, academic and professional discourses. I focus on how these relations 'interact with people's everyday lives in complex interconnecting ways' (Taber, 2010:10). Following Hall (2005), I explore whether policies and practices were a hybrid in which 'restricted' narratives were dominant, and other 'reformist' narratives were subordinate to these or if, as Gale and Parker argue, those categories were fluid and permeable (Gale and Parker, 2014).

The interviews with national policy actors were conducted between March and June 2014. A recurring thematic analysis of what was said was combined with interpretations of the interactions and constructions of the narrative and how the story was told in the interviews. Two representations of chronological and narrative time (Biesta, Field and Tedder: 2010) sensitised my interpretation. Three narratives were identified and, using the work of Bacchi (2000; 2012) on policy 'problems' and 'problematization', Rein and Schon on generative metaphors (1993) and Hall (2005) on policy 'double-shuffle', three distinctive contributions are offered in my interpretations of widening participation policy in these national contexts and how each of the narratives relate to those in national policy texts.

Stability, control and compliance?

One narrative was 'restricted' in that senses of stability, control and compliance, and the generative metaphor of 'the student life-cycle', were deployed to give coherence to policy whilst a second 'reformist'

narrative of two other national policy actors constructed a different plot. This counter narrative critiqued how the former dominant and 'restricted' narrative marginalised other contributions to widening participation within HE. This second narrative also noted and emphasised how the policy plot (Fischer and Forester, 1993), and packaging of policy (Gamson and Lasch, 1980), assumed coherence in dominant narratives of widening participation. The following section illustrates this struggle between these narratives.

The dominant narrative of widening participation combined the importance of measurement with a normative value of 'partnerships' and (seeking) stability. Particular notions of 'responsibility', in which universities were able to decide how to allocate expenditure, were also emphasised. 'Student success' was framed by combining it with an implicit reference to 'the student lifecycle' and retention. In this first example of a 'restricted' narrative, one policy actor asserted that 'Widening participation is a partnership with a whole host of stakeholders'. However, differences of power within this partnership were not considered. Instead, this assertion exemplified Roe's argument (1989) that 'bureaucratic stories' and narratives can be used to *stabilise* uncertainties and complexities of policy.

Here, in this first narrative, are examples of 'policy-as-discourse' (Bacchi, 2000:47) in which 'problems' are created and then shaped by proposals and a narrative of stability, control and compliance was constructed to give coherence to policy. Problematizing these

examples of 'partnership', and the generative metaphor (Schon, 1993) of 'the student life-cycle', is productive. The work of Vadeboncoeur and Torres on metaphors (2003) problematizes and sensitises these examples. They argue that whilst

> it is not uncommon for 'generative metaphors' to become axiomatic or taken for granted …Without reflection and consideration of generative metaphors the possible solutions that we construct for problems and the possible actions that we take may be limited (2003:89).

Bansel (2015) extends this analysis of 'policy-as-discourse' further by suggesting narratives are a form through which 'normative discourses and discursive practices are co-ordinated' (2015:184). Bansel argues that the temporal dimensions of multiple narratives are organised through a process of emplotment in which events in a policy story, or plot (Jones and McBeth, 2010), are not simply 'pieced together' in a bricolage. Instead, events are co-ordinated *through* narratives. However, whilst a 'policy problem' may be contested, and solutions ambiguous, policy in these examples of 'restricted' narratives is stabilised by narratives seeking to construct a 'truth, transparency and necessity' (2015:187).

By contrast, the counter narrative questioned this dominant narrative. Another policy actor, who was the first national policy actor I interviewed, was ambivalent and sceptical about whether there was a consensus about contemporary priorities for widening participation that all national policy actors shared. This perspective may apply to dilemmas about institutional policies and practices too:

I was expecting more consistency. We need to get behind what's done. We need to think about why we are doing. What does it actually mean? Why? Whether the people are changed. Why? Get behind why. What's really going on? Nobody knows that question. I think at meetings, conferences and seminars everyone says there is a need to talk...But I don't think they know how to do it.

You would think that Universities- at the heart of AimHigher- with all their experience could demonstrate and report and analyse – to demonstrate it back. You would think (there would be) some kind of intellectual imperative. People like yourselves- have let us down badly (if I may say so) (NPA 1).

In turn, NPA 7 shared this counter-narrative and critique of a restricted narrative of stability and compliance. She reflected on how changing notions of 'risk', compliance and marketization were managed by institutions in two ways. Firstly, referring back to the early 1990's and her own 'experience in being widened' she remembered

At that time Capital- and probably a lot of other institutions- were able to take more risks with people. I don't think that would happen today, and they took in about one third of students in that year who were from access course routes, from just whole different routes. After the end of that three years, we were a graduation year that had done exceptionally well (NPA7.sic).

In a reference to institutional memory, she noted 'I'm sure none of that data, stats, statistics, even exist' and 'the form that widening participation now takes within Capital it's much more, sort of, rigid and formal, in terms of where people are coming from, and so on'. However paradoxically, whereas she initially seemed sceptical about this formality, in a further comment about current institutional practices, her argument was that 'On the upside, though, widening participation has become much more formalised and evidence based'. Asked whether she felt that widening participation in the late 80's and early 90's, and

the position we are in now, meant something different, her reply, with an ironic understatement, was that

> I think they operate in a slightly different field at the moment because of all the league tables and everything, and I think that that's something that's recognised. universities feel that they have to keep up their position, and so on (NPA7).

Although, reflecting on different manifestations of policy she reinforced part of the counter narrative of NPA 1, by arguing that processes of evaluation, research and using data were problematic:

> Last week x said, 'It's not just about the data', she said, 'We have the data', but if she was just to put all of the data in front of people, they'd say, 'Well, what am I to do with it?' There's nothing about understanding how to use it and what it means. So, I think, yes, on-going issues with understanding the data, not just the WP officer sitting in their office being excited (NPA 7).

Restricted and reformist national narratives? : Constructions of 'the student life-cycle' and further 'truths'

Both dominant and counter-narratives amongst national policy actors framed 'the student life-cycle' as an integrated 'interacting system' with a series of defined stages designed to manage students' experiences. The assumption of an 'integrated entity' of institutional culture, that Greenbank noted in his research (2007:216), was evident in the dominant narrative about institutional responsibility and NPA 7's narrative about institutional change. Further 'truths' exemplified 'policy-as-discourse' (Bacchi, 2000) in which the 'problems' of 'joining up policy' and of 'institutional change' are created and shaped by the proposals made. NPA 7 referred to how she, and her organisation, worked on policies and practices in relation to equality and diversity,

internationalisation, as well as access and retention. She argued that there were 'real, important connections between those areas':

> *Well, I mean, it's all connected.* I mean, the national strategy sets out very clear expectations to universities in terms of what each HEI should be doing, that HEI strategy has to be evidence based, it has to be mindful of local and geographical WP patterns. *It has to work across the whole of the student lifecycle.* (NPA 7: emphasis added)

NPA 7 emphasised a 'truth' about institutionalising change by emphasising that

> every change you come up with has to be institutionalised. So, the universities we accepted onto this programme, they had to have the support of their PVC; they had to show that they were going to be able to attempt to institutionalise this across the universities

This perspective was combined with two further 'truths' in relation to 'active learning' and 'belonging and attachment'. Firstly, NPA7 argued that

> active learning, what happens in the classroom, is really, really, really important. But we also know you can't do that just in, sort of, isolation, otherwise you get some great teacher doing it and then they move on, and the problem just stays the same. It has to be...but *every change you come up with has to be institutionalised.* (NPA 7: emphasis added).

The tension or paradox in this narrative may be how the notion of institutionalising change *across* an institution related assumptions about belonging and attachment *within* a classroom:

> the site within the university system where people most feel they belong is within the classroom, people feel a sense of belonging and attachment to their subjects (rather than) the department, the school, the university (NPA 7).

Here, NPA 7 'pieced together' a narrative about widening participation combining not only 'restricted' notions of 'the student life-cycle' and institutionalisation of change, but also 'reformist' notions of curriculum:

> What are you including students in? You know, what are you including them into? Are you including them into an experience that's not really about them, that when students look at the curriculum, they can't see themselves in the curriculum? And is that why some students are more likely to drop out than other students? We've said over and over, education, it's not...inclusion is not about tolerance, it's about students' entitlement to an education (NPA 7).

Whilst, in one sense, references to inclusion and the curriculum are welcome, what troubled me at the beginning of the study was evident here too. Paradoxically, as I argue in the following analysis of institutional narratives, it may be those who teach and work with students within the classroom who are marginalised from how narratives of 'belonging' and 'curriculum' are framed within dominant and 'restricted' organisational stories (Cortazzi, 2001).This critique, which applies to my analysis of particular forms of management and notions of institutional change, also has implications for how professionals and their attributes are interpreted. These are considered in the second main section of this chapter on institutional narratives.

By de-contextualising students' diverse experiences of learning, the metaphor of 'the student lifecycle' obscures the inequalities experienced by individuals and groups of students when they access HE and then experience its diverse forms. NPA 7 did refer to the curriculum in these debates by asking 'What are you including students

in? You know, what are you including them into? Are you including them into an experience that's not really about them'? However, what troubled me was the absence of either a critique of 'the student life-cycle' or explicit reference to the practices of those who teach (other than references to the notion of 'a great teacher').

Hall's argument that New Labour was a hybrid regime (2005:329), in which neo-liberal strands were in a dominant position and the other social democratic strands were subordinate to it, applies to this example and critique. Widening participation policy and practice is itself a hybrid. For example, in my interview with NPA7, the 'restricted' narrative that embodies particular forms of management and institutional change was in a dominant position and 'reformist' narratives, including particular notions of curriculum design, were subordinate to it. Greenbank, in his study of widening participation (2007), notes that amongst senior managers within HEIs, there is an assumption that an institutional culture is an 'integrated entity' not an amalgamation of competing sub-cultures' (2007:216). This assumption was not critiqued by either the dominant or counter narratives constructed by national policy actors. Nor was there a consideration of how competing organisational and institutional sub-cultures may shape framings of widening participation within specific national and institutional contexts (Greenbank, 2007).

Reformist narratives? Critiquing policy: 'Time', policy and school leavers

However, the final section of this first part of the chapter does analyse tensions between national organisations and the dominant and counter narratives constructed within different interviews. It does so by reviewing a third set of narratives on how national policy trajectories of widening participation were re-framed by the conjunction of the AimHigher programme, introduced by the second New Labour government (2001-2005), and the establishment of the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) following the Higher Education Act (2004).

Whilst AimHigher was designed to address the aspirations and decision-making of children and young people, the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) was established to regulate widening participation practices within HE institutions. Doyle and Griffin (2012) trace the origins of AimHigher, and map its formation through a combination of Excellence Challenge, established in 2001, and Partnerships for Progression in 2003. However, what their review of AimHigher fails to consider is the effects of the programme on either national organisations with a remit to widen participation, examined in this section, or the re-framing of widening participation policies, practices and strategies *within* Universities which is reviewed in the second and third sections of the chapter.

I now examine the narrative of NPA 2, on senses of flux and bricolage in policy making, and compare this with those of two other

national policy actors, NPA 3 and NPA 6. The latter narratives challenged a dominant 'restricted' narrative that emphasised the place of school leavers and marginalised the place of adult learners in widening participation.

Reflecting on memories of working in Government, NPA 2 emphasised two parts of a dominant narrative. His was a story about narrative and Government (and the phrase 'In a nutshell. That was the narrative' was a phrase he used). This was combined with memories of those experiences and a sense of politics, policy making and research. Firstly, he summed up Hall's critique and characterisation of New Labour's 'double shuffle' (2005):

> Two things that characterised political interests and institutional interests and mine. Twin themes. Twin arguments. One was about human capital. For Labour having a positive view about how the economy worked- a chance for them to break from their own past. I simplify but it was pretty simple in the first place. I'm not trying to over complicate because that would betray what was happening. But the other parallel thing was a stream of fairness- inclusion and access. The key phrases of the time and indeed since are– fairness- inclusion- and access.....

Secondly, for him politics itself was

> Frenzy. Government is frenzied. Intensity of Government. You don't go into it to think that you are going to have time to deeply consider the arguments for and against and about objections and design I think it's critical. If I was to mention one thing that splits politics and academia – one thing at heart of difference- little blocks of 25 mins ….Either don't take account of frenzy at all or don't sufficiently consider it. 'Hyper' is a good word. Moments – appear and go away again. Themes continue but the moment is gone (NPA 2).

Although NPA 2 referred to research on policy making, and was very complementary about it, he argued that this research 'does not capture the pace' of policy.

However both NPA 3 and NPA 6, and their recurring emphasis on how there was a *shift* in policy via AimHigher, also suggested fractures in how time was represented (Biesta, Field and Tedder, 2010). Whilst both policy actors traced a 'chronological' representation of time, form and content (2010:319) was juxtaposed with 'narrative time' in which particular events were emphasised. Shared senses of flux and struggle were a dominant theme in both interviews and these provided the 'organising principles' for each of them (2010:321). Their narratives were the first to suggest widening participation was not simply a 'problem' to be managed but a set of recurring dilemmas in which they were positioned, and may position themselves, differently from the dominant 'restricted' narrative. The affective dimensions of their narratives were woven through their stories of policy and these are now examined.

In particular, their critique of the effects of AimHigher on their organisations and a re-defining of policy agendas suggested a counter 'reformist' narrative. When these national policy actors, NPA3 and NPA 6, 'pieced together' memories about AimHigher their senses of a struggle *between* national organisations was a recurrent theme. Another theme was the shift from work with a range of groups,

including adult learners, to a re-framing and focus on work with children, young people and school leavers because of AimHigher.

A further dimension, in both of their plots, was how the affective domain of policy shaped their experiences of policy in these contexts. Each policy actor was explicit about their senses of frustration and the significance of political factors that shaped the work of their organisations (Hodgson and Spours, 2006). Threaded through these narratives was a recurring sense of the negative effects of AimHigher and of Access Agreements:

> [T]he Aim Higher programme was government saying, 'Do this', and the bulk of the funding came not from xxxxx but directly from central government, and was an incredibly important initiative. And, the fact that that initiative actually pumped a lot of money into schools to allow them to engage was very, very important, but it took the emphasis away from those issues of student success, in terms of what was visible nationally, I think. It also probably didn't do much to encourage that join up within institutions (NPA 6).

The same policy actor, NPA 6, also emphasised that

> I think it's a source of *huge* frustration, I think, which is...and to an extent, the direction of our actual activity hasn't helped, because although in terms of our mainstream block grant, *the emphasis is very, very clear on the need for a lifecycle approach,* and the need for the whole of the learning and teaching experience to be part of the work to encourage successful participation, the actual policy initiatives *have, to date, all* focussed on access (emphasis in the original) so although we would promote the idea of the student lifecycle, certainly when we were asking for strategies, and that was prior to the act, when the act came into force, we were prevented from asking for strategies from government.
>
> Me: You were prevented?
>
> Yes. Yes. Well, we were instructed not to. I mean, we were concerned that the focus on Access Agreements would, again, do even more to take us away from that lifecycle approach, because *we saw those as being very, at that time, very, very narrowly focussed.* And, what we tried to say was, 'Look, have that statutory requirement situated within

a broader widening participation strategy that covers...' We couldn't. We weren't allowed to do it (NPA 6. Emphasis in original).

Other explicit references to AimHigher framed these interpretations of widening participation in terms of a struggle between an emphasis on access to University and framing widening participation in terms of what a 'student life cycle' or the possibilities of 'the life-cycle approach' may offer:

> *We were always trying to, as I say, promote the life cycle approach* and the importance of retention, and keeping that going, *but it was much harder to do that*, to maintain that focus. And, institutions were then contributing to the Aim Higher scheme; they had outreach offices that didn't necessarily have much to do with the rest of the university, so there were all manner of things, I think, that meant that the emphasis was seen to be on access, *which is hugely important,* and you can't widen participation without it, *but...*(emphasis in original).

In a further temporal dimension, NPA 3 also emphasised how the momentum of AimHigher marginalised and disrupted her work and that of her organisation too:

> at that stage, with widening participation in HE developing its own momentum, which didn't particularly make reference to Access to HE courses, it was a way in which that was, kind of, what we were doing in Access to HE was interesting, but wasn't actually thoroughly integrated, or really, it was only fairly tangentially related to the activity which was serving the widening participation policy ends in higher education. That seems to me absolutely critical

> why was it then that Access to HE continued to plough its own furrow, as it were, apparently with very little relationship to all of that other activity in Aim Higher, and so on. That was, I think, to do with the simple fact that actually the government policy was directed to increasing the progression rate from school leavers, so all of the policy stuff was written in terms of school leavers, young people, and so the way in which targets were written was all about increasing that progression. That then made it very difficult to put an argument that said, 'and adults, too'. I think there was immense frustration in the FE sector, from people who'd been working in Access to HE for many years, and to see that growth of widening participation, and kind of expecting, each time there was a new policy statement of some kind

that finally Access to HE would've been brought within that, but it wasn't because I think through all the years of the last government, *it was all about school leavers* (NPA3).

4.1.3 *National policy and its context*

The first part of this chapter has focused on policy and its contexts. Comparing narratives of NPA 1 and 7, with the different emphasis of the narratives of NPA 3 and 6 suggests tensions between a dominant narrative, and other policy narratives, were evident. The restricted narrative was grounded in a sense of stability and notions of 'institutional responsibility'. By contrast, the counter-narrative constructed a more nuanced critique that questioned whether there was a consensus about widening participation. However, these narratives did not critique the notion of 'the institution' nor of 'institutional change either'. NPA 2 emphasised a sense of flux and *bricolage* in policy making and NPA 3 and NPA 6 how specific policy interventions shaped policy and the place of their national organisations within a shifting national policy agenda. One national policy actor (NPA3) recognised the effect of this narrative. Adult learners were marginalised and developments in Access to HE courses were 'only fairly tangentially related to the activity which was serving *the* widening participation policy ends in higher education' (emphasis in the original).

In this first section of the chapter, the work of Ozga (2000) has been used to trace the source, scope and patterns of policy texts and Bacchi's analysis applied to the *construction* of policy problems, and

processes of 'problematization' (2000;2012) within policy texts. I have asked how transition was conceptualized and how policies and practices were shaped by economic, political and social factors since 2004. By analyzing BIS (2014), I focused on how 'outreach', 'support' and 'curriculum' were framed in the text. I noted that references to particular forms of outreach and collaboration were combined with further explicit references to the place of 'marketing' within the *National Strategy* and the implications of changes in funding that acknowledged

> Because each student now represents teaching income, many HE providers have refocused their recruitment systems more heavily towards marketing and there is increased competition to attract students (BIS, 2014:14).

By analysing national policy texts, and asking how different national policy actors constructed narratives, I have suggested that dominant narratives of widening participation were 'restricted'. There was only minimal evidence of counter 'reformist' narratives. In this 'double shuffle' (Hall, 2005), the notions of '*the* student life-cycle' and of '*institutional* change' were in a dominant position within these 'restricted' national narratives. However, Ball also suggests that the interpretation of these narratives needs to be understood by placing specific HE practices in the wider context of 'new governance' in education and the changing state (Ball, 2013:223). Ball notes two characteristics of this 'new governance'; the proliferation and fragmented array of agencies and actors and 'the democratic deficit' because of the increasing participation of executive agencies, businesses and voluntary organisations. Not only is governance

crowded, it is also complex. This dynamic suggests a crowded policy domain in which 'differing governance arrangements, policy prescriptions, participants and processes bump up against and even compete with each other' (Keast, Mandell and Brown, 2006:27).

This 'political era' (Hodgson and Spours, 2006) has provided a temporal context for reviewing the perspectives of national policy actors, interviewed between March and July 2014, in such a domain. Their narratives suggested a juxtaposition and tension between a rational representation of policy that plotted stability, control and compliance compared with other temporal dimensions of policy that were 'awkward, incomplete, incoherent and unstable' (Ball, 1997:265). Three representations of time were also woven through the semi-structured interviews with national policy actors. Firstly, milestones of widening participation were traced through chronological time (Biesta, Field and Tedder, 2010:318). Secondly, personal and organisational identities were 'pieced together' (Freeman, 2007) and narrative forms of time (2010:320) embodied senses of flux, uncertainty and frustration and struggle *within* and particularly *between* organisations. Consequently, whilst some of these organisations had worked together during all of this era, and may have drawn on shared 'generational references and markers' to plot their narratives (2010:323), the differences between the predominantly 'restricted' narratives of NPA 1 and 7, contrasted with the 'reformist' narratives of NPA 3 and 6, suggested that shared experiences were not necessarily framed in the

same way. This finding paralleled the work of Gergen (2004) who reported

> the difficulty of finding generational stories—because cohorts of people did not necessarily have the same story to tell, despite the historical similarities of their lives. (2004: 269).

The second main part of the chapter now focuses on institutional policy and practice. I do so by analysing institutional policy texts and then asking how institutional actors framed policy and interpreted widening participation. In Chapter 2, I drew on the work of Greenbank (2006) and Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever (2010) to argue that specific policies, and how these formed and framed institutional practices, cannot be separated from the institutional and national conditions under which they have been constructed. These conditions, and how policy actors framed their roles, practices, policies within an institution, are analysed in the following section of the chapter.

4.2 Framing restricted and reformist narratives within an institution

Three specific themes of 'compliance', 'marketization' and 'transition' emerged from my recurring and iterative analysis of these narratives. This section of the chapter interprets how different narratives, relating to these themes, were constructed within policy texts and in interviews with policy actors in the institution where I work. I argue that these narratives also suggest widening participation is not simply a 'problem' to be managed but a set of recurring dilemmas in which policy actors position themselves, and 'the problem' of widening participation, differently.

Firstly, I analyse the framing of narratives within institutional Access Agreements (Central, 2013-14; Central, 2014-15) and other texts (Central, 2014; Central, 2015) and examine 'practices of inscription' (Walby, 2013) using Ozga's work on the source, scope and patterns of texts (2000). Secondly, I consider how critical events and practices (Woods, 1994; 1996 and Cunningham, 2008) exemplified 'organisational stories' (Cortazzi, 2001) and framed a 'restricted' narrative within policy texts. Finally, I ask how senior and middle managers within the institution constructed and framed their narratives using the work of Roe (1989; 1994), Greenbank (2006; 2007) and Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever (2010).

4.2.1 Framing policy narratives within institutional policy texts: Restricted narratives of compliance and marketization

Fairclough argues that 'A text is a product rather than a process – a product of the process of text production' and a text, or specific narrative, is part of a wider discourse that 'involves social conditions, which can be specified as *social conditions of production*, and *social conditions of interpretation'* (1989:25. Original emphasis). Texts do not operate in a vacuum (Ball, 1993). In this section of the chapter, I build on McCaig (2015) who applies Fairclough's notion of policies as 'discursive events' (1993:136) that embody 'statements of social practice from the institutions' perspective' (2015:5). These notions are applied to my analysis of three institutional texts that asks whether different dimensions of compliance, marketization and transition are embodied in 'restricted' narratives within these texts.

The institutional Access Agreement (Central, 2013-14) is the first example of institutional social practice (Fairclough, 1993) examined. I argue this complies with the dominant narrative of aspiration raising and attainment in national policy texts (OFFA, 2013) in two ways. First, the Agreement (Central, 2013-14) framed the 'disadvantaged' student within a bricolage of activities (for students labelled as 'disadvantaged'). This was one of four labels used. The others were 'WP students', (Central, 2013-14:1), students 'from a comprehensive range of backgrounds' (ibid) or those who were categorised as being from 'under-represented groups' (ibid). Secondly, a range of practices or 'additional Access measures' were listed in the text and framed as a 'solution' to the needs of students identified by these labels. This was combined with an assertion that 'The higher number of WP students is a contributory factor to the lower than desirable completion rate' (ibid).

Further measures, chosen for inclusion in the policy text (Central, 2013-14), included the provision of visits to the University and a 'pre-entry' course. The apparent premise for these practices was to 'demonstrate the diversity of students attending university, the levels of independence expected of students' and to 'dispel some myths which prevent application to H.E' (2013-14:3). No evidence or research was cited to support any of these assertions.

The pre-entry course was for those 'whose previous academic record suggests they are at risk of non-completion or who are recruited

as a result of our contextual admissions policy'. Questions not addressed included why that 'previous academic record' may be problematic (and if so, who it is problematic for) and why (some) students were identified as 'needing' a 'pre entry' course' whilst other students entering the institution were not.

This intervention exemplifies the earlier 'utilitarian' discourse of widening participation that Jones and Thomas mapped and critiqued (2005). It continues to not only frame forms of pre- and post-entry 'support' but also be framed by its own organisational place within the institution. The intervention is an example of what Jones and Thomas describe as a widening participation 'initiative' that is 'more or less bolted on to core work' (2005:618). It also exemplifies how specific policies and practices cannot be separated from either a national context or institutional conditions within which they are constructed. For example, the HEA *Retention and Success Programme* 2008-11 (Thomas, 2012), that asks 'what works?' is framed by a notion of 'institutional transformation'. However, these specific practices exemplify those critiqued in a 'utilitarian' discourse of widening participation. They sustain how 'retention', 'success' and 'transformation' are framed by a deficit model of what individual students may 'lack' when they enter HE. Equally, the responsibility for addressing that 'deficit' is framed in terms of 'support' and is situated at the periphery of the institution, rather than in the province of academic departments, lecturers and students who work together daily.

This first institutional text itself can be interpreted as a 'discursive event' (Fairclough, 1993:136). Building on this notion highlights assumptions about (some) students and how they are formed by 'practices of inscription' (Walby, 2013:143). Practices of 'reading, interpreting and writing from an institutionally derived frame'– have made up and constructed the 'truth' of this text. (Smith, 1999:216).

The second text continued to comply with, and embed, this restricted narrative further. The second sentence of the 2014-15 Agreement asserted that the institution

> consistently exceeds sector averages and location adjusted benchmarks for recruiting students from under-represented groups including mature students, the proportion of students from low participation areas and students from families with no previous H.E. experience (Central,2014-15:1).

The second section of the document, on the same page, began with a table under a heading 'Recruitment of under-represented groups'. This highlighted three columns and four rows of data in relation to a specific cohort of young full time entrants. The columns were organised by academic year and NS-SEC classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 and 'low participation neighbourhood' sub-divided into actual, the locally adjusted benchmark and percentages by the overall sector. No specific data was presented about either mature students or students from families without prior experience of HE. The narrative constructed by this juxtaposition of opening statement and data may suggest the institution is presenting widening participation positively. However, this

was combined with five references to 'WP students' from 'widening participation backgrounds' and a further three references to 'widening participation students'. The document objectifies students and makes assumptions about 'them'. For example, an assertion is made that

> We are striving to improve retention and success for all students and feel that the measures we undertake will particularly benefit students from widening participation (WP) backgrounds (Central, 2014-15:1).

Subsequently, whilst a range of 'Additional Access measures' are listed (2014-15:3), what is also evident is that there was no reference to 'lecturer/s' and 'academic staff' are referred to once. By comparison, four of the 11 pages of the document list a range of 'student support' activities separated from, but not integrated with, those who teach.

Thirdly, a review of how widening participation was framed within the institutional website, in August 2014 (Central, 2014) raised further questions too. The policies and participants who were dominant, marginalised or silenced are a further example of bricolage or what Ball refers to as policy that is 'complex, contradictory and sometimes incoherent' (1998: 317). For example, on the front page of the website, and in the sub-category 'About Us', there was a drop down menu with two columns. In the right hand column, there was a link to 'widening participation'. The only entry in this section was to a 2009 *Widening Participation Strategic Assessment* document. There was no explicit reference to any of the institutional Access Agreements now on OFFA's website. In addition, in a further review of the website (Central,

2015) in July 2015, whilst the design of the front page of the website had not changed there was now no reference to widening participation in the 'About Us' category in the top right hand corner of the front page.

4.2.2   Framing institutional practices? A critical event

This ambivalent position was also evident in how the institutional group, with responsibility for producing the annual Access Agreement, framed widening participation. The status of the group was unclear. In 2014-5 it had ten members including three members of the Senior Management Team, managers who were members of the institutional Management Group and managers with responsibility for Student Records and Student Support. The Student Union President is a member and, finally, there are two representatives of academic staff of which I am one. Whilst the meetings of the group are minuted, and take place within the senior management meeting room, these minutes are not submitted to any University committee. Nor is the group constituted as either an institutional 'Working Group' or 'Good Practice Group'. In one sense, the group parallels the specific pre-entry intervention highlighted earlier. It is 'bolted on' to other practices.

My own positions in relation to the group and the policy texts (Central, 2013-14; Central, 2014-15; Central, 2014 and Central, 2015) are complex. My reflections on a series of diary entries, whose purpose was outlined in Chapter 3, illustrate how I was troubled by further aspects of compliance and institutional power. The first of the entries, that I review, was written on Sunday 2 March 2014. It was based on scratch notes and initial reflections on a series of events that had taken

place the previous week, between Tuesday 25 and Thursday 27 February 2014. On the 25 February, Universities UK and Action on Access had hosted a national conference on *Developing your Strategy for Access and Student Success*. The next day, in the late afternoon, the conference organisers tweeted a link to the slides of those who had presented at the conference. The following day, 27 February, the institutional group which prepares the Access Agreement had a scheduled meeting.

My description and initial reflections on this meeting were written up three days later on the 2 March using my scratch notes from the meeting. These provide one example of how policy actors frame and are framed by institutional structures and processes. Two extracts from this diary entry are reviewed below. The first exemplifies a tension between the performative and managerial and perhaps my naive attempt to combine research and policy. These were my initial reflections:

> The meeting began with a summary document headed as an 'action plan' for 2013-14. It was a list of activities. Each may be important but they did not constitute a strategy- unless that is a list of discreet activities. One of the items in the 'action plan' referred to an institutional 2013-14 retention strategy. Apparently the institution is now not going to have such a strategy in 2013-14. The priority this year is to now have a teaching and learning strategy. A retention strategy would follow in 14-15.

> I suggested that we will update lecturers in our School on these proposed comments. No comments were made by either of the Senior Managers. When I then referred to the slides by the Assistant Director of OFFA (presented on 25th February), and said to the Chair of the meeting that I had copies of the slides for either information or discussion this suggestion was rejected.

"If they want a strategic document they should give us the time to produce one" was the response of the Chair of the meeting to my suggestion. Although OFFA wanted a document returned to them by 1 May 2014, the Chair of the meeting said he wanted a document completed by the end of March.

The document was the institutional Access Agreement. Specific issues relating to the curriculum and lecturers and the position of part time students were then discussed. Those of us who represent the two Schools at Central wanted to discuss these issues. These were my reflections:

The first substantive issue that we had wanted to raise- of the Access Agreement and curriculum- was dismissed. I had tried to emphasise this point in terms of resources- the total number of lecturers who worked as Module Leaders and how, in that role, one of their key responsibilities was to enhance retention. I made explicit reference to the UKPSF- UK Professional Standards Framework- that forms the basis of the institutional role descriptor for Module Leaders. Framing our contribution even in this (narrow) definition was not acknowledged as part of widening participation.

The Chair of the meeting remarked, to another colleague, that the document required by OFFA was 'all about compliance'.

These discursive framings of the 'disadvantaged' 'WP student', and of widening participation and transition itself, were evident in both institutional policy texts and the institutional group responsible for producing these. Within these texts definitions of the 'problem' of widening participation were deemed unproblematic. However, following Ozga, my analysis suggests that each text can be conceptualised as carrying particular 'restricted' narratives that emphasised the story told 'about what is possible or desirable to achieve through education policy' (2000:95). Whilst such 'restricted' narratives are also evident in

(some) interviews with institutional policy actors my analysis, in the next part of the chapter, suggests more complex and nuanced processes that also constructed 'reformist' narratives too.

Walby (2013) emphasises how interviews enabled him to learn about what individuals do, and how their work with texts and location within the institution and beyond may affect their individual standpoint. Likewise Gerrard and Farrell, in their work on curriculum policy and teachers' work (2014), argue that institutional ethnography enables them to trace 'the intersections between policy texts and policy-makers' understandings and uses of them' (2014:640). Following Smith, my analysis 'doesn't begin in theory but in people's experiences' (2006:2) and, in the following section of the chapter, I now focus on the complex and contested, not inevitable, inter-relationships between policy texts and how policy actors talk about texts and policy within this specific institutional setting.

4.2.3 Compliance, marketization and transition: Narratives of institutional policy actors

My previous analysis of the source, scope and pattern of institutional policy texts and a critical event followed Ozga (2000). However, in this next section of the chapter, I apply Walby's argument about texts and practices of institutional ethnography to my analysis and interpretation of my interviews with institutional policy actors. By critiquing processes and 'practices of inscription' (2013:143), I learnt about what individuals do and how they work with texts. But I have also learnt how policy actors are both 'regulated *through* the organisational

processes in question' (ibid) but also how their location *within* the institution, and beyond, affects their standpoint too.

Eight institutional policy actors were interviewed between March 2014 and January 2015. Two were senior managers and the remainder were middle managers. Three were members of the institutional management group and had responsibility for three functions included in the institutional Access Agreements analysed earlier (Central, 2013-14). The other three managers led subject areas in the two academic schools within the institution. This purposive sample was designed so that I could analyse different forms of interaction between meso and micro sites within the institution, review different forms of institutional and departmental cultures and consider how these may shape the framing of widening participation and transition (Finnegan, Merrill and Thunborg, 2014:4). The sample of interviews also enabled me to trace different interpretations of inter-relationships between national policy contexts, institutional policy texts and policy-actors' interpretations and uses of them (Gerrard and Farrell, 2014:640).

In this section of the chapter, I present the findings from my recurring analysis and interpretation of interviews with institutional policy actors. I argue the dual themes of compliance and marketization, evident in policy texts, were also woven through these narratives. Although how they were framed varied significantly between different policy actors. Whilst some narratives exemplified specific forms of 'transition as induction' (Gale and Parker, 2014:739), by contrast,

'restricted' narratives were also juxtaposed with 'reformist' narratives emphasising 'transition as development' (Gale and Parker, 2014: 741). These provided a starting point for an 'extended metanarrative' that re-imagines the possibilities of 'transition as becoming' (Gale and Parker, 2014: 743).

Restricted narratives: compliance and marketization?

Early in my interview with one of three members of the institutional management group s/he made a bold assertion: 'I mean we are one of the best widening participation institutions in the country. Because we take so many students from WP backgrounds' (IPA 8). However, in this interview, a pattern of 'multiple and scattered events' (Kaplan, 1993:172) were chosen and deployed to re-present problems and frame a narrative. For example, recurring references to entry qualifications, the labelling of 'support' and specific cohorts of students explicitly situated policy and practices in relation to questions of institutional identity and risk:

> If you use entry qualifications as a proxy of people's success on a course then you are always going to have – you will have the oft cited person who came in with nothing and left with a First – but *for every one of those you probably have ten others who drowned. They weren't ready* (IPA 8: my emphasis)

No evidence was provided to support these assertions. However, entry qualifications were 'pieced together' in the plot they constructed and these were related to personal and institutional identities and questions of 'standards'. The inter-relationships between

setting and plot were extended further to include the policy actor, and their roles, in relation to the identity of the institution:

> I mean for instance one of the things that I did was that I championed the increase in entry requirements because looking at the market it made us look as if we had the lowest entry requirements. We were the easiest to get into therefore we had the lowest standards (IPA 8).

Here the policy actor, perhaps exemplifying Ball's argument on performativity and HE, was marketing themselves as their own 'subject' in a policy narrative promoting what s/he 'championed': 'There are new sets of skills to be acquired here- skills of presentation and of inflation, making the most of ourselves' (Ball, 2012:19). However, what the policy actor failed to recognise was that this dominant narrative not only framed the 'disadvantaged 'WP' student' and widening participation. It also acted to obscure the diversity of experiences, the range of needs and multiple identities of students themselves within the institution (Hinton-Smith, 2012).

A further framing of monitoring, evaluation and research was also problematic too. It reinforced those labels analysed earlier in policy texts. Claims were made by IPA8 about data and evidence too:

> I mean what *we did* was that *we looked at the data* on how students were progressing and as I mentioned earlier they either did really well or really poorly. Now at the time Access courses were Pass/Fail. So you had no idea whether someone sailed through it or scraped through it. So what we started doing when they started doing the Merits and what have you was that we said we wanted this to be the same as our A level and BTEC.
> We said ok we want all students to be successful. Clearly there are lots of students who are coming out with Thirds and Fails who come with Access those are the ones who perhaps we are less keen to recruit compared with those who do well (IPA 8).

This policy actor was not only clear about 'looking at the data'. They were equally clear in their interpretations of research on widening participation:

> Well, academics could get involved in research. But I have read research on WP on why people didn't go to University and it didn't tell me anything that I didn't already know. *It is confirming what we know*. Which can be fine but what you also need to do is… I mean some research comes out and it states the bleeding obvious and you think ok we already know that. I mean there was some research about barriers and men into primary and it was very interesting but – what do we do about it
>
> But in terms of WP research it needs to go beyond 'will I fit in', 'can I afford it' – it needs to go a bit deeper than that – all the reasons that are known – ok why don't they think they can afford it – do they understand the financing – are they saying they cannot afford it or is that hiding a deeper insecurity. *I don't know but I think you could do research that could go a bit deeper* (IPA 8: emphasis in original).

By contrast, another policy actor (IPA 6), who was also an institutional middle manager, was more nuanced and thoughtful in responses and the constructions of their narrative. But, their narrative also embodied a further sense of bricolage and fragmentation and a 'piecing together' of policy and practice. In my reflection that I wrote immediately after the interview (following Cousin, 2009), I noted in what way this narrative was also constructed:

> A number of points were striking about the interview. Firstly, the amount of preparation that x had done and information that she brought to the interview. Some were notes that she had prepared specially using the headings in the briefing document circulated before interview. The notes recorded various milestones – (some of which were mis-remembered eg the HEA funded project on widening project which was attributed to two other members of staff when I had initiated and co-ordinated this). However, each of these milestones was separate from the undergraduate curriculum. In other instances x had brought a range of reports that she had either written or contributed to. This collection of documents reinforced a sense of the 'piecing together' of a policy story.

Here references to self-marketing and developing provision were also made explicit. This policy actor commented that 'When I arrived I was the only full time member of staff. What I have had to do is build the team up. It's been a battle to get the team to where it is (IPA 6). However, these interpretations of growth were combined with the perceived needs of (certain) groups of students and a naming of two specific Subject Areas at Central. This reinforced a 'restricted' institutional narrative too by narrowly framing 'support' and including specific groups of students and academic subjects but excluding others from this narrative. Assumptions that *some* students 'needed support', or 'accessed services and the needs of other students framed this narrative:

> In terms of disability I think all of that could be linked to widening participation …. I would put all of that into widening participation. I also think *they* are coming from a work route and so *they* are accessing opportunities that they may not have done previously but that's where x's role is so important – transitioning from a role they are used to – to a different style and way of writing. *I suppose if I had to sum up what we are doing is helping people to transition and move along these different stages* (IPA 6:my emphasis added).

This metaphor of transition exemplifies Gale and Parker's dynamic of transition as induction (2014:739) and was combined with an explicit sense of Central 'as a WP institution'. IPA 6 asserted that

> I think from our point of view we try to do the best we can from the point of view of every individual regardless of where people come from or what their background is. We identify some people as needing more support than others. But that's for all sorts of reasons. There are certainly a lot of students who come to Central with a lot of other commitments. We have quite a lot of mature people. Mature students 21+. Well 25 + say. With children with families to look after with jobs they are doing. That's not necessarily widening participation either but *we have a lot of people who need a lot of help. Not just in academic*

support but in other sorts of support as well (IPA 6: my emphasis added).

Whilst, in one sense, the tone of IPA 6's narrative was markedly different from that of IPA 8 both explicitly reinforced the dividing practices or 'polarising categorisations' that Williams critiqued in her earlier work (1997:25). Nor were the framings of 'support', in the narrative of IPA 6, unproblematic either.

The construction of a narrative of 'support' was dominated by notions of support through a 'journey', and forms of transitional change, in which adjustment to HE was combined with a sense of shock (Gale and Parker, 2014:738). In the narrative of IPA 6, those students explicitly named were either from specific subject areas, were disabled or part time (although these students were not named but obscured by a reference to those from a 'work based' route). But, as Gale and Parker acknowledge, their three categories of transition as 'induction', 'development' and 'becoming' are not distinct from one another nor were IPA 6's either. For example, whilst IPA 6 emphasised metaphors, types of change and dynamics that reinforced senses of 'induction' into an institution, their plot was also 'pieced together' with those of 'development' too. These dynamics included an explicit reference by IPA 6 to 'stages' and 'help' ('helping people to transition and move along these different stages') and this was also framed in terms of linear and consecutive events through, and not just into, the institution.

What was absent from IPA 6's narrative of 'support' was a nuanced sense of how central support services may work with academic subject areas. This doesn't mean that there were not, and are not, valuable examples of student support within the institution. However, developing sustained collaborative work between central support services who provide study skills support and academic departments may begin with a review of the following research.

For example, a review could consider the implications of institutional and personal labels, including those critiqued earlier, and how these may relate to questions addressed by Scott et al. (2014:24). Several issues noted by them, in their review of the inter-relationships between widening participation and academic literacies, relate to the limitations of 'support' constructed by IPA 6. Firstly, in an over-emphasis on 'skills' there was a lack of attention to fundamental writing processes, methodologies and epistemologies (see Burke and Jackson, 2007). Secondly, questions of how different modes of assessment and ways of providing feedback may affect students who, in some institutions, may be under-represented were not considered either. Nor were possible inter-relationships between pedagogy and different forms of oral and written assessment. Finally, mismatches between diverse forms of learning and the experiences of students, before they enter HE, and the forms of learning then demanded by institutions (see, for example, Lillis, 2002) were absent from NPA 6's narrative. Although these questions are beyond the province of this

study, these silences are included to illustrate why 'restricted' narratives of widening participation and transition may be problematic.

The processes of 'problematization' and categorisation (Bacchi, 2012), explicit in the narratives of IPA 6 and 8, acted to frame and objectify students. In this sense, these narratives re-produced the 'restricted' narratives framed within the institutional policy texts that were analysed earlier. Also, the representations of 'time' differed compared with those of national policy actors. For example, whilst milestones in chronological time (Biesta, Field and Tedder, 2010:318) were explicitly combined with personal and organisational identities, narrative forms of time (2010:320) were used by institutional policy actors not to represent flux and uncertainty but particular representations of policy and practice. In an echo of Hoyle's work (1974), these emphasised a 'restricted professionality' in which narratives described events and were limited to a time and place.

From restricted to reformist narratives?

A senior manager also re-presented a dominant 'restricted' narrative of widening participation. Their framing of policy, and the writing of the Access Agreement, was summed up by the statement that 'It's all about compliance'. By contrast, another senior manager, IPA 2, offered a more nuanced narrative. The emerging themes from this narrative placed widening participation in a broader social context than compliance with the guidance of an external regulatory organisation. This attribute, in which their narrative related widening participation to a broader context of education, exemplified one

element of Hoyle's extended model of professionality (1974:18). In an emphasis on international dimensions of widening participation, IPA 2 remembered how, in the United States, a system supported transition from Community College to State University:

> You saw how they related to local colleges and that progression from local college into the university was very smooth. There were never any issues about what we would call APL in previous experiences and credits and I always thought that was one way of interpreting flexible studies, lifelong learning and promoting yes widening participation (IPA 2).

Although this represents a conceptualisation of transition as linear and cumulative in its movement, this sense of 'smooth progression' also reflects Gale and Parker's argument that 'transition as development' may be characterised by movement or maturation : 'In this sense, transition is about students' transformation or development, from one life stage to another' (2014:741).

However Finnegan, Merrill and Thunborg (2014), and Gale and Parker (2014), in their specific research on widening participation and transition, both critique earlier notions of 'support' and of transition as 'development' through an institutional system. Finnegan, Merrill and Thunborg (2014:6) extend this notion by arguing that the concept of 'transitional space' can be explored and used to interpret how students, including younger and older women, may reflect upon past and current identities and possibilities for the future. This 'extended' perspective is in marked contrast to the organisational metaphor of 'the student life-cycle' as a series of defined stages that relate to transition as either 'induction' or 'development'. Instead, the 'extended' perspective relates

to Gale and Parker's third category of transition as 'becoming'. This conception defines another dimension of flexibility and of 'voice' too. This was not only the flexible mode of study that IPA 2 referred to but also a 'curriculum that reflects and affirms marginalised student histories and subjectivities' (Gale and Parker, 2014:738).

Whilst this perspective was absent from the institutional narratives of IPA 6 and IPA 8, it was 'pieced together', in different ways, by a national policy actor, NPA 5, and four other institutional policy actors; IPA 3, IPA 4, IPA 5 and IPA 7. The institutional narratives relate to, but also critique, normative assumptions made by NPA 5 about 'voice' and the place of the curriculum in widening participation. They also address my third specific research question that focuses on 'voice' and policymaking. It is this question that is now analysed in the final section of the chapter.

4.3 'Voice', policy making and why it matters: From 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives to a starting point for an 'extended metanarrative'?

The third part of this chapter analyses five further interviews and reflects on my own diary of other critical events that each present different dimensions of 'voice'. It compares three further narratives, asks why these may matter and how they may relate to the 'reformist' and 'extended' dimensions of the typology of widening participation. The outline of this metanarrative is presented in the final section of this chapter.

In my interview with one further national policy actor (NPA5), conducted in May 2014, and four other institutional policy actors (IPA 3, 4, 5 and 7), interviewed between November and December 2014, each were asked about when widening participation began for them, the significance of their current roles in widening participation and those of their organisation or institution. Whilst one of the institutional policy actors is a further member of the institutional Management Group, three others lead Subject Areas at Central. Analysing and interpreting these interviews enabled me to trace different perspectives on policy actors and framing policy and questions of 'voice' and policymaking. I did so by comparing narratives on what widening participation was, is and could be and how it was discursively framed, in the institution, through inter-relationships between micro, meso and national dimensions of policymaking.

4.3.1 The curriculum and 'voice': 'The next frontier for widening participation' or a restricted narrative?

My interview with NPA5 was one of the most problematic I conducted. Whilst this in part was because of the setting (it took place, unlike all other interviews with national policy actors, on the edge of a large open plan office) it was also what was absent from the interview, as well as what was included within it, that was apparent and troubling. What was striking in this interview was a recurring emphasis on the present, on recent events and a sense of what was 'new'. This was exemplified by an assertion about the place of the curriculum in widening participation and a claim that 'I think it's probably the *next*

frontier for widening participation' (my emphasis). In a further reference to a sense of policy that was 'new' s/he asserted

> I quite like the Student Producers model. I like the way it's, kind of, politically motivated. I like the way it's embedded in the curriculum, rather than being an optional extra.

However, this stance and that of IPA7 combined 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives. In both student voice was framed in terms of 'the institution' and notions of 'institutional transformation'- but also specific examples of additional practice too.

IPA 7 traced influences on work within the institution to an earlier date. S/he argued 'It is project work. It is the way that teaching and learning innovations were done 10-15 years ago'. Whilst NPA5 assumed that 'the curriculum' was the 'next' or a 'new' area of national policy development, IPA7 framed it within its wider historical context reviewed in the first part of Chapter 2. In an echo of Hall's double shuffle (2005), s/he argued that

> The way in which higher education has expanded we have made into a more technocratic thing. So quite a lot of students coming to higher education do not see it as about expanding their worldview or about being active citizens. They are told it is about getting a better job- about getting the skills to getting employed- so it is a market exchange that actually discourages them from seeing the bigger picture- which is the *fundamental point* (emphasis) about this whole enterprise (IPA7: emphasis in original).

S/he also noted that a further dimension of HE and relationships with students was problematic:

> The difficulty comes with those inside and outside of higher education who want to treat it as a market. In which case your only interaction with the students is as customers. You deal with customer complaints

and you provide them a service. And in some ways that is a simpler model (Laughs). It is easier for managers to handle I suppose (IPA7).

However, paradoxically, in one sense this narrative also had echoes of those of IPA6 and IPA8. Work that had been established as a series of collective pieces of curriculum development, in partnerships between staff and students, was framed in terms of individual 'success'. For example, in a further expression of Ball's argument about self-presentation (2012:19), IPA7 framed activity as 'my work':

> I think *I am only* scratching the surface at the moment. It is project work…It is a bolt on activity where you get a few students involved in partnership work. *What I would like* is it to be a fundamental part of how the institution is organised (emphasis added).

Although what may be problematic about student-staff partnership working was also recognised:

> There is only a certain amount that you can expect of them in that way. They have probably done considerably more than that already. They are going to move on. How are the projects going to stay alive and become embedded in what we are doing thro that mechanism? And it is quite difficult through that mechanism. Because when a project ends a project ends (IPA7).

Yet it then appeared, paradoxically, as if a possible response in terms of student 'voice' was framed in what may be a 'restricted' form of student representation. This was defined by institutional forms of practice outside of the curriculum, rather than curriculum development within it:

> Whereas if it was an embedded part of the dialogue that we had with students as a part of the way in which we organised our course consultation then it wouldn't be a project it would be something we were doing and we would see it as a live part of a dialogue. The projects are a way of trying to kick start some of these things or fan these small flames. If we stop there it is not enough. It is not going to

embed this stuff. The embedding is much more about getting at student representation systems – about getting to the extent to which students do feel included in the institution (IPA7).

There was an apparent tension if not 'double shuffle' here. On the one hand, reference was made to students not being 'active citizens' and yet, on the other hand, terms of engagement and voice appeared to be framed in terms of a student representative system defined by the institution and not in terms of the curriculum.

Fielding and Moss' six-fold typology (2011) on students as data sources, active respondents, co-enquirers, knowledge creators, joint authors and inter-generational learners in education has a two-fold use here. Whilst it could deepen analysis of these existing practices, their typology may also be used to develop this practice further. For example, if senses of student voice within the institution were limited to a student representative system, then any process would be restricted to students as either data sources or active respondents rather than co-enquirers and beyond. By contrast, conceiving of students as 'creative subjects' in HE, rather than as data sources takes us back to the distinction made by Shanahan (1997:71) in relation to access, exclusion and knowledge.

Rather than conceptualising the development of widening participation, and questions of voice as either the 'next' frontier, or as 'new', instead the next two sections of the chapter build on these contested conceptions of voice. Consequently I suggest, along with IPA7, that the 'problem' of voice is not something that is a 'new' policy

issue. I now explore how other institutional policy actors reflected on and 'pieced together' narratives that may 'reform' or 'extend' widening participation further.

4.3.2 Reformist narratives of widening participation and 'voice' within the institution

I now ask how three policy actors, who lead subject areas at Central, framed widening participation and their roles and voices. Institutional ethnography enabled me to interpret the nuances of how they engaged in policy processes (Gibb, 2014:5) and, as such, my analysis builds on Smith's argument, in Chapter 3, that 'the social organisation of the everyday world…is only partially discoverable within its scope and the scope of the individual's daily activities. (However) local lives and settings need to be placed in a wider context of social, economic, and political processes' (Smith, 1988:154).

In the following analysis and interpretation each narrative of widening participation within the institution was situated in local and national contexts too. I ask whether and if so how policies are mediated building on Shain and Gleeson's notion of 'strategic compliance' (1999). I conclude by considering the implications of these processes for the attributes of these PA and their roles in producing and re-producing policy.

Memories of forms of widening participation

The memories of each policy actor and how they framed widening participation differed. Whilst one policy actor had worked in

schools, two others had either worked in a sixth form college or in further education. One of the policy actors, IPA3, was explicit when s/he plotted the relationships between their experiences and widening participation:

> [M]y interests in widening participation go back to my own biography and that was then further enhanced by working in working class environments where getting into University was a fairly remote issue for a lot of schools (IPA3).

S/he then framed those memories and their current motivations:

> [T]he sort of things I do largely interest me around marginalised curriculum areas and other groups that are marginal and where I think they are being done down by particular areas of policy (IPA3).

A particular notion and form of widening participation was problematic. There was a paradox. In their affective response to this form s/he juxtaposed a sense of unease about the contested idea of 'aspiration' with an acknowledgement of what may ultimately be a 'positive force for good':

> [O]ne of the things is that the term 'we' is a rather clumsy and potentially pejorative phrase. So I don't like the phrase 'widening participation'. I understand again its motivations. Its motives. So the first thing to say about what it means is that it is not a very (erm) attractive phrase. What it means in policy terms I think is about raising aspirations for communities that hitherto have ruled out university education either because simply it wasn't for them or because the (erm) development of aspirations – the promotion of an aspirant community- hasn't taken place . And certainly in my own school careers there was pretty much a fairly low level aspirant view of kids coming out. So apart from the clumsiness of the phrase the actual ambitions are a positive force for good (IPA3).

This sense that widening participation is 'a rather clumsy and potentially pejorative phrase' and not an 'attractive phase' is a powerful condemnation of *a particular form* of widening participation that

reflects Jones and Thomas' earlier critique of its academic and utilitarian discourses (2005). However, this critique and memory of aspiration raising, embodied by AimHigher (2004-11), is significant because it represents what (for many) is *the* dominant narrative of widening participation and not *an interpretation* of the phrase.

The memories of another policy actor (IPA5) also related to notions of 'aspiration' but they emphasised different interpretations of it and practice that embodied different expectations within a specific institution:

> I don't know whether we talked about widening participation so openly then. This would be the early 90's. But the fact that we had such a range of students, mainly from disadvantaged backgrounds but the expectations were high and there was a lot of encouragement to look at Uni and to go to a good Uni. I think that was when I began to think that there was something definite – it wasn't just left to chance. That these students were going to get to Uni. They were more likely to get to Uni from a place like ours than if they had gone elsewhere. So I suppose it opened my eyes to the barriers really that they might also experience in terms of proceeding with their studies (IPA5).

In these examples, whilst these two policy actors reviewed and critiqued 'aspiration' differently, their memories were of *a particular form* of widening participation. Although another policy actor (IPA4) also shared an emphasis with IPA5 on 'practice'. They not only recalled the explicit significance and place of widening participation but also remembered other forms of access and widening participation that were not narrowly framed in terms of aspiration raising.

These were central to their memories of those experiences in two ways. Firstly, working in a College s/he remembered that

> I am not sure I was aware of widening participation as a discourse at that point. But *I was certainly aware of it as a set of issues in practice* (IPA 4: emphasis in original).

Secondly, the importance of the experience was that

> [A]ctually in a sense from the very first day of my teaching experience (chuckle) I was dealing with widening participation practices. Although I think my understanding of it as a policy issue probably emerged.

An emerging understanding of policy was also framed in terms of the significance of key texts on widening participation, published in 1997, for interpreting practice within a specific institutional setting:

> What it felt like was a gradual evolution erm because as I said I started with a set of ideas around what I was trying to do- which were probably not informed by very much – other than my experience as a practitioner- but gradually obviously you developed a more sophisticated analysis of that as I said. I had started those conversations and I think I think by 97 Dearing and Kennedy I do remember. Both of those reports being published I think by that point I was I (hesitate) I certainly remember reading Dearing at the time where it had become a significant part of what I do (emphasis). And I remember particularly Kennedy in fairly positive ways because *what they did do was provide ways of beginning to structure your own thinking on issues in a kind of more strategic way* (IPA4. My emphasis added).

Each of the policy actors built on their memories of policy when they reflected on contemporary practices.

'Working around the edges' of policy or 'grubbing around in a mucky pool'?

In part, each of the policy actors' pieced together, interpreted and engaged in policy processes by explicitly embodying different temporal dimensions in their narratives. For example, one policy actor, IPA3, compared interpretations of current policy and practice and argued that

> [O]n one side you have got this fairly essentialist agenda and on the other side there is this really powerful agenda with issues around social justice- maximising participation and what people bring into the University environment in a much richer way really (IPA3).

Whereas another policy actor, IPA 4, highlighted and situated a sense of change *over time*

> I think it's interesting. When I first came here they *really-* (emphasis) promoted themselves as a widening participation institution. That was *very very* explicit (emphasis) and actually that was one of the things that was attractive to me at the time (IPA4. emphasis in original).

S/he also emphasised that

> [S]ince then the attitude to widening participation has become at best ambivalent and (hesitate) in a sense widening participation feels like something we do in spite of the institution rather than because the institution has an active commitment to it. In fact in many instance the institution has a biased notion against widening participation (IPA4).

A further policy actor, IPA5, also reflected this sense of change in a narrative that explicitly embodied a sense of struggle too:

> *I don't think we have won the battle* of convincing these people that students are being excluded from higher education who needn't be. I think for these people I am speaking of the problem is image. I am sad to say but I think that is exactly what it is. They think that to be involved in widening participation is to be grubbing around in a mucky pool (IPA5).

But these were only part **o**f their interpretations of policies and practices and how they had developed. Policy actors also emphasised why their involvement in specific initiatives were important for their own understanding of how processes unfolded and dominant discourses were framed (Gibb, 2014:5).

They emphasised the inter-relationships between national and institutional policies and interpreted institutional practices that

highlighted 'working around the edges' of a specific policy and shifting multiple strategies. Each explicitly referred to limitations or possibilities of 'spaces' within the institution. Firstly for example, one policy actor reflecting on developments within the institution, between 2006 and 2013, discussed how these were shaped by changes in national policies. Before a cap on student numbers:

> [W]e came up with a plan to take students with *low* (emphasis) UCAS points on a *Certificate* (emphasis) of Higher Education Programme. So I was very involved in discussions around that and setting up that Cert HE route. I mean it did apply to all Subjects and not just mine but we were enthusiastic participants in it. So that is the first time if you like when we had to *defend* (emphasis) widening participation that we had to think about the strategies for supporting students who came in on that Programme and that we began to look at the data about their success (IPA5).

Although a later change in national policy led to a particular decision by senior managers:

> [The provision] hit a bit of a snag because a cap came on numbers. So all the pressure from the top was to cut back and that is a very easy place to cut (and*) to take people who are a safer* bet (IPA5).

However, secondly, another policy actor highlighted a further specific issue. Not the effect of national policy on how institutional policy was framed but of how institutional practices framed working with first generation migrant students and the diversity of their language needs. This example related to three issues: the significance of the representation of a policy 'problem' and processes of 'problematization' (Bacchi, 2012); the frustration of the policy actor but also their imagination in 'piecing together' a specific response:

Really good things happen but they happen in the spaces. A really good example. I mean you may have clocked it. We have just started and this is a particular issue for us- we have a lot of students who are first generation migrants. Who are often doing a degree in a second or third language. Because they are classified as home students they can't get any support – language support etc. *Now in the cracks there has been a really subtle and well thought out attempt to try and do something about that* Erm so- in this case- x has really tried to be proactive and do interesting things. But the institution fails to acknowledge that those students exist. So if you raise it and say how do we raise those students from this view of them as a deficit- who can't write properly- when actually many of these students have a fantastic range of experience which we need to capture in positive and constructive ways. And to do that I think you have got to have a different model of the relationship between the institution and the students (IPA4).

Finally, another policy actor, IPA3, argued that multiple strategies represent a 'potpourri':

I think what we have are multiple strategies in place. I don't think that the management see they necessarily have an incoherent strategy. They think they have a very coherent strategy – but the strategy is a mission statement which signs into many things that those of us in the institution don't. So I think what we have got is multiple versions of strategy and of course programmes and Subject Areas are creating their own strategies which are tolerated. Some of which chime with the mission. Some of which don't. So I think what we have got is a kind of (hesitate)- a (hesitate)- potpourri for want of a better word (IPA3).

S/he explicitly made a connection between this notion of multiple strategies, without naming what they were, and practices of widening participation *in flux* and the diverse experiences of students:

I think certainly one of the things about widening participation is that we are constantly evolving in flux a curriculum with students all the time….. This is how a curriculum works. We are very much in a sense of flux all of the time. And then the widening participation part of that is the experience of the students at Central (IPA3)

They argued that in their practices policy was re-mediated:

So I think what *we do* (emphasis) is we re-mediate we mediate we re-invent it in our own way. Which at one level is very frustrating to

people charged with implementing this stuff and causes natural tensions. And for us it works to our advantage. So we in part play the game and in part don't play the game. We reinvent the game. Or whatever that game might be. Inevitably as a *creative enterprise to do good work* (emphasis in original) (IPA3).

These narratives relate to the argument posed at the start of this section that the 'problem' of 'voice' is not something that is a *new* policy issue but that institutional policy actors can 'piece together' practice that may extend this 'restricted' narrative. My argument is that these stances juxtapose a critique of 'restricted' narratives, an engagement with 'reformist' conceptions of widening participation that 'worked around the edges' of 'restricted' narratives and began to imagine an 'extended' conception of widening participation.

In chapter 2 I reviewed Sachs' argument that whilst managerialist discourses are generated from both outside of the institution, but also from within, 'democratic' discourses are produced within the profession itself (2001:149). Consequently, the identities of the teacher or lecturer, and their professional lives, are not fixed but are formed, in part, by recurring interactions between these two discourses and the narratives of the 'imaginative professional'. The narratives of each policy actor were shaped by the specific contexts they reflected upon, how they work with others and how they make sense of their work within this setting. However, to re-iterate an earlier argument: their capacities to exercise that agency were shaped by recurring 'restricted' narratives and managerialist discourses that circulate, swirl and become embedded within an institutional setting.

Each of these institutional policy actors adopted hybrid positions on what widening participation was, is and could be. In this complexity and uncertainty what was plotted within their narratives was a recurring tension between having to negotiate and work with other forms of 'managerialist professionalism' (Sachs,2001) and find spaces for themselves and others as 'imaginative professionals' (Power,2008). In this sense, their practices reflected Shain and Gleeson's earlier work on 'strategic compliers'. Compared with other institutional policy actors whose narratives were reviewed earlier, they were 'more likely to take the initiative, bend rules and network' (1999:457).

4.3.3 Starting to re-cast widening participation and 'voice': From reformist narrative to a starting point for an 'extended' metanarrative?

A third set of narratives extends this analysis of widening participation and 'voice' further. I use my research diary, and the reflections of others, to 'piece together' an example of practice that may extend beyond 'reformist' institutional narratives. First, I briefly locate this example in its theoretical context and then reflect on the practice. I ask how this embodied a 'reformist' narrative and may provide the basis for an 'extended metanarrative' too.

Davies, Williams and Webb (1997) argue that debates about access and widening participation are not just about the purposes of policies and practices - but also about who can speak about policy, when, where and with what authority. Moreover, 'voice' is not only about who may speak, about widening participation and transition, but

if voices are heard or not and what is spoken. The dilemmas that Fielding and Moss pose (2011) and Fielding addressed (2001; 2012), are significant for this final reflection on a third set of narratives on 'voice' and policy making. For example, asking whose voices are heard, the value of conceiving of the rights of students rather than simply their goodwill and how 'voice' may be appropriated as a tool in managing quality assurance practices also builds on Davies, Williams and Webb's earlier concerns.

In previous work (Jones, 2013), and in chapter 2 and an earlier section of this chapter, I reviewed the distinction Fielding and Moss (2011) make in their six-fold typology of students as data sources, active respondents, co-enquirers, knowledge creators, joint authors and inter-generational learners in education. Whilst their examples are drawn from early childhood and secondary education, I have argued these distinctions can also be applied to analysing and theorising widening participation in HE too.

The scope for students as co-creators or collaborators in relation to pedagogy, curriculum and co-enquiry in HE is explored by Bovill, Cook-Sather and Felten (2011) whose work was introduced in chapter 2. As education developers their position is that lecturers should not merely consult with students or, in Fielding and Moss' terms, relate to them as data sources or active respondents. Instead, they should review ways for students to 'become full participants' as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design or of curricula. These questions

are relevant to an analysis and interpretation of specific interventions at Central. The first set of 'restricted' institutional narratives, that I reflected upon earlier, situated 'voice' within a student representative system. By contrast, the following example of practice embodied a narrative premised on the notion of three students and four lecturers working collaboratively as co-enquirers and creators of knowledge (Fielding and Moss, 2011). It was informed by my earlier work on critical pedagogy within the classroom (Jones, 2011) and 'the student experience' and diversity of students' experiences in HE (Jones, 2013).

Positioning Students as Partners and questions of voice

At the start of the project, in April 2014, the students wrote an information sheet summarising the small scale research project– from their perspective:

> The purpose of the research we are carrying out is to evaluate the Education Studies curriculum, to ensure it is culturally diverse, that it includes a variety of perspectives and is appropriately more inclusive. (Begum et al, 2014:3)

In their final report, four months later, they made a series of recommendations to:

- Continuously expose students and staff to multiple views of the world and harness experiences of all the students in Education Studies.

- Increase opportunities for collaborative learning (communities of practice, group work in seminars) which exploit the diversity within the student population.

- Diversify the theorists and theories used to gain multiple perspectives and avoid repetitiveness. Include the ideas of Black and Asian thinkers and academics from local, global, past and present much earlier on in the modules.

- Include the concept of multiple identities, especially religious identity across the modules from level 4 onwards as, this will allow students to develop a deeper understanding of the concept of identities as students come from a super diverse city (Begum et al, 2014:21).

The small scale project began to develop a problem posing education that fundamentally was not just about interpreting the world differently. An essential element of the method we used was praxis: a recurring process of action and reflection leading to further action. Our aim was to begin to critically analyse a knowable object (the curriculum) and develop our critical consciousness. As Freire argues:

> To be an act of knowing... demands among teachers and students a relationship of *authentic dialogue.* True dialogue unites subjects together in the cognition of a *knowable object,* which mediates between them... learners must assume from the beginning the role of *creative subjects* (1985:49. my emphasis added).

In research diary entries in September, October and November 2014, I used three prompt questions to reflect on this work. It is illuminating to review these entries and reflections on why I became involved in this work, what I learnt from it and how it also related to my own dilemmas about 'voice' and policymaking. In Chapter 3, I suggested that my conception of events, and what made them 'critical', was informed by my uses of the method in my earlier Institution Focused Study (see Jones, 2013:27). In this previous work, I compared the different perspectives of Woods (1994; 1996) and Cunningham (2008) on how incidents may be conceptualised. These interpretations are combined together below.

Re-reading these diary entries, I sense affective interpretations embodying *why* I chose to become involved in that work at that moment:

> [T]he essence of why I wanted to contribute to the project was (in part) a reaction against other practices. Claims to 'listen' to students instead of treating them as 'sources of data' (see the work of Michael Fielding on this dimension of 'student voice'). For example, in single events earlier last year a small groups of students were called together to discuss (20 credits). They were then re-presented as 'the student voice'. But, by comparison, when the messy, incomplete but detailed comments of 60 students were typed up and sent to senior managers – these were ignored. My sense and hope was that by comparison the project was an opportunity for sustained work with a small group of students that promised to be 'more authentic' (29 September 2014).

In retrospect, these initial motivations can still be read using the work of Mackenzie and colleagues (2007). Their research suggests practices can be interpreted in terms of affective dimensions of performativity. 'The authentic self' may recognise demands but also act knowingly and mindfully in response to these (2007:47). When I reflected on what I learnt from the work I recognised

> It felt interesting. It felt genuine. Perhaps I am self-consciously referring to feelings – but again the essence of enjoying an activity was an essential part of it. In part that was because of working with such a highly motivated group of students. The project felt that it was important to each of us. N, R and M reflected on their own experiences at Central and of what was 'absent' from it. They were each explicit that many of their experiences were either absent or in some instances mis-recognised.

> I brought to the project what I already knew about labelling and othering – but the project reinforced some of what I already knew and offered me fresh insights. The project emphasised that it is essential to address the complexity of what 'curriculum enrichment' may mean - particularly in terms of inter-sections between diversity, gender and ethnicity. The project was also important in terms of the processes of collaborative research. We moved back and forth between 'teaching', 'facilitating' and encouraging the students as partners and, in many ways, leaders of the project (19 October 2014).

Dilemmas about 'voice'

However, the dilemmas Fielding and Moss pose (2011), and that Fielding addresses in his own work (2001; 2012), were also significant for this work *within* the institution. For example, concerns as to how the 'voice' of students may be appropriated as a tool in managing quality assurance practices were evident here too. I was troubled by this:

> What are the implications of the report for 'curriculum enrichment'? Senior managers asked to meet with the students to discuss the report. Another manager has encouraged this too. (29 September 2014).

This concern was extended in October when I wrote:

> On reflection I am also interested in how the projects are being appropriated. Interesting to reflect on how the whole idea of the projects is being framed (19 October 2014).

The final dilemma was whether this work could extend *beyond* committed individuals working within a course or Department. I recognised this in a further reflection in November 2014:

> The completion of the first phase of the project was marked by the submission of a report in July. However, before that, a presentation was made at the end of year Subject Review and comments there contributed to the final report. All of the lecturers at the Review shared enthusiasm for the project and the report. What is now interesting is how the report will shape our practices in 14-15 (10 November 2014).

Several options were identified at a review meeting in November. We discussed the range of ways in which the project could develop *within the curriculum*. Three possibilities were identified. Firstly, to focus on how the original recommendations may be applied to specific modules and then for each student member of the project to interview one or two members of the Subject Area and review how they

have responded to the original recommendations in their work in Semester 1. Finally, we review the possibilities for developing new modules providing further space for engagement with the original recommendations of the project.

On reflection, this small scale student led research project embodied several of the features of a 'reformist' narrative outlined in my typology. It was an example of specific *additional* practice, situated outside of the formal curriculum but in relation to it. In this instance lecturers and students were engaged as co-enquirers in an emerging form of curriculum enrichment. However, the final dilemma that Greenbank (2007) and Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever (2010) both recognise also suggests that the *position* of this work within the institution may be problematic too.

Greenbank (2007) argues a 'culture of widening participation' is often *not* embedded throughout an institution. Likewise Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever (2010) argue that because the national policy context and rationale for widening participation is not clear, it will 'remain the preserve of committed individuals and at the local level' (2010:105). This dilemma is now explored in the final section of this chapter when I outline the features and possible conditions for the development of an 'extended meta-narrative'.

Re-casting an 'extended metanarrative' of widening participation

The 'extended metanarrative' of widening participation, outlined in the final section of this chapter, is more than a comparison *between* 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives. Instead, I offer a metanarrative that re-casts what widening participation could be. I do so by outlining its features and considering the implications of Sachs' notions of 'managerialist' and 'democratic professionalism' (Sachs, 2001) and those of the 'imaginative professional' (Power, 2008) for my own practices, and those of others, in expanding the possibilities of widening participation. I map an outline of distinguishing features of this narrative using the questions from my typology and my own thinking that I have refined throughout the Doctorate.

The first feature of an 'extended metanarrative' is based on what 'the problem' is. Whilst a dominant and 'restricted' narrative is based on the metaphor of 'the student life-cycle', that frames widening participation and transition in terms of a series of measured and managed stages of 'access', 'success' and 'progression' (BIS,2014), a re-casting of the narrative rejects this position. Instead, policies and practices are framed by beginning to recognise that experiences and forms of studenthood are neither fixed nor linear (Field, Merrill and Morgan-Klein, 2010) but are complex and contested.

Field and Kurantowicz (2014), Finnegan, Fleming and Thunborg (2014) and Gale and Parker (2014) extend this analysis further by tracing the value of 'transition as becoming'. The argument of Gale and Parker is that this conception of transition, compared with other forms

that conceptualise transition as either 'induction' or 'development', has more potential for new thinking about transitions in H.E. They begin this process by arguing the need for H.E. institutions themselves to change by reflecting on questions about the design of the curriculum and forms of pedagogy that may be developed given the diverse needs and interests of students (2014:745).

Such practices extend beyond 'restricted' narratives exemplified by, and framed within, national and institutional policy texts. Instead, for example, recurring process of reflection, debate and planning that were the basis of the 'Students as Partners' project, outlined in the previous section of the chapter, also echo the earlier perspective of Shanahan in which the question of widening participation should be inverted into that of universities accessing the knowledge of those who have been excluded (1997:71). Then asking what 'the problem' is represented to be, and how policies and practices are framed, re-casts the question of access and widening participation by taking account of the 'multiplicities of student lives' (Gale and Parker, 2014:745) and extending beyond specific examples of additional practice. For example, engaging with contested narratives of widening participation explicitly recognises that 'the problem' is not 'being' a 'WP' student (as in the 'restricted' narrative). Instead this work, and my earlier research with students (Jones, 2013), suggests that multiple identities are shaped by inter-sections of class, gender, ethnicity, age, disability and sexuality. It is these re-presentations and re-framings of 'the problem'

that have implications for contested ideas of transition within institutions.

Quinn's argues that 'there is no such thing as <u>an</u> identity, or <u>a</u> discrete moment of transition' (2010, 127; emphasis added). This position, which I share, relates to the work of Zepke and Leach (2005). Their notion of the 'emergent discourse of adaptation' is productive. Gale and Parker argue that this is not about individuals or groups *adapting* to institutions, or the incorporation of individuals into the cultures of an institution. Rather the notion offers an entry or new starting point (Smith, 1988; 2002; 2006) in re-viewing teaching practices and curriculum *within* institutions (2014:746).

Finally, by asking who gets to speak about these processes and why this matters, Nixon argues what so-called 'under-represented' groups lack is not 'representation' but *presence* (Nixon, 2011:123. emphasis in original). In earlier work Nixon and colleagues suggest that professionalism should not be defined 'in terms of status and self-regulation, but in terms of values and practices' (2001:234). However, as a starting point, contrasting notions of 'managerialist' and 'democratic' professionalism (Sachs, 2001) compared with those of the 'imaginative professional' (Power, 2008), matters for starting to develop such an 'extended metanarrative' of widening participation.

In chapter 2, I reviewed the work of Sachs (2001) on the tensions between competing discourses of 'managerialist' and 'democratic professionalism' in her focus on teachers' development.

Sachs argues that managerialist discourses are generated both from outside of the institution, but also from within. This argument relates to my earlier analysis of 'restricted' narratives of widening participation and how national and institutional practices were shaped by wider ruling relations. Within national spaces of policy making, practices were exemplified by dominant narratives of stability, control and compliance and the recurring metaphor of 'the student lifecycle' in section 4.1.2 of this chapter. These then shaped dominant restricted narratives of marketization and support within the institution analysed and interpreted in section 4.2.

By contrast, the second 'democratic' discourse produced within the profession itself (2001:149), was embodied in 'reformist' narratives within the institution. The representations were of a 'narrative time' (Biesta, Field and Tedder, 2010: 320) that 'worked around the edges' of policy and practice. These were analysed and interpreted in section 4.3.2. However, my analysis of the tensions between 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives suggests that the identities of the lecturer or manager are not fixed but are formed, in part, by recurring interactions and tensions between 'managerialist' and 'democratic' discourses. These, in turn, are shaped by the contexts each policy actor works within, how they work with others but also how they make sense of their work and identities within that setting. This has implications for professionalism and professional identities, including my own, and specifically a re-casting of widening participation.

Conclusion

I conclude this chapter by asking why the typology I have designed, and the hybrid of policy and practice (Hall, 2005) analysed, may matter for providing a starting point for a re-casting of widening participation. I suggest that whilst 'restricted' narratives are *dominant* and 'reformist' narratives 'work around the edges' of policy and practice, these possibilities are situated within a dominant paradigm of compliance, marketization and performativity. However, widening participation and transition are not simply *problems* to be managed but remain a set of recurring dilemmas that need to be *problematized* (Bacchi, 2000:2012).

My analysis of policy and narratives, in Chapter 4, has been derived in part from these notions of 'problem' and 'problematization' in which findings from an analysis of policy texts, interviews with policy actors and a diary of critical events have been reviewed. I considered how the rational narrative of texts became part of an organisational or 'occupational story': a particular form of narrative and a specific structure of knowledge that represents a storied way of knowing (Cortazzi, 2001). However, I also asked how the meanings of texts were discursively interpreted in other settings within the institution too.

In this chapter, my focus on policy and context, policy actors and framing policy and 'voice' and policy making has analysed national and institutional forms of 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives that embody what widening participation *is* within an organisational and institutional

context. However, 'extended' metanarratives of widening participation, outlined in the final section of the chapter, offer a narrative that re-casts what widening participation *could be*. By extending *beyond* the 'reformist', I have begun to consider how widening participation could be re-cast by outlining the features of a metanarrative. In the concluding chapter I ask what the implications may be of Sachs' notion of 'managerialist professionalism' and 'democratic professionalism' (2001), 'the imaginative professional' (Power,2008) and Burke's call for the development of participatory pedagogies (2012;2014) for both my own practices, and those of others, in extending the possibilities of widening participation.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Chapter 5 has several functions. I first review the aims, problems and dilemmas I began the research with. I then outline how I have answered my research questions and, consequently, what my thesis is. The implications of my study are then addressed. I present my contributions to knowledge and consider the implications of my study for theory, policy and practice. Finally, I outline the basis for future research which will build on my study and its thesis.

5.1   Aims of the research

My research began with two problems and a dilemma that had emerged, for me, from institutional practices. The first problem embodied a sense of 'policy amnesia' or lack of policy memory (Higham, 2005; Higham and Yeomans, 2007) and led to a second problem. How widening participation was framed, and how it excluded or marginalised other possibilities. The dilemma I set out to explore was how national and institutional policy actors interpreted policy and texts on widening participation and how particular policies, practices and problems were framed and constructed within a specific political era (Hodgson and Spours, 2006).

The study was designed to enhance research on the complexities of widening participation by analysing and interpreting the recurring tensions between how 'the problem' of widening participation was framed and 'what the problem was represented to be?', a question derived from Bacchi's work on the construction of policy 'problems' and

processes of 'problematization' (2000;2012). My aim was to start with the 'problem' or dilemma and the everyday. Then I traced inter-relationships between these stories, narratives and organisational policies and practices (Taber, 2010:9) and how policy narratives at national and institutional levels were 'pieced together' within narratives and 'organisational stories' (Cortazzi, 2001).

My stance, threaded through the thesis, has followed Ball's argument (2013) and contrasted narratives representing policy as clear and fixed compared with others that interpret policy as contested and in flux. The argument I have developed explored this tension by building on Roe's comparison between policy narratives, which underpin and stabilise policymaking, and those that critique the process and policies that are formed (1994). However, I also argued that each policy text and policy actor has constructed narratives. The narratives of policy actors reflect Burke's argument that 'complex, multiple and shifting identities, are produced within educational sites' (2008:134) in which time is not stable but is in flux.

The study, and the exploration of these problems, has contrasted how a rational and instrumental paradigm of widening participation has been embodied within the metaphor and 'problem' of 'the student life-cycle' (BIS, 2014) compared with my analysis and interpretation that has 'problematized' how narratives have been constructed and represented.

My aim by combining narrative policy analysis, institutional ethnography and bricolage has been to critique simplistic assumptions about widening participation. This methodological framework has been used to:

1. Analyse and interpret policies and practices by differentiating between their purposes and practices

2. Enhance research on the complexities of widening participation by going beyond the question asks what is 'the problem?' and asking 'what's the problem represented to be?' a question derived from Bacchi's work on the construction of policy problems (2012).

The next section of my conclusion examines how this methodological framework has been used to answer my research questions by reflecting on what my findings were and how each method enabled me to analyse and interpret each focus summarised in figure 1.

5.2   Research questions

How national policies and practices on widening participation in England, introduced between 2004 and 2014, were interpreted by researchers and national policy actors.

The first specific research question focused on policy and its context. My review of literature combined several inter-related themes. First, debates about the nature of policy on widening participation considered different perspectives on the history of access and widening participation and then compared different interpretations of contemporary research on widening participation.

Maringe and Fuller, in their review of policy (2006), placed widening participation in its economic context and that of equity and social justice. I argued that this tension between the perceived economic benefits of widening participation, and the demands of equity and social justice, is also central to debates that Burke addresses (2012). In this discourse, from Burke's perspective, key policies are framed in economic terms emphasising individual advantage. Whilst this reflects one rationale, identified by Maringe and Fuller (2006), Burke also argues overlapping discourses of 'expansion', 'massification' and 'access', combined with that of economic growth, act to obscure inequalities experienced by those who participate in HE- as well as others who do not.

Secondly, I argued that widening participation is framed in literature by notion of 'barriers'. A 'solution' is the 'removal' of situational, institutional and dispositional barriers (2006:5). However, Hinton-Smith (2012:9) critiques this notion by arguing that a consequence of emphasising 'barriers' is that practices of categorisation become part of a process of 'othering' and a 'catch-all' of 'WP' and 'non-traditional' students. Burke (2012:141) extends this critiques of the notion of 'barriers' by arguing that national policy texts (citing the examples of HEFCE, 2001;2009) construct a dominant 'derogatory discourse' based on 'the student lifecycle' of stages and milestones.

I compared OFFA/HEFCE's perspectives on the *National strategy*, published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS, April 2014), and three 'broad stages' of a life-cycle of 'access', 'student success' and 'progression' (2014:3) with its origins in HEFCE (2001). By analyzing BIS (2014) I focused on how 'outreach', 'support' and 'curriculum' were framed in the text and built on the narratives within previous texts. I noted that references to particular forms of outreach and collaboration were combined with further explicit references to the place of 'marketing' within the *National Strategy*. I argued that this metaphor of 'the student lifecycle' embodied a rational form of transition.

However, I then reviewed a range of work that critiqued the generative metaphor and organisational device of 'the life-cycle'. I argued that these contested concepts of widening participation and transition need to be understood within wider debates about institutional context, performativity and professionalism. Whilst these sections of the review considered 'problems' and processes of 'problematization', by building on the work of Bacchi (2000; 2012), the fourth section of the review considered how narratives of widening participation and transition could be re-imagined by suggesting why a more nuanced understanding of 'voice' may relate to notions of 'institutional amnesia' (Pollitt, 2000) and 'policy memory' (Higham, 2005).

My conclusion was that this dynamic suggested a crowded policy domain. The notion of 'political era' (Hodgson and Spours, 2006) provided a temporal context for my semi-structured interviews with national policy actors interviewed between March and July 2014 and the narratives they constructed. In my focus on the era, between 2004 and 2014, the themes that were identified suggested a juxtaposition and tension between a rational 'restricted narrative' of policy and Ball's analysis of policy as 'awkward, incomplete, incoherent and unstable' (Ball, 1997:265). Building on Biesta, Field and Tedder's work on 'time' and narratives (2010), I then suggested the narratives I analysed and interpreted could be sensitised further by deploying notions of 'chronological', 'narrative' and 'generational' time. This deepened my understanding of the juxtaposition of stability and flux in different representations of time within 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives.

How do institutional policy actors, structures and processes frame policies and practices on widening participation?

The second specific research question focused on policy actors and how they framed policy. The paradox or tension between the rational and linear and the flux and frenzy, evident in national narratives, was also reflected in contested debates within the institution. From the analysis of institutional policy texts, I concluded that particular 'problems' and meanings of 'outreach' and 'support' were created (Bacchi, 2000; 2012). These framed the 'disadvantaged' student and activities it assumed were 'needed'. For example, building on Smith's argument that texts within institutional ethnography 'create a

crucial join' between the activities of individuals and the social relations that may co-ordinate these activities (2002:45), I analysed how institutional policy actors framed transition and, in particular, 'outreach', 'support' and the place of the curriculum in relation to widening participation. By combining an analysis of texts, interviews with policy actors, between May 2014 and January 2015, and critical events recorded in diary entries, between November 2013 and July 2015, I concluded that whilst dominant 'restricted' narratives of widening participation emphasized compliance with the minimum requirements of OFFA, 'reformist' narratives were framed in terms of working 'around the edges of policy'.

Who is included and excluded from policy making on widening participation and why does it matter for widening participation in the future?

The third specific research question focused on 'voice' in policymaking and why it matters. Bacchi's analysis was also applied to this question and the construction of policy 'problems', and processes of 'problematization' (2000; 2012) in relation to transition and voice. I asked how these were conceptualized within policy texts. I firstly noted how notions of 'support' were framed in terms of institutional strategies. Whilst a national text asserted that 'We see a strategic, long-term "whole institution" approach as crucial' (BIS, 2014:11) reference to curriculum was in terms of those 'developing the teaching curriculum' and not lecturers who work with students each day. Secondly, in presenting data on the 'problem' of students and transition, national

and institutional policy were framed in terms of differences in the rates of retention and achievement rather than in how diverse needs of students have been and are shaped by their experiences of the inter-relationships between social class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability and age (Quinn, 2010).

I argue that the third conception in Gale and Parker's typology of student transition, 'transition as becoming' acknowledges not only flexible modes of study but also a 'curriculum that reflects and affirms marginalised student histories and subjectivities' (2014:738). Whilst this dynamic was absent from the 'restricted' narratives of institutional policy actors, I suggested 'reformist' narratives were 'pieced together', in different ways, by three other institutional policy actors who are heads of academic subjects and also by myself and others in my analysis and interpretation in the final section of chapter 4.

I concluded the chapter by outlining features of an 'extended metanarrative' of what widening participation could be. The first feature of an 'extended metanarrative' would reject 'the student life-cycle'. Instead it recognises that experiences and forms of studenthood are neither fixed nor linear (Field, Merrill and Morgan-Klein, 2010) but are complex and contested. I argued that Field and Kurantowicz (2014), Finnegan, Fleming and Thunborg (2014) and Gale and Parker (2014) extend this analysis further by tracing the value of 'transition as becoming'. I suggested this position has implications for both H.E.

institutions and reflections on questions about the design of the curriculum and forms of pedagogy.

I argued that recurring process of reflection, debate and planning that were the basis of the 'students as partners' project, provided a starting point for asking how policies and practices are framed, by taking account of the 'multiplicities of student lives' (Gale and Parker, 2014:745). I gave the example of how engaging with contested narratives of widening participation explicitly recognises that 'the problem' is not 'being' a 'WP' student (as in the 'restricted' narrative). Instead this work, and my earlier research with students (Jones, 2013), suggests that multiple identities are shaped by inter-sections of class, gender, ethnicity, age, disability and sexuality. It is these re-presentations and re-framings of 'the problem' that have implications for contested ideas of transition within institutions.

5.3   My thesis and argument

Consequently, my thesis is that a critical analysis of widening participation in HE is enriched by 'piecing together' the complexity of a bricolage to form a typology derived, in this instance, from my analysis of different narratives within interviews, policy texts and critical events. Whilst this study was conducted within a specific time and place, its design and methods may be used by others if they too want to go beyond a 'restricted' form of widening participation and instead re-cast its possibilities. The metaphor and concept of bricolage was also generative in shaping my interpretation of how policy actors 'pieced

together' different forms of evidence to make policy. Whilst work by Freeman explicitly refers to bricolage and the *bricoleur* in relation to health policy (2007), I argue his work may enhance research on widening participation in HE by asking how national and institutional policy actors construct narratives of policy and practice in other institutional contexts too.

5.4 Implications: Contributions of thesis to academic and professional knowledge

This study makes two specific contributions to academic and professional knowledge on widening participation. Firstly, my methodological contribution to research is based on my argument that a framework combining narrative policy analysis with an institutional ethnography and bricolage can be used to re-construct narratives on widening participation. Secondly, I used this methodological framework to critically analyse policies and practices on widening participation by constructing a typology of widening participation that compared 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives and provided the basis for an 'extended metanarrative' that re-casts widening participation.

In my introduction to the study, I emphasised Slade's argument which has informed the methodological contribution of the thesis. Each institutional ethnography 'begins with a disjuncture' (2012:462) and tensions between lived experiences and wider social processes. The iterative and recurring process of discovery has asked *how* local experiences, and different stories and narratives, were 'pieced

together' in a typology of widening participation. 'Restricted' narratives have emphasised stability and compliance and representations of policy and time that were 'organised, regulated, tamed, colonized and foreclosed now' (Adam, 2004:142). By contrast, 'reformist' narratives 'pieced together' an emerging critique of practice. My analysis following Roe (1994) emphasises that metanarratives do not seek to homogenise policy. Instead by identifying dominant narratives and then those that ran counter to these, I recognised the differences in a controversy by recasting competing and conflicting narratives.

This is the basis of my second contribution. The typology of 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives, and an 'extended metanarrative', of widening participation has enabled me to interpret *how* narratives and dominant meanings were constructed, circulated and shaped by national but also 'subtle micro politics' (Burke, 2012:155). In chapter 4, I explored tensions between dominant 'restricted' and 'reformist' counter narratives and built on Roe's notion of 'small-m metanarratives' (1994:52). The typology I presented, based on these narratives, is a device that has enabled me to analyse and interpret the complexities of widening participation.

The explanatory typology has several purposes. First, it was used to structure the analysis and discussion of 'the problem', then what 'the problem' was represented to be, how policies and practices were framed, and, finally, who gets to speak about policy. The typology may be used by others to debate how these differing narratives of

widening participation are not just about the specific purposes of policies, but who speaks about such policies and practices too (Davies, Williams and Webb, 1997; Burke, 2002 and 2012). This provides a starting point for finding whether there are spaces and places for beginning to re-imagine 'extended metanarratives' of widening participation that may go beyond dominant 'restricted' or other 'reformist' narratives.

5.5 Implications and recommendations for theory, policy and my practice

My thesis is that widening participation and transition are not simply 'problems' to be managed but a set of recurring and complex dilemmas to be 'problematized'. Students' identities are not fixed and nor are their experiences within institutions linear- although this is what policy texts may represent them to be. In the following section of my conclusion, I argue why research on professionality, professionalism and performativity (Hoyle, 1974; Sachs, 2001; Pollitt, 2000, 2008; Power, 2008 and Cunningham, 2015) relates to my thesis and re-casts and extends the conditions for what widening participation could be.

Firstly, Hoyle's heuristic models of restricted and expansive models of professionality (1974) distinguish between different professional attributes. For example, whereas one dimension of restricted professionality limits skills to those derived from experience, by contrast, an extended model embraces the inter-relationship between experience and theory. Another dimension limits practice to

an immediate time and place, whereas an extended dimension of professionality includes an awareness of a broader social and political context. These different attributes relate to the two problems and dilemma I began the study with. The conditions for the development of an extended model of professionality are embodied in different representations of time (Biesta, Field and Tedder, 2010). For example, if widening participation policy and practice are represented as stable and linear, and constantly 'moving forward' in chronological time, then the opportunities for reflecting on representations of widening participation, in narrative time, may be limited. However, when policy actors reflected on their experiences, the 'organising principle' of narrative time (ibid: 321) deepened my understanding of how their narratives were constructed to embody, for example, flux and frenzy.

Sachs' tension between managerialist and reformist professionalism also sensitised my interpretations of these two themes that emerged from my recurring analysis of the narratives. In addition, what Power offers is 'the promise of the sociological imagination' (2008:154) embodied in the 'imaginative' professional. Three questions derived from Mills (1970) focus on relational, temporal and dispositional attributes of a professional.

These attributes relate to theory and my own practices and may also contribute to a re-casting of an 'extended metanarrative' of widening participation. 'Relational' attributes ask who is included within, or excluded from, a profession and how the components of one

profession may relate to those of another (Power, 2008:156). For example, this is illustrated by different perspectives on responsibilities for 'support' within the institution. In section 4.2.2, I argued that what was absent from specific narratives of 'support' was a nuanced sense of how institutional support services may work with academic subject areas. In this instance, I suggested that further collaborative work (Cunningham, 2015) between central support services providing study skills support, and academic departments, may begin with a review of research including questions addressed by Burke and Jackson (2007) and Scott et al (2014:24). These may include how the inter-relationships between widening participation and academic literacies are framed in an over-emphasis on 'skills' and a lack of attention to fundamental writing processes, methodologies and epistemologies and questions of how different modes of assessment and ways of providing feedback may affect students and shape their learning.

The thesis has also shaped my own professional practices and relational attributes in three ways. Firstly, I have deepened my capabilities as a researcher through an understanding of how to analyse critical events and policy by deploying and combining narrative policy analysis, institutional ethnography and bricolage in an interpretation of widening participation in HE. My position is that whereas the concept of bricolage has been applied to health policy (Freeman, 2007) it is productive to extend this use to an analysis and interpretation of the narratives of policy actors in HE. The concept of bricolage enhances research on policy (Hall, 2005; Maringe and

Fuller, 2006; Ball, 2013) and this has been sensitised further by reflecting on how the interpretation of narratives are deepened by exploring chronological, narrative and generational representations of time (Biesta, Field and Tedder, 2010). The temporal dimensions of each narrative relates to my dual focus on policy and its context and how policy actors frame policy.

Secondly, the collaborative students-as-partners project has provided the basis for further research. It may begin with some of the dilemmas I identified in section 4.3.3 and extend our work by returning to the possibilities and limitations of critical pedagogy in HE that I summarised in my reflective statement. Finally, this research for my EdD which has shaped the curriculum development analysed in this section 4.3.3, will be extended further through my participation in national and European research networks.

Finally, dispositional attributes relate to which forms of professionalism and managerialism are made visible (Power, 2008:157). Here is the recurring tension between 'performing management' and forming other practices. However, as argued earlier, tensions in framing policy and practice are not fixed. In the recurring tensions between 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives and the possibilities of an 'extended metanarrative', the identities of the lecturer or manager are in flux. On the one hand, as Nixon et al (2001) argue, managerialism and regulation may produce 'different and often incompatible structures...with different groups occupied on different

tasks and often pursuing different interests' (2001:230). However, as argued earlier, policy is not only an object, it is also an unstable process (Ball, 2013:8) and framing 'widening participation' and transition within an institution is specific and situated and may open up further spaces for 'imaginative professionals' (Power, 2008).

In this penultimate section of my conclusion I have argued why research on professionality, professionalism and performativity relates to my thesis that widening participation and transition are not simply 'problems' to be managed, but a set of recurring and complex dilemmas to be problematized. Two further questions follow. First, what are the implications of this conclusion for policy in relation to widening participation? Second, how does the conceptual and analytical framework, developed in the thesis, apply to other institutions (similar to and different from the HEI featured in the thesis) and further our understanding of the wider system of widening participation policy in HE policy formation. Each question is considered in turn.

Professionalism and the implications of the thesis for policy on widening participation

What are the implications of this literature on professionalism for extending understanding of policy in relation to widening participation? I address this question in two ways. Firstly, by asking how dominant contemporary narratives of widening participation frame policy but then, secondly, asking how widening participation could be re-framed in national and institutional policy texts and diverse institutional

practices. An example then outlines the implications of this re-framing for policy in this field.

The texts, BIS (2014) and Central (2014-15), both represent the first recurring and complex dilemma to be problematized which has implications for policy. Neither text recognises the diversity of students' identities and experiences. Consequently, a rational notion of policy is framed, in both texts, in terms of a recurring metaphor of the singular student lifecycle. This metaphor is reinforced by a notion of 'institutional transformation' (see, Thomas, 2012) which is also problematic for policy. For example, Greenbank (2006; 2007) reports that the notion of a single institutional approach may represent narratives of senior managers within institutions rather than the diversity of experiences of students, lecturers and others. A further dilemma, to be problematized, is who engages with widening participation within an institution. Stevenson, Clegg and Lefever's conclusion (2010:105) is that involvement in widening participation will be limited to 'committed individuals', and will not impact on institutional cultures and practices, because the policy context and rationale for it is unclear. If the singular student lifecycle and uncontested notion of institutional transformation are both problematic, and others argue widening participation is a marginal activity, what are the implications of these conclusions for re-casting and extending widening participation policy in the future?

Such dilemmas depend, in part, on how policy is framed and whose voices and experiences are made in/visible within institutions. If a standpoint is adopted that national guidelines (for example, OFFA 2017) only represent a regulatory document, and accordingly, an institution must comply with this policy, practice may be framed by such 'restricted' narratives. By contrast, there are other possibilities for framing policy that may extend policy and practice.

The following example, and proposal, relates to a specific institutional setting (the one where research was conducted). However, other institutions would be able to review their existing practices against these recommendations and principles designed to inform and extend practice and policy.

Firstly, an annual institutional evaluation plan for widening participation (in compliance with OFFA, 2017: 5) should recognise the diverse identities, experiences and practices of students, lecturers and others working with students. It could do so by extending the evaluation of existing practice- beyond pre-entry and other activities that are additional to the curriculum. The starting point for this extended practice would be compliance with the summary of OFFA's strategic priorities for 2018-19 that asks institutions to 'improve your understanding of the challenges faced by different groups of students' (2017:1).

Secondly, the design of the proposed plan would relate to a review of institutional policy and practice. For example, it could relate to

and be part of other annual evaluation process completed by heads of subjects/ departments and lecturers within departments. Such new co-ordinated practices could then be developed, designed and evaluated in conjunction with managers, and lecturers in departments, and not imposed on them (Sachs,2001). Thirdly, this new form of institutional evaluation plan, that incorporates widening participation, could be extended further.

For example, in the second year of this process and beyond, a co-ordinated evaluation of emerging themes from annual reports, within and across departments and faculties, could provide the starting point for annual small-scale research projects on widening participation across the institution. Such projects would be informed by research on the complex not singular representations of widening participation and transition- but their co-ordination would be designed to extend their dissemination within and outside of the institution. This diverse, but co-ordinated, institutional approach would be informed by Power's notion of the imaginative professional (2008) and Sach's earlier contrast between managerial and democratic professionalism (2001).

How the conceptual and analytical framework applies to other institutions and furthers understanding of the wider system of widening participation policy in HE policy formation

The combination of institutional ethnography, and its concern with wider social relations, and narrative policy analysis' awareness of specific stories has provided the conceptual basis for analysing and interpreting institutional and different organisational stories (Cortazzi,

2001) within the thesis. A framework combining institutional ethnography, narrative policy analysis and bricolage has enabled me to interpret the complexities of policy and practice within specific national and institutional contexts.

My argument builds on Smith (1988; 2002 and 2006), Taber (2010) and Walby's work (2013) on institutional ethnography and inter-relationships between text and practice. Further situated interpretations of national policy texts (for example, BIS, 2014) would enable others to analyse and interpret how institutional policy texts and practices are framed in other contexts too. These particular forms of widening participation would embody narratives re-presented in other specific organisational contexts bound by time and place.

Building on Greenbank's (2007) critique of a unified and singular 'institutional culture', the typology I presented in figure 5, on pages 112-113, may also apply to research on widening participation in other institutions similar to, and different from, the HEI described in chapter 1. It could produce a series of profiles differentiating *between* widening participation in different institutions. However given Greenbank's critique (2006; 2007), which I share, the typology may also provide the basis for sensitizing research on the complexities of policy formation *within* institutions.

My purpose in this study was to analyse, interpret and critique rational representations of policy. If other researchers share my stance, and engagement with research *on* policy as well as *for* policy, then the

conceptual and analytical framework I have presented could provide a starting point for their analysis and interpretation of widening participation policy within other specific institutional contexts too. Sharing these findings through national and European networks, and working together collaboratively in the future, would also enrich research informed practices on the complexities of widening participation and, potentially, extend small metanarratives (Roe, 1994) that may re-cast future policies and practices too. A starting point for this next stage of research could be an awareness of the relational, temporal and dispositional attributes of an engaged professional that were reviewed earlier.

5.6   What next? Future research

These attributes relate, in turn, to 'temporal' questions on how 'being' a professional is affected by a particular period of time (Power, 2008:157) and representations of time (Biesta, Field and Tedder,2010). A re-conceptualisation, of who policy actors are, in future research, could build on the situated example of the 'students as partners' project and ask how policy could be re-imagined if there were further places and spaces within policymaking for lecturers as 'imaginative professionals' (Power, 2008) and students as more than objects of 'derogatory' or 'deficit discourses' (Burke, 2008; 2012). This 'problem', and the possibilities of further collaborative research between lecturers and students, will form the basis of work in the future.

The next phase of my research will begin from 'entry points' evident in the 'restricted' and 'reformist' narratives I have analysed and interpreted. However, rather than limiting narratives of widening participation to those of 'support' and 'development' (Gale and Parker, 2014), I hope to contribute to further research on widening participation by working with others to review how the explanatory typology, presented in this study, may provide a starting point for an 'extended' metanarrative. This may re-cast widening participation by starting from the position that widening participation and transition are not 'problems' to be managed, but recurring dilemmas to be 'problematized', because of the complexity and diversity of students' experiences within higher education.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Policy texts cited by national policy actors in my interviews with them

Appendix 2: Briefing sheet sent to national and institutional policy actors before interview

Appendix 3: Interview guide

Appendix 4: Categorisation of diary entries based on keywords and phrases

Appendix 5: Summary of five cycles of research

Appendix 1: National policy texts cited by national policy actors in semi structured interviews. March-July 2014

NPA 1	NPA 2	NPA 3	NPA 4	NPA 5	NPA 6	NPA 7
AimHigher guidelines 2003	Dearing Report 1997	White Paper 1987	QAA Subject Reports	Blog post (on Wonkhe) on widening participation	Dearing Report 1997	David Willett speech. 50TH Anniversary of Robbins Review
HEFCE guidelines (date not specified)	Kennedy Report 1997	Lindop Report 1987	State of the Nation 2013: Social mobility and child poverty in Great Britain	HEFCE papers around outcomes, and differential outcomes for different student groups	HEFCE guidance for WP strategies 2001	HEA widening participation archive
HEA/Paul Hamlyn 'What Works' student retention and success report (2012)		QAA Review framework for Authorised Validating Agencies	Access Agreements	Access Agreements	Access Agreements and guidance on the Agreements	HEA/Paul Hamlyn 'What Works' student retention and success report (2012)
Access Agreements		Learning and Skills Act 2000	Interim and final strategy by OFFA and HEFCE (BIS,2014)	NUS Student Engagement Partnership	WP strategic statements (WPSS) and WP strategic assessments (WPSA)	AimHigher synthesis of widening participation (2013)
Frank Buttle Charter mark guidelines		National Qualifications and Credit Framework				Interim and final strategy by OFFA and HEFCE (BIS,2014)
Access Summit & 'Think Pieces'2014		Access to HE Diploma 2003			HEA/Paul Hamlyn 'What Works' student retention and success report (2012)	Toolkits for Progression Trust

WP Research JISC list		White Paper 2003 The Future of Higher Education			Interim and final strategy by OFFA and HEFCE (BIS, 2014)	
		QAA Report on Access 2004				

Appendix 2

**"Policy, memory and imagination:
Re-constructing narratives of widening participation in higher
education"**

**Information sheet for Doctoral research. Sent to national policy actors
March-July 2014 and institutional policy actors, October 2014-Januay
2015.**

I am undertaking research for my Doctoral thesis at the Institute of Education,
University of London, working under the supervision of Professor Ann
Hodgson. This is my institutional research profile:

http://www.newman.ac.uk/profile/1722/mr-iain-jones

Individual interviews are a key element of the study I am conducting. Semi
structured interviews are designed to last for 45 minutes and the first phase of
these are to be conducted between March and July 2014. They would explore
the significance of your role, and that of your organisation, in the development
of policies and practices on widening participation in higher education. Your
contribution to the research is welcomed. The interviews would be conducted
at your organisation.

Aims

The study aims to examine the development of policies, practices and
research on widening participation in higher education, within a political era,
through the analysis of policy texts, individual interviews with policy actors
and an institutional ethnography.

The overall research question asks

What are the discourses and policy narratives of widening participation in higher education, between 2004 and 2014, how have they been shaped, produced and interpreted and how could they be re-constructed and re-imagined?

The individual interviews will explore

- The significance of your role, and that of your organisation, in the development of policies and practices on widening participation in higher education.

- The significance of policy moments, or critical events, in relation to widening participation for you and your organisation.

- Your reflections on what has shaped widening participation in higher education, what its current position is and what it could be in the future.

The following ethical guidelines apply to the research:

Ground rules:

If you do choose to participate, we will discuss ground rules at the beginning of the interview and agree what you do and do not want to discuss.

If you do choose to participate you will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form but may withdraw from the study at any stage.

How will you be informed about the research findings?

After the interview, you will be provided with a transcript of it. This will enable you to correct any factual inaccuracies.

I respect your right as a participant to not have information included in the study if, in retrospect, that is your wish. Alternatively, you may consent to have information included but how that is anonymised will be agreed with you before any information is included in the analysis of findings.

The research has received ethical approval from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee at the Institute of Education, University of London and the Research Ethics Committee at Newman University, Birmingham.

Thank you for reading this information sheet. Please contact me if there are further questions you have before the interview. I look forward to meeting you.

Iain Jones, iain.jones@newman.ac.uk**, 0121-476-1181 ext. 2470**

Appendix 3: Sample interview guide

Note: The guide was solely for my purpose. After the opening question, designed as a 'warm-up', the sequence in which questions were asked depended on the responses of each interviewee.

Introduction

Overall purpose of interview

The significance of your role, and that of your organisation, in the development of policies and practices on widening participation in higher education.

Key points in terms of ethics

Today

Ground rules

For you to determine what you do and do not want to discuss

After the interview

Transcribed

If you wish I will provide you with a transcript of interview

Enable you to correct any factual errors

Analysis

I respect your right as a participant to not have information included in the study if, in retrospect, that is your wish.

Alternatively, you may consent to have information included but how that is anonymised will be agreed with you before any information is included in the analysis of findings.

Questions? Pause- time for any questions

If not – ask interviewee to sign ethics form

Time

Information sheet confirmed interview is for 45 minutes

Confirm we will finish interview at.........

My research questions explicitly refer to 2004-2014. From the creation of OFFA to today-

I want to explore importance of previous experiences for each of us

Four themes would like to explore in terms of you and your experiences

- Contexts for policy on widening participation
- Policy and how it is made
- Policy and power
- Whose voices heard when policy is made and why it matters

Context – why this is important to me

My first memory of widening participation was the Spring of 1985

Worked at College. On Eastern fringe of town. College was part of expansion of town through a Development Corporation

Opening Question:

    When did widening participation begin for you?

Use of 'plot questions'

- Was there an event that stood out there?

- Would you now see that as a 'high' or 'low' point

- How do you feel about that now?

- What does that tell us about your role then?

In your previous role/s what did widening participation mean for you?

(? use the ideas of 'explicit' and 'implicit' – this will depend on role of interviewee)

Significance of critical event/s:

Alternative positions

- Looking back - were there alternative ways you could have acted?

Thinking about those events what is their significance?

- What do they tell us about your role?

- How policy is made?

Your role/s since you have worked at the organisation

- Your role and when you joined the organisation

- Could you describe your first month here

- Could you say a bit more about why that was significant?

Further use of previous 'plot questions' (if necessary)

- Has there an event that has stood out?

- What do you see as a 'high' or 'low' point in your current role?

- How do you feel about that now?

- What does that tell us about your current role?

Thinking about those events - what is their significance?

- How did that influence how you feel now – the values you hold and the actions you have taken?

Winding down

We have reviewed widening participation through your experiences

Thank you.

- Is there anything you think I should have asked?

- Anything you would like to add?

Appendix 4: Categorisation of diary entries based on keywords and phrases

Dimensions of policy

4 February 2014	Time and intensity
17 February	Time, speed and policy
27 February	Performativity, compliance, time , marginalisation and labelling
2 March	Policy and sampling time
5 March	Performativity and professionalism
5 September	Discourses, power and voice
26 Jan 2015	Performativity and professionalism
6 February	Time and analysis
9 February	Time for research
1 July 2015	Uncertainty and memory

Representations of the curriculum

10/11 January 2014	Curriculum and time
22 May	Scope, purpose and student engagement
27 May	Equality
30 September	Curriculum development and inclusion. Framing the issue
19 October	Curriculum and Students as Partners
10 November	Voice, inclusion and the curriculum
4 December	Students as Partners
25 January 2015	Curriculum and Students as Partners
17 March	Students as Partners

Framing students

22 May 2014	Student, engagement
28 September	Student, induction
29 September	Student; dividing practices
19 October	Curriculum, Students as Partners
6 November	Students, Framing transition
7 July 2015	Framing students success

Appendix 5: Summary of five cycles of research

Cycle 1 August-December 2013	- Prepared research proposal - Presented proposal to Review Panel on 11 November 2013 - Follow up review and planning - Confirmed sample for phase 1 of interviews - Wrote three entries in research diary
Cycle 2 January-August 2014	- Wrote 11 entries in research diary - Completed pilot interview - Contacted six interviewees – all national policy actors- and invite them to participate in study - Reviewed plan and add two further interviewees to sample - Conducted eight interviews - Completed the initial review of the interview. This and the other stages of analysis of interviews based on model by Cousin (2009) adapted from work by Savin-Baden. - Completed the transcription of two interviews with national policy actors - Presented preliminary analysis of research at BERA seminar in April and institutional seminar in June - Completed Chapter 1:Introduction and Chapter 2: Review of literature and policy texts
Cycle 3 September 2014-January 2015	- Wrote 12 entries in research diary - Completed six interviews with institutional policy actors - Completed first draft of Chapter 3: Methodology and methods

Cycle 4 February 2015-November 2015	- Wrote five entries in research diary - Completed transcription of seven interviews with institutional policy actors - Analysed transcripts in conjunction with the other seven transcripts of interviews with national policy actors - Completed re-analysis of existing policy texts originally analysed in Chapter 2 and identified and analysed further additional texts - Completed final draft version of Chapter 3 - Synthesised data and identified themes and sub themes - Used the themes and sub themes, in conjunction with the literature and policy texts, as a basis for first draft of Chapter 4 - Wrote the first draft of the final chapter of the thesis: Chapter 5 Recommendations and Conclusion
Cycle 5 December 2015-March 2017	- Completed second versions of drafts of Chapters 4 and 5 - Completed revisions of all other chapters - Submitted full draft of thesis to supervisor - Meet with supervisor to review full draft - Complete amendments and submit thesis to Internal Reader - Complete revisions based on comments from Internal Reader - Submit thesis for examination

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