Negotiating Student-Staff Partnership – Developmental Evaluation of Change in a Law School's Curriculum Review Process

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Abstract

Working in partnership between staff and students on matters related to the curriculum is seen as desirable for several reasons. These include equalising power relationships between students and staff, challenging neoliberal models of Higher Education and complying with moral and democratic values. Student-staff partnership is therefore an increasingly popular form of student engagement. However, evidence suggests that partnerships for programme curriculum review and design continue to be uncommon in practice. The reasons for this are unclear. Furthermore, disciplinary differences, an important variable, are not well understood. This thesis details research which examines one instance of a partnership approach to curriculum review in a UK law school. Using a developmental evaluation methodology, I consider the ways that institutional staff, Student Union representatives, legal educators and law students understood the difficulties, risks and rewards of working together in partnership. I discuss the implications for practice and policy, and examine the concept of partnership as a form of student engagement. Analysis of mixed methods data suggests that participants saw the partnership process as a means to achieve various objectives rather than as an end in itself. However, while they saw great democratic value in diverse viewpoints, they also perceived risk in the process of partnership. The research adds to knowledge regarding partnership in whole curriculum review in law schools. It considers how, in this context, seeing partnership in different ways, might promote and enhance the process and outcome. It also indicates the dynamic complexity of values in partnership, including the centrality of trust between actors and its connection to courage, risk, empowerment and responsibility. While no claims are made for direct generalisability, the evaluative approach used highlights the potential value of collaborative and participatory conceptions of power as well as pluralistic understandings of partnership. This facilitates a more holistic, pluralistic and potentially practical, understanding of partnership practice as a negotiation process that encompasses varying participant interests and motivations.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

i. incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
ii. contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of this thesis; or
iii. contain any defamatory material;

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List of Abbreviations

DEval – Developmental Evaluation

ESD – Education for Sustainable Development

HE – Higher Education

LLB – Undergraduate Law Degree

PhD – Doctor of Philosophy

RQ – Research Question

RTA – Reflexive Thematic Analysis

SaP – Students as Partners

List of Publications and Presentations relevant to this research

Journal articles

Boyle, F. & Cook, E. J. (2023) *Developmental evaluation of teaching quality: evidencing practice.* Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice, 20 (1). p. 11.

Slates, S., Cook-Sather, A., Aghakhani, S., Al-Humuzi, A., Alonso, D., Borgstrom, K., Boyle, F., Cachia, C., Carlson, E., Cole, J., Dennehy, T., Väfors Fritz, M., Gadzirayi, M., Goff, L., Gudmundsoon, P., Han, Y., Hellman, P., Holder, K., Hou, S. … Zou, W. (2023). How can students-as-partners work address challenges to student, faculty, and staff mental health and well-being?. *International Journal for Students As Partners*, *7*(2), 221–240. https://doi.org/10.15173/ijsap.v7i2.5597

Boyle FA, Buchanan FM, Ritchie D, Gamage KAA. Exploring Staff–Student Partnership in Curriculum Design. Education Sciences. 2024; 14(1):61. https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci14010061

Book chapter

Boyle, F. & Ritchie, D. (2023). Caring About Complaints: Perceptions of Complaints Procedures Considered Through the Lens of Ethic of Care. In: Strevens, C., Jones, E. (eds) Wellbeing and the Legal Academy. Springer Briefs in Education. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-20691-7_7

Conference presentations

Boyle F., Molloy E., Rutland L., Todd N., Widish M., (2022, March) *Law Students as Partners in Curriculum Review*, AdvanceHE Sustainability Symposium, online

Boyle F., Buchanan F., Ritchie D., Todd N., *Students as Partners in curriculum design:an assessment of the benefits of a partnership approach* (2023, June) University of Cumbria, Teaching and Learning Conference

Other impact

Green Gown Awards finalists; Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC), Student Engagement category, 2023

Chapter 1: Introduction

The past decade has been a period of considerable change in undergraduate curricula (Spendlove, 2023). Developments regarding AI, blended learning, universal design for learning, decolonisation and education for sustainable development (ESD) are being implemented within many programmes. While there are various concerns about how such change can be managed, the active engagement of students with curriculum review appears to remain largely an aspiration, rather than a realisation (MacNeill & Beetham, 2022). This is despite the fact that student engagement is almost universally seen both to matter, and to make a difference (Blackstock, 2020). Regarding active engagement in curricula, Ashwin and McVitty (2015) explain:

> In student engagement in curricula formation as partnership, students take an active role in forming the courses they will study in partnership with members of academic staff. Why should students have the opportunity to influence the curriculum? If the claims that experiencing an in-depth encounter with disciplinary knowledge is not merely a process of acquisition but a process of identity formation and transformation … then the question of students exercising agency in their own learning becomes a profoundly moral one. (p. 351)

In addition to the moral question regarding students' individual agency and development, the benefits of partnership on curriculum matters include equalising power relationships between students and staff, challenging neoliberal models of Higher Education (HE) and enacting democratic values. The reasons for the lack of realisation regarding working in partnership are unclear, and disciplinary differences are not well understood. In order to address the moral and democratic issues and seize an opportunity to research action for change within my own institution, my research used the locus of the undergraduate law programme (LLB) I co-lead to focus on the experience of a partnership approach to curriculum review. While my goal for the outcome of this iteration of a partnership approach was to embed ESD within the curriculum, my research focus was on the change process, collaboration between staff and students, which I hoped to form the basis of ongoing reviews. Below I outline the background and rationale for my research before specifying my aims and research questions (RQs). After summarising the contribution and limitations, I outline the structure of the thesis as a whole.

Partnership is a form of active student engagement through which current students work with staff, and sometimes others. This can relate to activities beyond the curriculum, but my focus sits within the domain of curricula design and specifically the formal institutional process of curriculum review. In the UK, partnership as a form of student engagement is largely supported conceptually, but the benefits and challenges of working in partnership in specific contexts and disciplines mean generalisations are difficult. In addition, though more problematic aspects of partnership are recognised, the literature as a whole tends to be highly positive. Although the disciplinary context is seen as a significant variable, few studies exist in the discipline of law and none of these examine partnership within a whole programme curriculum review. What is not clear therefore, is how this discipline context might affect perceptions of partnership practice. Furthermore, within existing studies of partnership, philosophically critical orientations appear to predominate. As a result existing research has yet to answer questions such as the three raised by Marquis et al. (2019) regarding a potential disconnect between motivations towards empowerment championed in the literature and more instrumental goals articulated by students in practice; how to accommodate a wide range of motivations and whether valorisation of partnership might risk excluding some perspectives. No studies were found utilising either developmental evaluation (DEval) or a philosophically pragmatic approach and my research therefore provides an alternative lens through which to consider partnership and its position in relation to wider student engagement theory to address these questions.

The terms partnership and students as partners (SaP) are often used interchangeably to refer to situations in which staff and students work together. Partnership is sometimes used by those who wish to indicate a broader definition while SaP emphasises the *partner*, rather than *consumer* or *follower* role of students. This research considers the concept of partnership and data regarding participant understanding of the terms partnership and partners. As the curriculum review and evaluation progressed, I found in response to my analysis of data, and engagement with the literature, my own conceptions of partnership were developed and refined. This resulted in a reconceptualization which resulted in seeing partnership as a sensitising, rather than a definitive concept, which is context dependent. In this research, it appeared to be a form of negotiation, encompassing sometimes divergent participant interests and motivations. Nevertheless, while recognising its provisional nature, in order to aid clarity, I have used the term partnership to describe the activity undertaken within the curriculum review and to refer to more democratic ways of working with students. I also use the term SaP when referring to this concept as used in specific sections of the relevant literature.

Curriculum change is future oriented and generally opportunity seeking, rather than problem solving. Although a lack of active student engagement in curriculum review can be presented as a practice problem, as the joint programme leader, I conceptualised this research as an opportunity to evaluate the use of an innovation (working in partnership) which had been used successfully in other contexts, to understand and improve the process and outcomes of curriculum review. This was the focus of my research. Curriculum review entails ongoing development and adaptation within a broader complex HE environment. DEval is sensitive to complexity combined with systems thinking, and seen as appropriate when adapting effective general principles to a new context. DEval was therefore a suitable methodology (Leonard et al., 2016; Patton, 2011, 2016). There were three phases within the project design. They are depicted below in Figure 1 and explained in Chapter 5.

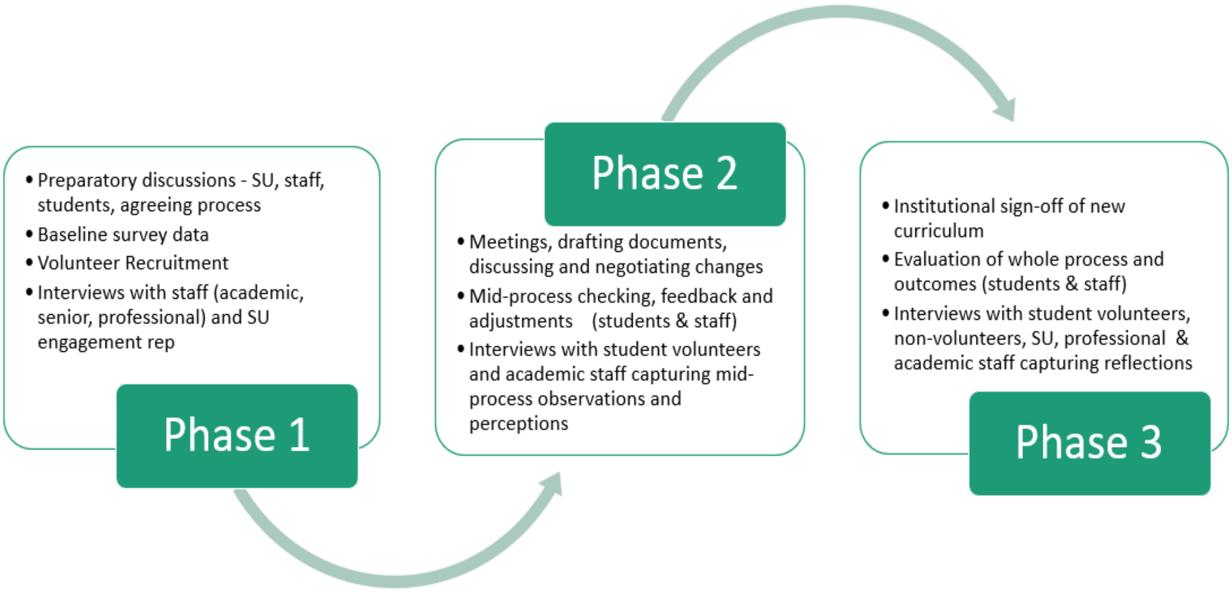

Figure 1: Overview of research design

I chose to situate my research within academic legal study because it allowed me insider access as a researcher while considering, with others, ways in which to improve approaches to curriculum review. In Chapter 4, I discuss the implications of insider research which brought the advantages of rapport, trust, familiarity and ease of access. Furthermore, being an insider, working closely with others, allowed me to answer my RQs using DEval which, though it does not stipulate fidelity criteria, highlights co-creation and utility as key principles (Patton, 2016b). Because the review process and some aspects of its evaluation were collaborative, it has led to other joint work with students and staff. Ultimately it also facilitated the development of the programme I co-lead to be more relevant from both top-down and bottom-up, by responding to national guidance on good practice, and to students' perspectives.

As noted above, the outcome goal for the programme, and therefore a relevant contextual factor in terms of locus, was the introduction of ESD. Globally, the UN 2020-30 Decade of Action highlights the role of HE in ESD and there is a growing community of interested parties in Higher Education for Research and Sustainable Development (HERSD) covering all disciplinary areas. The definition of ESD I used is that provided in UK guidance, this is "the process of creating curriculum structures and subject relevant content to support and enact sustainable development” (QAA, 2021, p. 51). This meant content, learning outcomes and therefore teaching, learning and assessment might be affected. Because ESD is presented in policy as a means to “facilitate a culture of co-design and collaboration” (QAA, 2021, p. 9), I saw a direct alignment between ESD and a partnership approach to the review. The scope of my research centres on this review and the students and staff involved. This includes those not directly involved such as management staff and students not taking part. My role was to lead the research, but act in collaboration with others. I aimed to research and evaluate the curriculum review to analyse perceptions, and consider how policy and practice might be developed together with any wider theoretical implications. My objectives were to facilitate a partnership approach to the review, integrating ESD reflecting student and staff preferences, to evaluate the review and to collect data during three phases, before, during and after the review, to answer the research questions:

1. *What are participant understandings and aspirations regarding working in partnership?*
2. *What factors inhibit and promote working in partnership in this context?*
3. *What are the implications of the answers to questions 1 and 2 for policy and practice?*
4. *What are the implications of the research findings in critically assessing the concept of students as partners and its position in relation to relevant theories of student engagement?*

I address RQs 1 and 2 in the context of this research to improve micro-level practice in my law school and inform future iterations of the curriculum review process. The data shows that discipline understandings of terms such as *partnership* and *equality* are important. Furthermore, it appears that despite the value placed upon plurality and diversity, motivations and concerns regarding risk can interact with other elements within a complex system to inhibit practice. In relation to RQ.3, I make tentative suggestions regarding the meso-level disciplinary context, presenting reasons why law schools are currently well suited to actively engage students in curriculum review. In addressing RQ.4, I propose answers to questions regarding disconnections between participant perceptions and the approach advocated in the partnership literature. While acknowledging context dependence, I argue that partnership is complex and dynamic. This has wider implications at the macro-level for those considering partnership practice. For example, I suggest that static ladder of participation models may not always be useful. Additionally, the relationship between partnership, engagement and neoliberalism cannot be reduced to a binary (which presents partnership as either supporting or challenging neoliberal agendas) when considered in the context of complex dynamic relationships.

I use the term negotiation in the title of this thesis in a dual sense, primarily, to emphasise the risks and rewards of taking a challenging route, secondly to refer to discussion in order to reach agreement. Encouragement of partnership practice I contend, is desirable, because it is democratic, moral, and results in better outcomes. However the data confirms perceptions of risk in partnership may prevent its use. Therefore seeing engagement in alternative ways, such as problem solving negotiation, draws on familiar legal concepts and may reduce concerns. My argument is therefore that in this context, and potentially in others, seeing active student engagement in curriculum review differently, may encourage its use.

Focussing on partnership, participant experience, the utility of conceptions and related theory, this research makes the following contributions to knowledge. Firstly, addressing the current lack of studies in law, it contributes to knowledge regarding partnership by considering, at a micro-level, an example of partnership practice within this discipline context. Findings also support the contention that discipline is a significant variable. Secondly, following calls for studies detailing problems, as well as benefits, in partnership practice, it contributes by considering the less positive aspects of partnership as perceived by participants in this context. These centred on a variety of risks which were seen as inherent in partnership practice. Thirdly, using DEval, which draws on systems thinking and complexity, I add to understanding regarding the ways values in partnership might interact, highlighting the dynamic complexity of practice. These contributions are important within the local context, where reflections will inform the next curriculum review. More widely, they are significant because although active student engagement in curriculum design is seen as positive, currently its use is rare in circumstances where the design of a whole programme, rather than a module or in class activities, is under consideration. Although limited in scope, my research suggests why this might be so in some cases. In doing so it provides a view of partnership that preserves its moral and democratic value while accommodating diverse motivations among staff and students. Finally, it adds to knowledge regarding the use of DEval as a research methodology. Limitations result largely from the scope and methodology of the research. It is a small scale study within a particular context and time, with a unique set of individuals. Fuller details of contributions and limitations are addressed in Chapter 8.

I have introduced this thesis by outlining its rationale, context, research questions and summarising the contributions while acknowledging limitations. In Chapter 2, I outline salient features of the disciplinary, institutional and higher education (HE) contexts. A review of relevant literature in Chapter 3 examines the concept of SaP and its relationship with student engagement, highlighting theories I later use to address my research questions. In this chapter I also examine philosophical orientations and positive representations in the partnership literature regarding which I aim to present an alternative perspective. In Chapter 4, I set out my own ontological and epistemological orientation and the choice of DEval as a methodology. I end this chapter by discussing my position as an insider researcher. The mixed methods design comprising three phases, is detailed in Chapter 5. Here I address ethical issues in the research and outline choices and limitations in relation to methods of analysis. I also consider the significance of reflection and set out my reflections on the process. I present an analysis of data in Chapter 6, integrating mixed methods. I use this to inform discussion of the research questions in Chapter 7. In Chapter 8, I conclude by summarising my answers, and discussing in more detail, contributions, limitations and possibilities for further research.

Chapter 2: The Disciplinary, Institutional and Higher Education context

This chapter describes what I consider to be the most important aspects of the context for this research. The context within which DEval, and empirical studies of partnership, take place are important variables. My framing emphasises what I see as relevant, informed by the pragmatic philosophy within which the research was conducted. This framing includes the relevant discipline, institutional setting, curriculum change, and wider political and temporal issues affecting HE. My thesis uses a DEval methodology to examine a partnership process of curriculum review. For this reason, the nature of shared beliefs, habits and their practical effects is central to the project. I see curricula review as a form of action-oriented inquiry, which is based on democracy and committed to progress (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019; Patton, 2021). I thus include beliefs regarding the nature of curricula and habits regarding change in this context. In addition, I set out specific factors regarding the research setting to provide clarity in assessing the extent to which characteristics are similar to other contexts. In this way, the extent to which findings can be useful in other contexts can be more readily assessed. In the following four sections I outline the discipline context and my relationship with it. This is followed by a description of the institutional setting within which the research took place. I then discuss the nature of curriculum and curriculum change. Because curriculum is central to the purpose of HE, I conclude by addressing some broader contextual issues concerning purpose and value.

The discipline context

The Law Degree in England and Wales

I am co-programme leader of my institution’s undergraduate law degree (LLB), thus *law* is the disciplinary context for this research. Experience in legal practice also influences my views regarding the value of legal education. Having worked across three institutions over 25 years, my experience and generational perspective, are also relevant.

Law and legal education are distinguished by national and jurisdictional boundaries. For this reason, my focus is on legal education in England and Wales. Here, although less than half of law graduates qualify as solicitors, and less than 10% as barristers, students embarking on an LLB typically do so with these professions in mind. High numbers of law graduates and restricted numbers of professional career opportunities result in a discourse of anxiety (Slingo, 2021). This is partly explained by the close relationship between the LLB and the legal professions. This relationship is historic, uneasy and relevant because it has resulted in professional dictation of curricula content (Boon & Webb, 2008), which is seen as a threat to law schools' autonomy and preventing innovation. Control previously took the form of the qualifying law degree (QLD) specifying aspects of assessment, syllabus and content. The LLB curriculum thus tends to be viewed in narrow terms (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006), with an unchangeable core around which supporting content and optional additions are built.

Tensions have led to dichotomised debates about the nature of the LLB, as liberal legal education or as professional preparation. The divide between the academic study of law and the development of skills necessary for legal practice is seen as a divide between the liberal and the vocational (Menis, 2020; Slapper, 2011). However, some argue these can be combined (Guth & Ashford, 2014). This approach is taken within my programme where skills and vocationally oriented teaching are seen as connected and integral to academic content, concepts of employability and professionalism. Though law has a strong theoretical foundation, by its nature it also involves practical application in real-world scenarios. Communication skills, including negotiation and interviewing are argued to provide a means by which vocational and liberal goals can be met (Turner et al., 2018). These issues are relevant to curriculum and questions regarding curriculum change are addressed in the following section.

Curriculum change in Law Degrees

In their consideration of curricula co-creation, Bovill and Woolmer (2018) emphasise that, in disciplines with substantial amounts of foundational knowledge, space is limited. To widen access to the profession, the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA), in 2021, changed routes to qualification, meaning control over LLB content effectively ceased. Although the QLD requirement was retained for barristers, it was no longer needed to qualify as a solicitor. This means law schools can continue gearing content towards the traditional QLD or relinquish SRA control. Many appear not to have broken free from the mindset of the QLD despite questions of its value (Vaughan in Roper et al., 2020). Making curricular changes is presented as problematic, either due to pressure from employers (Rice, 2023) or because academics are unconvinced by arguments for change (Macduff & Holmes, 2022). Nevertheless, there is now an opportunity to engage with the curriculum (Gibbons, 2019) free of the constraints of professional requirements (Menis, 2020).

Most conversation regarding LLB curriculum change centres on content. Discussions regarding process tend to highlight use of design thinking not student involvement (Doherty & McKee, 2022). This means that decisions tend to rely on staff assumptions regarding either what students think, or what to ask students in surveys. Maharg has pointed to the lack of law student voices in discussions (in Dunn et al., 2022). Hall and Rasiah (2022) in their consideration of what legal education is for, contend student voices are missing from the debate, and any inclusion is via “blunt instruments” (p. 59). This is important because at the point where law schools may be making impactful changes, students’ views, unmediated by staff, appear unlikely to be fully captured. However the question of what a law degree is for, is of importance to students and this is discussed in the next section.

What is a Law Degree for?

Questions of curriculum concern not just what is learnt, but also the purpose and value of a programme. In his consideration of the value of LLBs, Nicholson (2020) argues the individualised economic value articulated by government, is partial and should be countered. Nicholson (2021, 2022) found that, for legal employers and law students, employability was the most important aspect of value, but argues a wider conception is needed. He suggests co-creation of articulations of value are necessary. Value is future oriented and, from a sociological perspective, has many cognitive dimensions. These include: reach into the short, medium and long term, the sense these are dependent on each other; sense of personal control; and whether the future is seen as intwined with the actions of others (Mische, 2009). It is perhaps not surprising students’ valuation tends towards the short term, whereas value perceived by law teachers may encompass medium and even longer term reach.

Issues of current concern relevant to curriculum change include decolonisation, equality, diversity and inclusion, widening participation, technology and the wellbeing of students and staff. While ESD is less commonly the subject of consideration, it was recently added to the law subject benchmark statement (QAA, 2023). Wellbeing and ESD were contextually relevant for this research because students were motivated to incorporate wellbeing content while incorporation of ESD was a goal. I therefore conclude this section with an overview of these areas.

Although wellbeing became a concern during the pandemic for all disciplines (MacNeill & Beetham, 2022) it was already central to conversations regarding legal education (Jones, 2018) with calls for greater prominence in the curriculum (Casey, 2021; Jones & Strevens, 2022). The competitive, hierarchical nature of law school is well documented (Goodrich, 1995) and seen as contributing to high levels of stress (Collier, 2014; Strevens & Wilson, 2016). Wallace (2018), discussing the value of community in legal education, argues for practical solutions to counter these effects. Wellbeing has been identified as a key criteria of student-staff partnership work in the legal education context (O'Connor, 2023).

In contrast, consideration of changes to integrate ESD are not prominent in law. Literature highlights disciplinary conceptions as barriers (Graham, 2014; Reid, 2016) and a need for research regarding the significance of sustainability for law students (Lowther & Sellick, 2016). The sustainability skills survey (SOS, 2022) shows 79% of HE students agree sustainable development is something all university courses should incorporate. Often associated with environmental and climate issues, sustainability involves working towards all 17 United Nations sustainable development goals (SDGs) including SDG 16 promoting the rule of law and access to justice.. It should be noted sustainability is not value free, and relies on certain assumptions about progress, politics and the role of universities (Chankseliani & McCowan, 2021). In the UK, sector guidance emphasises the development of reflective and collaborative competencies. Franco et al. (2019) reviewing the HE sustainability literature, conclude questions of how to address curriculum change are under-investigated. Evidence regarding the incorporation of sustainability in curriculum appears mixed. Vargas et al. (2019) assert although curriculum review is seen as a vehicle for sustainability implementation, translation into curricula is not widespread. Nevertheless, Tight (2023b) in his review of research literature on curriculum, concludes there has been a substantial increase in literature considering sustainability. Some argue it is student concerns (Congreve & Cross, 2021) that are driving action. This is a relevant contextual factor because the integration of sustainability was conceived as the main intended outcome for the review, providing a specific rationale for partnering with students. There was no top-down imperative or encouragement from employers or my institution to include ESD or use a partnership approach to do so. Sectoral guidance regarding curriculum change in this area (QAA, 2021) provided important support, but my personal theory of change relied on evidence suggesting a majority of students wished to see sustainable development reflected in all degree programmes (SOS, 2022). There is no clear model for curricula sustainability integration, but in their review of literature regarding drivers and barriers, Weiss et al., (2021) identify the importance of individual initiatives and participatory approaches including academic and student involvement in curriculum change as drivers. Their meta-analysis found that while some institutions take a holistic top-down approach, other developments occur as a result of bottom-up or mixed initiatives. Sector guidance (QAA, 2021) recommends an iterative but strategic institutional approach to integration, aligning with other institutional objectives including SaP. While neither my institution, nor discipline, had clear policy regarding partnership or ESD, I aimed to capitalise on their alignment. Details of the institutional context are now addressed.

The institutional context

This research took place within my law school, in a post-1992 university in the north of England. The institution is divided into faculties and professional staff support quality enhancement, including curricula review. Management sits with an executive group overseen by a university board. The institution was formed from an amalgamation of existing, mainly vocationally oriented organisations. Areas of provision and expertise reflect regional priorities regarding employment. Undergraduate students are drawn largely from the local area and many are commuter students. Compared to UK sector averages, international students are not well represented (HESA, 2023).

Periodic curricula review was a recently introduced mechanism replacing bureaucratic and lengthy re-validation where no significant changes to programme aims and outcomes are required (Hurlimann et al., 2013). Review takes place within a five year cycle and is supported by a central academic development department (MacNeill & Beetham, 2022). The normal curriculum review process at my institution involves meetings to agree on any proposed changes. These meetings are co-ordinated by the programme leader and attended by the academic programme staff. Any changes are, if possible, agreed between all academic staff teaching on the programme. The proposed changes, documented as part of formal amended programme specifications and module content descriptions, are reviewed by professional service colleagues. Though it is possible that academic staff interpretations of previous student evaluations or other student feedback could influence change, this is generally not the case. The usual process seeks no direct student input. Approval is via a Periodic Review Panel meeting, with an independent external chair, non-programme academics, professional staff and a paid student member from a different programme. Generally, only those students joining the university after approval of a change will study the revised programme. This means that all existing students remain on the previous programme until they graduate. Exceptionally, all current students can be transferred directly onto the revised programme immediately after approval. To effect this, all the students on the programme need to indicate that they are happy for this to happen. Failing this, the previous programme will be taught to all existing students and the revised programme taught to the next cohort to begin the programme after approval. Institutional strategy guiding curricula review focuses on programme cohesion and assessment, rather than any overarching design rationale, content or values. Student engagement in curriculum as consultation (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015) is the model used throughout the institution, often involving evaluation surveys where questions and interpretation are in staff hands. The relevant framework expects that staff seek student views to inform review, and evidence of engagement is required, such as consultation (meeting minutes) or feedback on staff decisions (further surveys). At the time of this research, no other similar co-creation activity had been undertaken and, in the usual curriculum review process, the concept of partnership between staff and students was neither used nor promoted within the institution.

Students' Union structures provide sabbatical officers and course representatives. There are typically two representatives for each year group of the LLB, elected via a classroom vote.

Representatives attend committee meetings and engage informally each month through verbal and emailed updates. Within the institution there is strong emphasis on student surveys, including the National Student Survey (NSS). However, since a move to completion online, response rates have declined. Although the significance of survey fatigue has been questioned (Fass-Holmes, 2022) it is commonly attributed to decline which, in turn, diminishes utility and increases bias in results, because those completing surveys are less likely to be representative. This means, although surveys are envisioned to provide reliable data for decision making, and avoiding student complaints, which are increasing (Jones, 2006; OIAHE, 2022) this is often not the case (Adams & Umbach, 2012).

The post-pandemic context of this research is a further contextual factor. During the pandemic, the institution, like others in the UK, delivered all teaching online. When this research began, a tentative and partial return to campus was in progress. This had an effect at a number of levels. Practically, it affected the modalities used. To facilitate attendance for participants, meetings took place in a mixture of online and face-to-face formats. All interviews took place via Microsoft Teams. This context may have influenced individual beliefs and actions. My own selection of a methodology requiring co-creation and oriented towards positive change, could be seen as a reaction to the isolation and lack of autonomy characterising lockdowns in which communication deteriorated and levels of depression and stress increased (Munir, 2022).

Conceptions of Curriculum and Curriculum Change

Since Barnett and Coate (2005) challenged HE researchers to consider more deeply the importance of the curriculum, there has been an increase in research and practice focused on this area. Conceptions of what constitutes curriculum are varied. Tight (2023b), in his review of research literature, identifies competing epistemologies and disagreements regarding what is included, arguing differences are, in part, due to differences in understandings among students, academics, institutions and professional bodies (p. 3). Frameworks for consideration of the curriculum include Biggs' (1999) constructive alignment between activities and learning outcomes. However this has been challenged as seeking predictability by obscuring unpredictability and complexity (Gough, 2013). Barnett and Coate's (2005) domains of knowing, acting and being and their relative balance in a curriculum provides an abstract alternative. Also relevant are the four understandings held by academics identified by Fraser and Bosanquet (2006). These include *products* of structure and content of a module or programme, or *processes* of interactive relational experiences of teaching and learning. They argue only when teachers take an emancipatory view regarding student empowerment can "the teacher and students negotiate what will be included in the curriculum" rather than students influencing curriculum through feedback (p. 281). Whether this is true is considered in Chapter 7.

Curriculum change is an area of contestation and influence is exerted at all levels, though is most impactful at the disciplinary academic level (Shay, 2015). Curriculum and its development can be seen as a complex adaptive system which is relational and recursive (Doll, 2008; Mennin, 2010). Academics are said to exert creative influence within the scope of their room for manoeuvre (Annala et al., 2021), in this way, curriculum is the result of "various ideas, intentions, interests, and dynamics" (p. 2-3) and curriculum change is an area for negotiation over disciplinary principles and practice. I aimed not to facilitate convergence on a shared understanding but, instead, to use different conceptions to add to the multiplicity of perspectives informing the review process. It appears that, post-pandemic, many are considering change from a programme perspective. It has been observed by Andrews and McVitty (2023) that as a result, curricula development is a more collaborative undertaking or "collective negotiation" (p. 1) than it was when subject specialists considered individual module content. Ashwin (2020) has argued curricula content should be robustly, even painfully, debated, including by students (p. 125). Largely, however, curricular debate or negotiation does not appear to involve students directly. In their report considering post-pandemic changes in curricula design and review in seventy-five institutions, MacNeill and Beetham (2022) state that, despite clear desires to work with students beyond traditional formal processes, engaging students as co-creators in curriculum and learning design is "more of an aspiration than a realisation for many" (p. 21). Similarly, in relation to the research literature on curriculum, Tight (2023b) notes that, while co-creation with students is the focus for a minority of researchers, there is a:

> widespread sense here that the curriculum is primarily the responsibility of higher education teachers, guided by their institutions and relevant professional bodies. While accepting that lecturers and professors will be the major driving force for

> implementing curriculum development, much more needs to be done to research what students would prefer and benefit from. (p. 10)

This research addresses the question of student preferences within my own LLB context.

The purpose and value of Higher Education

The curriculum can tacitly signal what is valued (Margolis, 2001). Consideration of curricula content is, therefore, closely connected to questions regarding the purpose and value of HE. Purposes are sometimes presented using a dual conception of liberal or vocational, where liberal education is seen as an end in itself and vocational education as a means to more practical ends (Sanderson, 1993). This has been a prominent feature of the legal education literature and continues to be a contested issue in the UK (Guth & Ashford, 2014; Menis, 2020; Winch, 2002). However, there are also calls for more detailed and nuanced examination of HE as a complex system with many connected and interacting elements (Hager & Beckett, 2022; Mason, 2008). Barnett argues debates over the ends of education are impoverished, with significant questions including "how are we to live personally and collectively with uncertainty?" (2004, p. 71) as yet unaddressed. Supporting an ecological curriculum, which fosters engagement, care for others, and the world, he argues HE's purpose lies in embracing supercomplexity and uncertainty (Barnett, 2017).

In relation to the question of purpose, Biesta (2020) argues that education is for qualification, socialisation and subjectification. Qualification encompasses knowledge and skills, socialisation refers to enculturation and subjectification is used in contrast to objectification, and refers to developing individual capabilities. It represents freedom to act, but is not completely individual, because action takes place within a complex network of relationships. Subjectification, he argues, is risky because it involves agency. These points are presented at an abstract level and can be marshalled to justify various approaches to curriculum and its development, they nevertheless include an important critique of policy which appears to prioritise certainty and focus on the economic ends of education. In the UK, the level of fees and government discourse indicate strongly that the purpose of HE is a means to gain a certain level of employment and pay. Such neoliberal policy emphasises the power of markets for successful economies to which those in HE must adapt. I use the term neoliberalism here to include a general model which emphasises market forces, a form of normative rhetoric influencing expectations, and an ideology seeing universities, their staff and students as in competition. This encompasses managerial and performative views that tend to micro-manage people while diminishing other values and purposes of HE. This kind of neoliberalism can be seen as authoritarian because purposes are dictated by the system not participants. This tends to place individuals and institutions in competition, undermining autonomy, collective action and democracy, and damaging visions of education emphasising togetherness (d'Agnese, 2019). Furthermore, its rhetorical focus on jobs and economy leave little room for alternative means or additional ends for education. Neoliberal policy and metric based management is often challenged in the education literature though this can have the further effect of reinforcing dichotomies. As noted by Carey (2013a), much of the literature presents academics as either victims or heroic fighters of managerialism. However, some have questioned this binary approach (Tight, 2014). For example, Biesta (2014, 2020) critiques the emphasis on learners and learning, which he sees as a reaction to a top-down focus on teaching and curriculum content. This is because he sees process and outcome as connected, but *learning* alone as merely "an empty process term" neglecting to account for outcomes, such as what is learnt and what learning is for (p. 91). Similarly, in considering student views about the purpose of HE in six European countries including England, Brooks et al. (2021) contend that assumptions are often made regarding students' instrumental views of HE and transformation into consumers. They argue previous contentions that students emphasise gaining a degree over being a student (Molesworth et al., 2010) require reconsideration, not least because these understandings affect curriculum decisions. Their findings demonstrate the complex and nuanced nature of student understandings, including personal growth and societal development as well as preparation for the labour market. Students valued exposure to knowledge, diverse groups and opportunities to increase their potential to contribute to the public good as critical citizens supporting national economic progress. This is what Biesta calls the subjectification purpose.

To continue a democratic society, a form of democratic education is required. This means that curricula must change, but change should be undertaken carefully to retain useful elements. Rather than taking an either-or view between liberal and vocational, it is necessary to make connections between what might be seen as opposing views (Dewey, 1938). Such connections are argued by Gordon (2016), to offer "fresh (and more expansive) perspectives from which to consider education" (p. 1079). This is relevant to this research because I see partnership in curriculum review as offering opportunities to make such connections through democratic engagement. While I see process and outcome as entwined, the process of student engagement in the form of partnership is the focus of this research, therefore a critique of the relevant literature is detailed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: A Review of the Partnership Literature

This chapter considers the literature informing the subject matter of this research. I conducted a systematic review of SaP literature during the initial stages. As the research progressed, I continuously engaged with this literature, focusing on recent developments and relevant aspects based on my data analysis. This reading was completed in light of a parallel engagement with literature informing a pragmatic philosophical orientation and DEval methodology. Consequently, the review became an iterative process. This chapter concentrates on partnership and relevant literature regarding student engagement. My ontological, epistemological and methodological choices will be discussed in the following chapters.

All my research questions necessitate consideration of practical aspects related to working in partnership, planning, partnership policy, and the concept of partnership itself. Thus, I begin with a consideration of the concept of partnership and its relationship with the wider field of student engagement. I use the term *partnership* to encompass literature that is not always labelled as *students as partners* literature but falls within this general area. For example work labelled as *co-creation* between students and staff. With a few exceptions I do not include literature focussed on student voice, and my understanding of the relationship between student voice and partnership is explained in the context of student engagement. Considering the connection between partnership and theory in student engagement, I also highlight pertinent literature relating to student engagement within a neoliberal HE context. After a critical analysis of the epistemological and ontological approaches taken in the partnership literature, I conclude with consideration of literature regarding partnership in curricula formation and in the discipline of law.

The concept of students as partners

Working with students as partners is the primary focus of this research and, therefore, the concept requires critical assessment. However, the meaning of the term is varied and evolving (Cook-Sather et al., 2018). Though the term SaP is commonly used, alternatives such as *co-creation* (Bovill, 2020b; Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2023) are used by various authors to denote very similar concepts. For those familiar with these variations, the utility of the term SaP, lies in its capacity to group a section of the educational research literature. Ferri et al. (2020) acknowledge these issues and comment on the elusive nature of the concept of partnership in all fields which, nevertheless, allows for inclusion of a wide variety of activities within a recognised area of scholarship of teaching and learning. While most of those writing in this area do not critique the term, Lubicz-Nawrocka (2023) explains her preference for *co-creation*, which avoids implying “a level of equality in decision-making that can sometimes conflict with the reality of academic structures and constraints” (p. 135). This is a point relevant to this research which is discussed further in Chapter 7. In their discussion of the term SaP, Mercer-Mapstone and Abbot (2020) reflect on whether naming only students in *students as partners*, is a form of othering students which represents a temporary change in their role. Though these authors opt to use *student:staff partnership*, they acknowledge the binary nature of this term (p. 7). More rarely, critiques have argued the term *partnership* may be seen as “patronising or pretentious” (Peart et al., 2023, p. 33). I will consider in Chapter 6 the ways in which partnership was perceived by participants.

Despite differences in understanding of the terms used to denote partnership, a working definition is needed. The QAA (2018) define partnership broadly as “joint working between students and staff”, which is clarified as “not based on the legal conception of equal responsibility and liability” (p. 2). This clarification is relevant in my context because some participants applied their legal disciplinary understanding of the term as discussed in Chapter 7. AdvanceHE (n.d.) sees partnership as “a relationship in which all involved are actively engaged in and stand to gain from the process of learning and working together,” drawing on values enacted in the partnership process (p. 2). The NUS (2013) has defined partnership in terms of democratic co-creation, seeing it primarily in terms of the power of the collective. However, by far the most commonly cited definition is “a collaborative, reciprocal process through which all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways, to curricular or pedagogical conceptualization, decision making, implementation, investigation, or analysis” (Cook-Sather et al., 2014, p. 6). This definition focuses on process, but I will argue process and outcome are entwined and, therefore, my own definition stipulates requirements regarding process and outcome. My definition of partnership in this context, is: *an ongoing, cyclic and principled process within which staff, students and others share decision making about, and negotiate aspects of, the curriculum, leading to practical improvements*.

In using and understanding partnership in practice, concept models provide theory that can be evaluated at the micro and meso-levels. The most widely used conceptual model, developed by Healey et al. (2014) and adopted by AdvanceHE (2016) is shown in Figure 2.

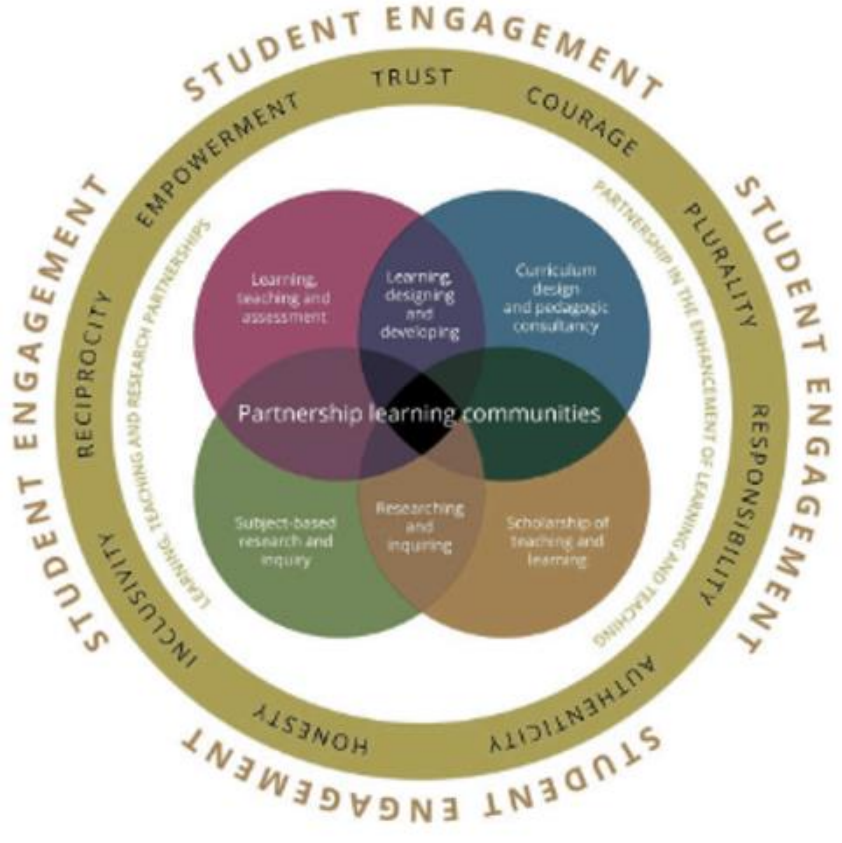

Figure 2: Students as partners model from Healey et al. (2016)

The model is presented as a lens to develop practice and policy at various levels including the disciplinary program level. Centring a learning community, this model depicts four domains of practice, including *curriculum design and pedagogic consultancy*, which is relevant in this research, and identified as the least developed domain (Healey et al., 2014, p. 11). Several sources refer to the process orientation of partnership in opposition to being outcomes driven (AdvanceHE, n.d.; Bovill, 2019; Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Vayada et al., 2019). Ferri et al. (2020), describing their study of a process gone wrong due to its outcome focus, state partnership "is not concerned with the outcome" (p. 1). They cite Healey et al. (2014) who describe it as "a way of doing things, rather than an outcome in itself" (p. 7). In contrast, in their literature review, Peart et al. (2023) recommend those facilitating partnership practice consider whether the process or outcome is more important and imply there is a tension between inclusivity in the process and an outcome focus (p. 39). Questions of the relationship between process and outcome are central to this research. This is due to my pragmatic conception of the relationship between ends and means outlined in Chapter 4.

With some notable exceptions (Khouri et al., 2017) the literature tends not to examine the nature of learning communities in theoretical depth. In HE, the term learning community is used flexibly (Kilpatrick et al., 2003) and inconsistently and specific models have been called for (Prodgers et al., 2023). Addressing this point, Healey et al. (2016) refer to the application of the communities of practice literature. A community of practice (Wenger, 2011) is generally defined in terms of a group deepening expertise by addressing issues impacting shared futures on an ongoing basis (Bowles & O'Dwyer, 2022). An alternative conception, of a community of inquiry (Burgh, 2021; Cam, 2011; Pardales & Girod, 2006; Shields, 2003), is based on Deweyan ideas regarding education and democracy in which participants work together to find solutions to problems (Shields, 1999). The community of inquiry model does not appear to have been applied in the partnership literature though its use has been suggested by Lower (2019; 2022) in his consideration of the use of the community of inquiry framework (Garrison, 2016) in legal education. I will consider the benefits of this framework in a context, such as mine, where modalities of interaction are mixed and the process is cyclic but periodic, involving different students in each iteration rather than continuously ongoing.

The current values in the model shown above have emerged as it has been developed (Healey et al., 2014, 2016) and are offered as a tool for reflecting on past practice and for operational planning. They initially comprised trust, challenge, reciprocity, community, inclusivity, responsibility, empowerment and authenticity. Later versions use trust, plurality, responsibility, authenticity, honesty, inclusivity, reciprocity, and empowerment, and courage.

There is little critique of these values, although recent studies have considered their application in distinct cultural contexts (Liang & Matthews, 2021, 2023), highlighting the anglophone nature of the literature and potential differences in approaches to power and authority. Courage, when it is considered, is often from a perspective seeing courage as a personal attribute (Stengel, 2018) or enacted in opposition to an external force and connected to empowerment. For example, Raza Memon and Jivraj (2020) in their study of partnership in decolonising curricula highlight self-empowerment within an oppositional neoliberal context as requiring courage (p. 477). Thus, though this model is widely used to frame research, it appears detailed critique of the values presented, or the meaning of a learning community, are less commonly considered. Importantly, the nine values tend to be presented as normative. However, from a pragmatic perspective, these values and, thus, the model's validity, can be assessed only following the practical consequences of their use. In Chapter 7, I will consider the ways participants in this context enacted these values and I add to critique in relation to the values of plurality, empowerment, trust and courage and their interaction.

Partnership as a form of student engagement

I have used the concept of student engagement as an interpretive frame for partnership. This framing is common in the partnership literature (Matthews et al., 2019a), where partnership is often presented as one of the more meaningful manifestations of student engagement (Carey, 2018; AdvanceHE, 2016; NUS, 2013). Because it is a developing area, framing partnership in this way facilitates its positioning within a broader context and is relevant in considering its position in relation to macro-level theory.

Student engagement is a concept used in the UK and internationally (Pike & Kuh, 2005). While there is some evidence of its use since the mid-1960's, Kahu and Nelson (2018, p. 60) cite Astin (1984) as being responsible for initiating the student engagement body of research. The past twenty years have seen a rapid increase in policy and research related to student engagement, and the term is commonly used aspirationally within HE institutions (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015). Literature reviews have been conducted by Kahu (2013), Tight (2020), Trowler (2010), Trowler and Trowler (2010), Wimpenny and Savin-Baden (2013) and Zepke and Leach (2010). Some definitions focus on student action (Zepke & Leach, 2010; Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013), while others highlight the responsibility of institutions

(Little et al., 2009). Although many definitions refer to engagement in teaching and learning, some point to student participation in decision making, such as curriculum development, as an important aspect of engagement (Ashwin & McVitty, 2015; Buckley, 2018). I use the term in that latter sense, as a form of engagement in a specific area of activity, which, in this context is curriculum review.

Almost all those who consider student engagement begin with statements acknowledging its complexity and contested nature (MacFarlane & Tomlinson, 2017) and, while some describe it as ambiguous (Healey et al., 2016), enigmatic (Buckley, 2018) and unclear (Tight, 2020), others see the question of definition as considerably more problematic (Baron & Corbin, 2012; Trowler, 2015; Zepke, 2018). Aspects of this ambiguity include the way in which engagement is enacted and who is engaged. Many studies focus on students, some consider institutions as actors (Baron & Corbin, 2012; Carey, 2018), while others consider academics or other staff as separate from their institution (Cook-Sather et al., 2014).

As with the term partnership, a working definition of engagement is required for this research. I therefore consider Trowler's (2010) definition, which refers to engagement as an interaction between students and institutions with multiple outcomes, as the most useful.

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

This definition encompasses more than engagement in teaching and learning, and considers process and outcomes benefiting students and institutions. However, it foregrounds the institution as a whole, rather than the role played by staff at all levels. This dualism of student and institution where each is seen as responsible for engagement with the other (Bryson, 2016) is at the heart of many definitions. This can occlude the fact that institutions comprise multiple levels of staff with differing perspectives, acting in different ways, the totality of which can encompass divergent priorities and motivations. This is important in this context, because, as will be considered below, models and theories of engagement and partnership may ascribe values or motivations to institutions or groups which reduce dynamic complexity to static binary conceptions.

Matthews et al. (2019a), in their review of the partnership literature, highlight that most activities are described from the student perspective, and recommend consideration of student *and* staff perceptions. This consideration needs to account for different perspectives within these groups. Whereas most studies include only those who take part in partnership activities, the views of those supporting, hindering or opting out are also relevant. In much of the literature, only academic staff are considered, though notable exceptions describe the roles of academic developers (Bergmark & Westman, 2016; Fitzgerald et al., 2020) and the significance of senior management perspectives (Gravett et al., 2020). In this research (as outlined in detail in Chapter 5), I include multiple perspectives to help reflect the plurality of understandings and aspirations relevant to engagement in partnership in the context examined in this thesis. Including multiple views is important in philosophical pragmatism which values a plurality of perspectives and defines participation widely.

In the partnership and student engagement literature, their relationship is conceptualised in a number of ways. Partnership is presented as in interaction with engagement, a path to engagement, including staff in engagement or a means of redefining engagement (Matthews et al., 2019a, p. 286). I see partnership, in the context of this research, as a form of active student participation in evaluation and planning in a programme, outside scheduled class time (Barrineau et al., 2019) and distinct from formal representation and student voice. This view of partnership as an aspect of engagement is reflected in recent literature (Lowe & El Hakim, 2020; Lowe, 2023; Peart et al., 2023) and is presented in Figure 3.

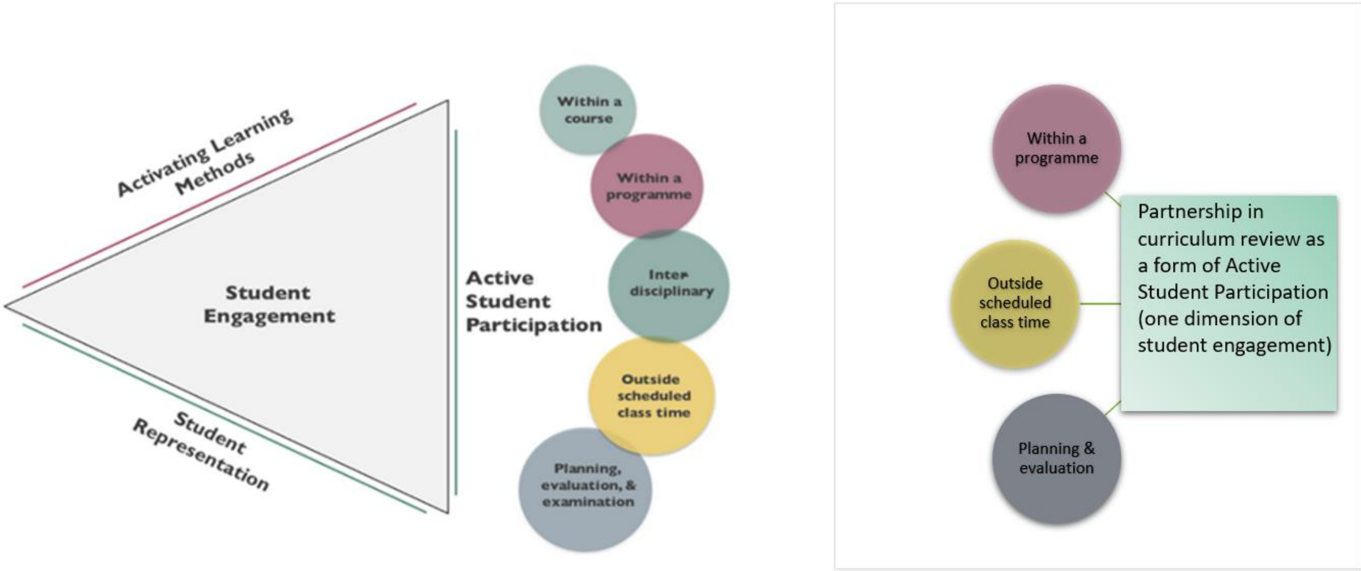

Figure 3: A student engagement model adapted from Barrineau et al. (2019, p. 29)

The various models and typologies for student engagement (Kelly et al., 2017; Trowler, 2010; Wimpenny & Savin-Baden, 2013) compounds the complexity surrounding the concept and, therefore, scholars highlight the need to use a context specific focus (Kahu, 2013; Matthews et al., 2019b; Trowler, 2015). Defining engagement as partnership in curriculum review in this research serves the purpose of situating it within the expanse of the student engagement literature. The innovation in this context can thus be presented within a nested framework as shown below. Seeing partnership and engagement in this way helps to define their meaning, despite the ambiguous and “black box” (Hatch, 2012) nature of both terms.

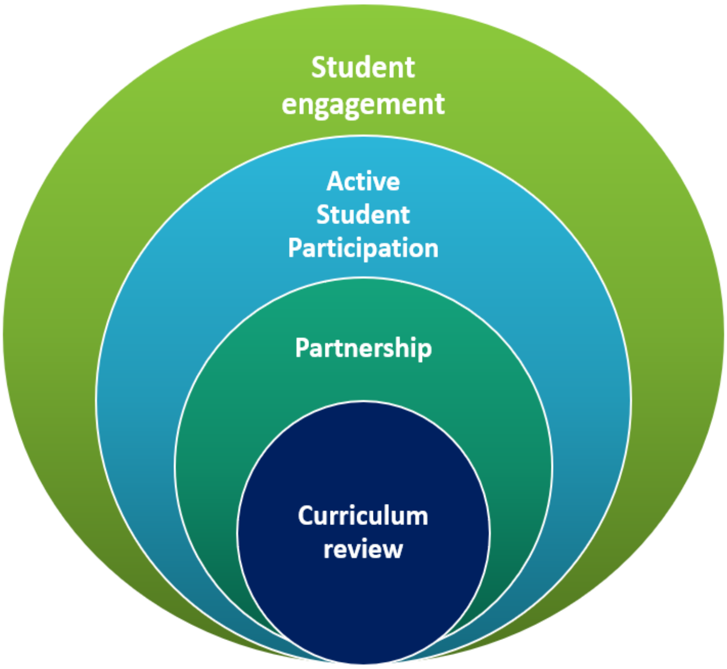

Figure 4: Relationships - review, partnership, active student participation and engagement

Both engagement and partnership can be seen as what Patton (2011) describes as sensitising concepts. These are loosely operationalised notions providing initial direction to inquiry considering how concepts have meaning in specific contexts. Minsky (2006) describes such terms as *suitcase words*, meaning broad use can obscure differences so they must be unpacked to consider underlying interpretations. Likewise, Patton (2011) describes sensitising concepts as containers but emphasises their usefulness in allowing the exploration of patterns of understanding and their implications (p. 270). The ambiguity of both terms has arguably contributed to a debate involving understandings of engagement and partnership; that is, the question of whether discourse or practice are being appropriated by higher level actors for neoliberal ends. I now address this debate regarding the relationship between partnership as a form of engagement and the neoliberal HE context within which partnership and engagement operate.

Theories of engagement and partnership: the neoliberal debate

The question of whether student engagement is driven by, or supports, underlying neoliberal agendas is contested (Neary, 2016; Trowler, 2015; Vallee, 2017; Zepke, 2015, 2018). Student engagement is presented from two opposing ends of a spectrum. On the one hand, as "the product of a marketized, neoliberal system which seeks to appropriate the student voice" (Lowe & El Hakim, 2020, p. 16), and on the other, as radical and humanising (Fielding, 2006, 2011; Mercer-Mapstone & Abbot, 2020). Buckley (2018) considers this debate in the context of those researching student engagement but continues the binary conceptualisation, characterising engagement research as either siding with neoliberalism or supporting the opposition (p. 718). The dualistic nature of this debate tends to obscure the dynamic complexities of practice.

There is a corresponding discussion in the partnership literature. Much of which explicitly positions partnership in opposition to neoliberal ideology (Matthews, 2017, 2019b; Wijaya Mulya, 2019). This is either from a positive stance, arguing for the benefits of partnership, or from a more negative stance, regarding the danger, or actuality, of partnership being co-opted in service of the student-as-consumer, reinforcing neoliberal HE policy and diminishing critical thinking (Neary, 2016; Nixon et al., 2018; Patrick, 2022). Mercer-Mapstone and Abbot (2020) highlight lack of trust in institutions, referring to the risk that partnership is adopted as lip service "buying into the neoliberal seduction of institutional rhetoric to curry favour with student clients without the authentic enactment of partnership" (p. 67). The resultant fact that diametrically opposed perspectives of neoliberalism, from either radical, emancipatory proponents or neoliberal institutions, can pursue similar partnership goals is presented as a conundrum (Bovill, 2019, p. 8).

Tight (2019), in his examination of the use of the term neoliberal in HE research, notes that, although neoliberalism is not often defined it is very commonly critiqued in educational research, and never cited in positive terms. I understand its use in the HE context, to encompass new public management, also referred to as managerialism or performativity, and the neoliberal market model with its focus on competition (Marginson, 2013). These are seen in market driven approaches where institutions compete for students who are seen as the means by which to score highly in metrics of customer satisfaction. Tight acknowledges the pervasiveness of new public management and the neoliberal market model in HE policy and practice commenting on the tendency to denounce neoliberalism rather than offer alternatives. In doing so, he recognises elements of the partnership literature as rare exceptions, offering a way to enact more traditional liberal practice. Although he concludes resistance by small groups often involves more work, and is unlikely to have any wider impact, he appears to see this as preferable to either “going along with neoliberalism” or “hanging on” in the hope of change (Tight, 2019, p. 279-280).

There are few who appear to take account of the complexity of different perspectives rather than characterise this question in binary terms. Exceptions in relation to student engagement, are provided by Trowler (2015), and by Ashwin and McVitty, (2015) who speculate that the vagueness of the term provides constructive ambiguity, which can usefully mediate tensions between different conceptions. Additionally, Holen et al. (2020) note opposition to neoliberal reform is one of the main ways engagement and partnership are generally used. Nevertheless they argue contradictory rationales of partnership can coexist dynamically and draw on Olsen (2007) to present an institutional level framework (Figure 5) showing four idealised visions of the university that might function as drivers of policy and practice in the context of pressure towards participation and consensus, or as conflicting norms and objectives of actors. Applying this framework at the institutional level, they conclude that partnership is complex and context dependent often exhibiting a mix of hybrid practices related to different conceptualisations of partnership, with multi-faceted understandings and motivations.

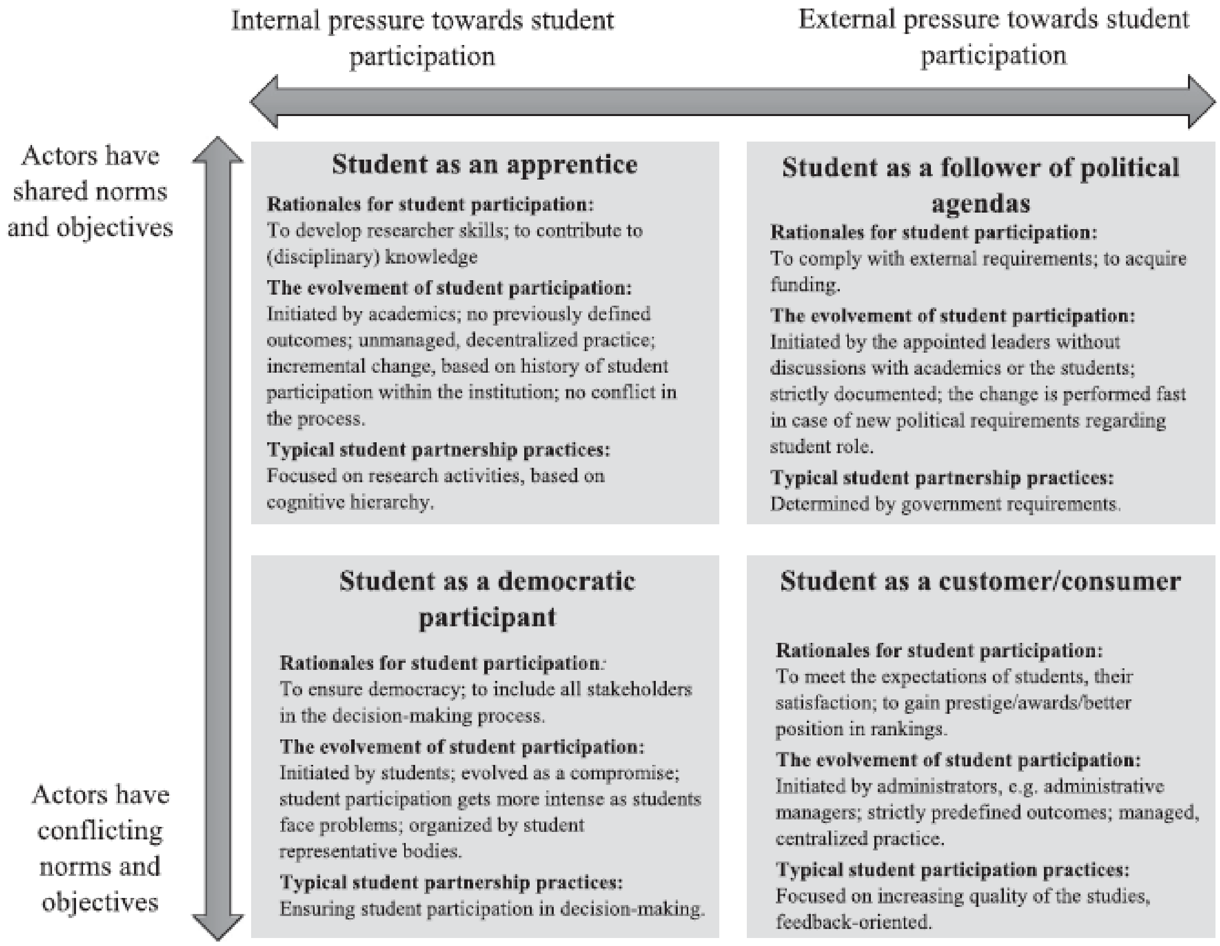

Figure 5: Partnership framework from Holen et al. (2020)

The partnership framework is a useful model to break free of the dualistic debate outlined above and may help address the conundrum identified by Bovill (2019). After testing its utility at the micro-level, I argue (in Chapter 7) that this model supports a more pluralistic conception of the ways neoliberal and other idealised views of HE interact in practice.

Philosophical orientations in partnership literature

While literature is often not explicit regarding the epistemological or ontological approach used, several influential researchers in this field draw on critical theory, which may have led to their heightened focus on power relations (Bovill, 2014, 2019; Kehler et al., 2017; Mercer-Mapstone & Abbot, 2020). Matthews et al. (2019a), reviewing use of theory, identify the use of power, identity, and gender, along with partnership, as constructs. They refer to the influence of democratic, social justice and critical theory orientations acting in reaction to neoliberal forces echoing the debate outlined above as to whether partnership can operate as a challenge to neoliberal practice or support it. Bovill (2019), another seminal contributor to the partnership literature, contends that critical pedagogy is significant in theorising partnership and appears to use it in her work (Bovill & Bulley, 2011; Bovill, 2014) as do others (Kehler et al., 2017). Similarly, Mercer-Mapstone centres resistance to power hierarchies (Mercer-Mapstone & Abbot, 2020) and systems of oppression (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2021) in her consideration of partnership work. Finally, Neary's (2010, 2012, 2016, 2020) work on Students as Producer, which is grounded in Marxist theory, has also been influential and is highly cited by those centring resistance to power hierarchies within partnership practice. This philosophical orientation means partnership is often presented as radically transformative "identity work that seeks to disrupt taken-for-granted power structures" (Matthews et al., 2019a, p. 289). A large proportion of the literature focusses on power relations (Kapadia, 2021; Kehler et al., 2017; Mercer-Mapstone & Mercer, 2017; Zepke, 2018) and their effects. The value of empowerment is also often highlighted and described as essential in versions of partnership which foreground power redistribution (Bovill, 2019; Matthews, 2017). Studies taking a critical theory based approach have highlighted important features of partnership and the significance of power in student:staff relationships, but have arguably resulted in less consideration of alternative constructs and their relationships, especially in ways that do not connect these to power hierarchies. Furthermore, the literature tends not to fully acknowledge alternative ways in which power might be conceived as, for example, arising *from* partnership rather than *possessed* by individuals or groups within a partnership. Taking an alternative pragmatic view facilitates seeing partnership through a different lens, and the effect of this epistemological and ontological perspective is demonstrated in this thesis and discussed in Chapter 7.

White (2018) distinguishes authority from power arguing staff hold authority in a relational sense to the extent they are trusted due to their discipline expertise and students seek that expertise to enhance their employability. White argues that partnership, especially when enacted through policy and outside the teacher-student relationship, can be an unjustified intrusion undermining relations between students and academics, damaging trust. He contends authority is recognised by students within a rule-based system (White, 2018, p. 166). In Chapter 7, I apply this analysis to the data and consider the extent to which White's argument is justified.

Those framing partnership as a form of student engagement also often use hierarchical models, which present the role of students on a continuum of power ranging from consumer students who are provided with information, through representative students who are consulted, partner students who negotiate, and culminating in agentic students who initiate action (Trowler et al., 2018). Ladder of participation models, depicting similar hierarchies, are very widely used (Bovill & Bulley, 2011; Buckley, 2018; Carey, 2018; Healey et al., 2014; Varwell, 2023). The most influential in the partnership and HE engagement literature is that presented by Bovill and Bulley (2011) (Figure 6). Their model is based on Arnstein's (1969) original (p. 217) which is also premised on power hierarchies. Critiques of Arnstein's model note its continued use in describing participatory processes to illustrate the ways power effects participation, but suggest this focus is not sufficient for understanding participation either as a concept, or in practice (Collins & Ison, 2006).

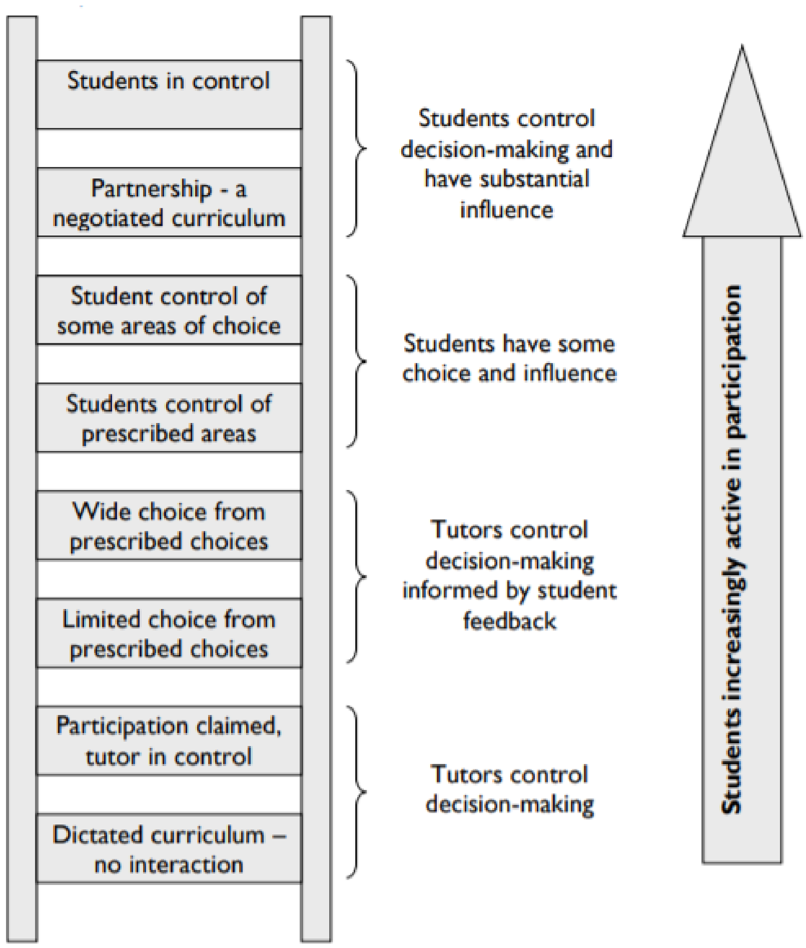

Figure 6: Ladder of Participation from: Bovill, C., and Bulley, C.J. (2011) @ Oxford Brookes University, 2011. Reproduced with permission.

Ladder models tend to imply progression through what Healey et al. (2016) refer to as stages from tutor *dictated curriculum* to students with substantial influence, or from *consumer* to *agent.* However, ladder models do not account for a dynamic or multifaceted analysis (Holen et al., 2020). Some of the literature also refers to levels of partnership, acknowledging the subjectivity of such categorisations, but nevertheless depicting "true" partnership as the highest level (Peart et al., 2023, p. 13). Arnstein (1969), contemplated use of her model in universities, although the sometimes violent campus protests against the Vietnam war (Heineman, 2020) which formed the background to her work, are quite different to that presented in this thesis. Notably, she was careful to acknowledge the model is heuristic. Arnstein accepts a juxtaposition of the powerful and powerless is not reflective of reality where in fact each group "encompasses a host of divergent points of view" (p. 217). Similarly, though Bovill presents co-creation as requiring "teachers to relinquish some of their power" (2020b, p. 50) it is important to note Bovill and Bulley are careful to highlight their ladder model (Figure 6) is not an argument for higher levels of student participation as always preferable (2011). As Ashwin and McVitty (2015) point out, more engagement is not necessarily better (p. 356). Nevertheless, the models built upon it can appear to assume a less complicated, zero-sum (Von Neumann & Morgenstern, 2007) conception of power and the practical effects of this are important because they can include increased perception of risk.

In other contexts, Arnstein's ladder has been criticised as simplistic and unsustainable. Tritter and McCallum (2006), having considered its use in healthcare decision making, conclude "engagement and empowerment are complex phenomena through which individuals formulate meanings and actions that reflect their desired degree of participation" (p. 157) and too much focus on power can undermine the process. Hart (2008), the originator of a similar ladder model in school student voice, has reflected on its static nature and tendency to imply that the transfer of power to disempowered groups, rather than full participation of all, is the ultimate goal. Hart argues it has now served its purpose because the "ladder metaphor may be a problem in that it seems to some to suggest that in all cases the higher rungs of the ladder are superior to the ones beneath" (p. 23). Hart concludes that alternative models are needed, where community participation is more significant than power redistribution (Hart, 2008, p. 29). In Chapter 7, I argue that, based on this research, a pragmatic view of power can offer a way to retain emphasis on diverse views and the importance of inclusion, while seeing power as generated, and used, by all those participating in partnership activity to achieve beneficial outcomes.

Different perceptions of power, and their implications, are rarely considered in the partnership literature. A notable exception is presented by Marquis et al. (2019) who explored the ways students in four institutions understood and perceived drivers and barriers to participation. They found students were motivated not by empowerment, but by enhancing employability. Peart et al. in their literature review (2023) similarly note enhancing employability is one of the most commonly perceived benefits of partnership (p. 5). Marquis et al. (2019) describe the employability, as opposed to empowerment motivation, for students as “somewhat more instrumental and less transformational than many of the partnership values and outcomes described in scholarly writing about partnership” raising important questions about contradictions between the literature and the motivations and understandings of those who might enact partnership practice (p. 1251). They conclude there are compelling questions for partnership scholars and practitioners, including how to reconcile a potential disconnect between student understandings and those espoused in the literature; how to accommodate varying interests and goals; and how to remain open to a range of motivations, while resisting appropriation of partnership discourse for socially conservative ends (p. 1251). These are questions I consider further in the discussion in Chapter 7.

In advocating a critical pragmatic approach to school student voice, Jones and Hall (2022) caution against seeing power as only problematic, rather than deployed by partnerships in action. They advocate, instead, for voice as part of learning communities, using frameworks facilitating shared understanding, accepting that different values can be seen as opportunities for dialogue and reflexivity (p. 581). They also note a tendency to see student voice through a rose-tinted lens. This positive tendency is also found in the partnership literature, which I now discuss.

Positive representations of partnership

Marquis et al (2019) have questioned the ways in which partnership literature tends to emphasise positive findings and valorise what Matthews (2017) originally referred to as *genuine* partnerships. A number of literature reviews suggest some reporting or publication bias as negative outcomes are less commonly reported and messiness occluded (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017; Peart et al., 2023). Cook-Sather et al. (2014) set out positive outcomes for those directly involved, including a reconceptualisation by staff of students as colleagues and a deeper understanding of student needs. Partnership is described as *overwhelmingly positive* (Peters & Mathias, 2018), *radical* (Mercer-Mapstone & Mercer, 2017) and as an *ideology* (Matthews et al., 2018).

Less commonly, some have questioned the extent to which practice can be congruent with the optimistic claims made the literature (Bao, 2022; Ferri et al., 2020). In their systematic review, Peart et al. (2023) note “there can be a general attitude of partnership being a good idea, with a *but* attached” (p. 32). An example of this observation is seen in Murphy et al.’s (2017) study, which included law staff among others and found partnership involved a “struggle” (p. 12) where staff had significant concerns, forming barriers to partnership work. Whilst Murphy et al. found a threshold was crossed as a result of a successful partnership process, their post hoc review indicates that, unless the practice is initiated by staff willing to take a risk, such concerns may prevent any initiation of partnership working.

Many of the more problematic potentialities can be characterised as risks in partnership. Some of the less frequently reported problems identified in Peart et al.’s review, were time, which was significant for students, while, for staff, the question of whether to take a lead on project management and assume power was also highlighted (p. 32). Similarly, Ferri et al. (2020) note that, in trying to treat students as equals and, thus, meet the criteria for partnership, project management difficulties are more likely to arise (p. 4) and I reflect on my own experience of this issue in Chapter 5.

A final example of an exception to the mainly positive accounts, which invokes the notion of risk, is Patrick’s (2022) critique of partnership as risking corruption, patronage, tokenism, and agism in which he argues for structured student governance, as opposed to less formal partnerships risking problems and (echoing wider theory) neoliberal exploitation. Patrick’s critique is similar to other literature in presenting risk as both wholly negative and avoidable.

However, I argue in Chapter 7 that, at least in this context, risk appears inherent and requires detailed consideration if it is to be acknowledged as such.

Partnership in law school curriculum review

Much of the literature highlights the value of engaging students in the review or design of curricula. Bell et al. (2013) point out that, though directly affected by the curriculum, students are consulted less often than others, at least in meaningful ways facilitating dialogue as opposed to survey evaluations. Ashwin and McVitty (2015), considering different domains of engagement, acknowledge the curriculum as a “powerful force for change” (p. 349) and list moral, communitarian and democratic reasons for enabling students to interact with curricula in ways that are not just transmissive, but that facilitate identity formation (p. 351). Breen and Littlejohn (2000), considering student:staff negotiation in curricula formation, trace its origin to classical liberalism, citing John Dewey as a key figure linking education to democratic citizenship, where democracy is seen not just as a system of government, but as a way of organising ordinary life, including education. However, in the student engagement and partnership literatures, the extent to which this happens in practice is hard to assess.

Although Trowler and Trowler (2010) recommended studies of direct engagement in shaping curriculum design (p. 14), Healey et al. (2016) viewed the same area as less well developed within the four domains of their model. It is not always easy to identify or distinguish these areas in the literature. In their review, Peart et al. (2023, p. 26) note domains are hard to separate from each other, especially when curriculum design impacts on other areas, such as learning, teaching and assessment. Furthermore, difficulties in assessing levels of engagement in curriculum design or review in the literature can be compounded by the contextual nature of research, and the fact that studies are labelled in diverse ways. There are many models of engagement, within which curriculum design is presented as, variously, engagement in: learning design (Trowler, 2010); quality enhancement (Healey et al., 2014); as a form of public participation (Carey, 2018); and as a form of decision making (Buckley, 2018). Ashwin and McVitty’s (2015) model attempts to deal with the problem of ambiguity in the meaning of engagement by considering both what is being engaged with, and the form of engagement. As explained above, this research engages with curriculum review, in the form of partnership.

What is somewhat easier to assess in reviewing the literature, is the discipline context. This is because the role of different disciplinary approaches to teaching are seen as significant in inhibiting or promoting partnership activity (Symonds, 2021, p. 232). Though here also, there are calls for greater clarity (Peart et al., 2023) as well as calls for consideration of partnership studies within specific disciplines (Healey et al., 2023). Mercer-Mapstone et al.'s (2017) systematic review identifies a lack of studies considering disciplinary differences, with few, if any, in law and none considering curriculum design from a disciplinary perspective. Baumber et al. (2020) similarly identified a lack of research regarding partnership practice in disciplinary contexts (p. 396). In considering the distinction between partnership *in* or *of* the curriculum, Bovill and Woolmer (2018) draw on curriculum theory and note the need for research considering the impact of disciplinary curricula. More recently, Healey et al.'s (2023) review of disciplinary perspectives within the partnership literature, underlined the contextual nature of partnership practice and the resultant need to consider disciplines as contextual variables (p. 3). These variables include curriculum, pedagogy, and any associated professional practice, especially where the discipline is more hierarchical in nature. The need for further consideration of disciplinary partnerships is also highlighted in Peart et al.'s (2023) review, which suggests students on vocational courses may be more inclined to participate (p. 37). Thus, is it not clear whether law's hierarchical nature might act as a barrier, or its vocational nature as a driver, for partnership practice.

Although discipline is important, many disciplines are not well represented, and law is among these. Some authors have included law students in a wider study (e.g. Marie & McGowan, 2017). Another example of this is Murphy et al.'s (2017) research, which found law staff more wary than those in other disciplines, with respect to partnership and curriculum, due to external professional accreditation requirements (p. 9). Brooman (2015, 2017) is one of a few legal educators contributing to this area and has reported enhanced student engagement in successful module redesign. Further work is starting to emerge, such as that by O'Connor (2022) regarding reverse mentoring of law staff by international students focussing on equality, diversity and inclusion. However, no reports of partnership in whole curricula review were found. Nevertheless, the general benefits of involving students in curriculum review are likely to apply in law in the same way they apply in other disciplines. Stuckey (2006, p. 83), in an influential report on best practice in legal education argues law schools should “demonstrate in word, deed, and spirit that the point of view of each student is welcomed and valued”. Although words are accounted for in written evaluations, demonstration in deed and spirit, which might enhance democracy and autonomy (Huggins, 2012) is arguably lacking.

This chapter has reviewed literature that informed the partnership practice to be evaluated. I have considered the use of terminology and offered my own definition of partnership for use in this context. In reviewing the concept of partnership, I have considered how partnership is presented as a positive, values driven process. I highlighted the importance of understanding how process is connected to outcomes, and whether values can be understood in different ways or need shared understandings for successful partnership practice.

The area of partnership has generated a significant body of literature. However, I have highlighted that partnership is often studied from a critical theoretical perspective. In the following chapter, I explain the pragmatic perspective taken and how this approach, though not yet used explicitly in the literature, aligns with DEval regarding partnership practice. I also explain the ways in which it can facilitate an alternative, non-dualistic, perspective on theory and models of partnership as applied in this context. Finally, as I have noted in this review, although the discipline context is seen as a crucial factor, there has been limited consideration of partnership within the discipline of law.

Chapter 4: Ontology, Epistemology and Methodology

In this chapter I consider and explain the ontological and epistemological approach I took in this research, and the choice of a DEval methodology. I begin by setting out my understanding of philosophical pragmatism, its ontology and epistemology and explain how it has informed this research and how I used pragmatism as a meta-theoretical lens. After setting out the criteria by which methodologies were judged, I explain why this led me to choose DEval. I then outline aspects of DEval which I used to orient this research. In the final section I set out my understanding of my position as an insider in the research setting.

Ontological and epistemological approach

In order to be clear regarding the beliefs and assumptions underlying my research approach, I set out in the sections below my reasons for choosing a pragmatic research philosophy and the implications of this choice (Daniel & Harland, 2017; Grix, 2002). As highlighted in Chapter 3, much of the current literature regarding partnership appears to take an approach informed by critical theory. It therefore appeared a different approach might offer a useful, alternative, lens through which to consider partnership. Research choices are influenced by how the world is understood and how knowledge is seen to be generated, It was therefore important to use an approach that aligned with my own worldview. However before beginning my PhD study, I was not aware of what this was in philosophical terms. I found the questions, methodologies and methods which most interested me led me towards an investigation of pragmatism. My reading, throughout the research process, confirmed that this philosophy, which focusses on the practical consequences of ideas and actions, was one that resonated with my own views on education, learning, truth and knowledge and would enable answering my research questions. I was interested in how conceptions of partnership (from multiple perspectives) might act as to promote or inhibit its use in practice. I wanted to take action with others, and use an experiment (or innovation), to generate knowledge. I also felt hopeful that beneficial outcomes, in knowledge generation and for the curriculum review, would result. Pragmatism is grounded in experience within a specific context and this aligned with the practicalities of undertaking small scale research within my own practice setting.

Biesta and Burbules (2003) in their explanation of the implications of pragmatism for educational research, make clear that pragmatism offers no prescriptions, instead it is presented as a resource for reflection on research activities. After outlining my understanding of philosophical pragmatism, I set out in the following section, aspects of pragmatism I have used to inform this research.

Classical pragmatism, developed in the late 19th and early 20th century in north America generally cites Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910) and John Dewey (1859-1952) as originators. It is often presented as a *third way* alternative to objectivism and relativism (Martela, 2015). Hard to define concisely, it has been referred to as a philosophy of action (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Pragmatism's focus is on experience and the cash-value of knowledge to affect future action, as opposed to finding an absolute truth (James, 2013). This means pragmatic research is directed at addressing concrete problems, and truth is verified by testing ideas and theories in practice (Patton, 2015). Pragmatism rejects traditional metaphysical philosophy, the Cartesian dualism of mind and body and thus also the "spectator theory of knowledge" (Dewey, 1917b) meaning researcher objectivity is not regarded as possible.

I use the concept of a paradigm (Kuhn, 1970) or worldview (Patton, 2015) to describe my use of pragmatism to frame my motivation, choices and analysis. Pragmatism has been proposed to replace previous philosophies of knowledge, moving beyond the post-positivist and constructivist dualism (Morgan, 2014). By emphasising experience and the interaction of belief and action, it asks what difference is made by using alternative processes or basing action on different beliefs (Morgan, 2014, p. 1049). Many authors note the resurgence of pragmatism (Brendel, 2009; Ormerod, 2020) but also its lack of influence in the social sciences (Martela, 2015; Wills & Lake, 2020). A small but significant recent literature advocates for the use of pragmatism within educational research (Gordon, 2016; King, 2022; Wills & Lake, 2020). Pragmatism is argued to offer a distinct perspective on educational research and a way to un-think false dichotomies, support reflection and act as a resource for intelligent consideration of topics (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Because pragmatism has many orientations and because Dewey was the leading pragmatist considering education, I have focused on Deweyan pragmatism. Use of values based pragmatism can support transformation of the indeterminate situation of partnership in curriculum review into a more determinate one (Dewey, 1938). The following section considers specific aspects of pragmatism used to inform the research.

Pragmatism as a resource for educational research

One of the reasons pragmatism has contemporary relevance is that, rather than set out specific responses to social problems, it provides tools with which to consider current issues. Theoretical constructs are judged by their usefulness in advancing goals and the extent to which some are more useful than others (Martela, 2015). Some pragmatic ideas I have used as tools, and refer to in this thesis, are set out below.

Democracy - Deweyan pragmatism sees democracy not merely as a system of government, but as a social, ethical way of life, perpetuated via education, where trust and deliberation prevent degeneration into power struggles (Bernstein, 2010; Dewey, 2008). Improving conditions for debate, discussion and persuasion were seen by Dewey as "*the* problem of the public" (Dewey, 1927, p. 208). This emphasises the unique perspective and contribution of individuals and the need to for each to be involved in decision making. Dewey's opposition to an elite class uniquely qualified to make decisions does not negate expertise, but does require inclusion of those affected by decisions in decision making processes (Hildreth, 2011). Pragmatism connects democratic process and outcome, or ends and means and this connection is a further resource.

Ends and means - Philosophical pragmatism goes beyond popular conceptions of the term pragmatic which rejects principles by asking only *what works* (Morgan, 2014). Dewey considered the interdependent relationship between process and outcome and used the term ends-in-view to refer to "foreseen consequences … which are employed to give activity added meaning and to direct its further course" (Dewey, 1922, para. 225). Ends-in-view are therefore means dependent, motivated by hope (Nolan & Stitzlein, 2011) and seen as ongoing, rather than as technocratic, performative fixed ends which once achieved, terminate action (Schön, 1995). In response to calls for an ecological university (Barnett, 2011), Badley (2016) argues for the pragmatic university. Pragmatists are encouraged to work incrementally from within, to project hope into educational reform regarding the means and ends of HE. Thus I see hope in the partnership means forming the focus of this research, and the connected, contextual ends-in-view of incorporating ESD in the law curriculum.

Power **-** Power is often argued to be understated or ignored in pragmatism (Allen, 2008). Wolfe (2012) accepts this, but argues pragmatic power includes values based social action or practice informed by collective intelligence (Bergman, 2015; Odera, 2018; Nolan & Stitzlein, 2011). Pragmatic power is agency enacted with others in social situations to find practical solutions, where it's use to achieve certain ends, corresponding with shared values, means power itself does not determine fact or truth (Hildreth, 2009; Wolfe, 2012). I will discuss this conception of power when considering participant understandings of the risks and rewards of partnership. Using a pragmatist lens, power structures can be seen as based on unhelpful dualisms implicit in notions of interactional power over others, and I now explain the pragmatic approach to dualism.

Dualisms **-** Pragmatism is suspicious of dualisms, beginning with the cartesian mind-body dualism resulting in the spectator view of reality, and extending to theory and practice, or knowledge and action (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). Pragmatism values the "intermediate possibilities" (Dewey, 1938, p. 17) of connecting different viewpoints such as authority and freedom, or knowledge and experience to improve their relation (Gordon, 2016; Stoller, 2018). I will highlight some examples of dualisms throughout this thesis and consider the intermediate possibilities in the relationship between risk and partnership values in Chapter 7.

Community of Inquiry **-** The community of inquiry is deployed within pragmatic philosophy as connecting individual experience in collective deliberation about a problem. It is also the way by which social democracy is achieved and truth is pursued, providing a way of engaging with others and comparing perspectives. Morgan (2014) argues freedom of inquiry is the central moral value of Deweyan pragmatism. Through inquiry, communities can identify the things that matter to them, and deliberate regarding action to address them. This is echoed by Ashwin and McVitty's contention that partnership in curriculum design is a democratic and moral issue (2015).

Fallibilism **-** Pragmatism's conception of truth and focus on future action, means knowledge gives rise to lightly held, warranted assertions. Taking a fallibilist approach facilitates acknowledgement of complexity by seeking contextual, warranted assertions rather than an ultimate truth. Although Jones and Hall (2022) use what they refer to as critical pragmatism to consider student voice, pragmatism does not appear to have been used in the partnership literature. In UK legal education research, with some notable exceptions (Ferris, 2009; Maharg, 2016) pragmatism is rarely explicitly utilised. Nevertheless, Ferris (2009) sees law, legal education and Deweyan pragmatism as having important features in common which assist in challenging academic and vocational dualisms and can renew the curriculum. These include their common focus on constructing meaning through social practice, while taking a fallible approach to truth claims.

Before continuing, it must be acknowledged there are dangers in rejecting a critical approach. Hammond (2013) cites criticisms of a pragmatic approach; it can miss sociological insight, overestimate the agency of individuals, and underestimate the political interests of social institutions. Rejecting a critical approach means my research may be open to allegations that it merely supports the status quo. If it does not encompass some element of criticality, it may reproduce and validate what already exists. Pragmatism is also argued to be deficient in its consideration of power relations, too moderate, failing to "take sides in the struggle for justice" but utopian regarding progress (Wills & Lake, 2020, p. 63). Addressing this, I will argue in Chapter 7 that pragmatic conceptions of power do exist and can assist in seeing partnership differently. Acknowledging that awareness of a critical approach is necessary, and to mitigate any disadvantages, I have attempted to use reflexivity, which Johansson and Lindhult (2008) associate with a critical orientation. Critics of pragmatism highlight its failure to produce generalisable knowledge, leading to lack of rigour and validity (Patton, 2015; Pawson, 2013). However these claims are countered by the fact that rigour is demonstrated by utility, and validity by clarity regarding design, together with reflexivity. The research design, and use of reflexive thematic analysis to support this, is explained in Chapter 5. Pragmatism is at times contradictory (Bernstein, 2010; Posner, 2007). Focussing on Dewey, who wrote about issues of relevance to my research including the process of inquiry, reflection, and democracy as a social activity, addresses this. A form of partnership encompassing a plurality of opinions fits within Dewey's conception of democracy.

Connecting education to democracy, Garrison (1994) argues if this conception is about "participation by all in the conversation of humankind" then "initiation into this conversation is the purpose of education, and it is the purpose of educational research to provide tools that aid this task" (p. 13). Central features of Deweyan pragmatism informing my approach include a view of knowledge as "intimately connected with what people do" and a consequent emphasis on action and interaction (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 2). I see my research as pragmatic because it involves studying the experience of working in partnership and capturing insights to inform future practice. Furthermore, as pragmatism emphasises the effect of shared beliefs, it is of particular utility in examining a collective process. Nevertheless, a specific methodological approach is required and my choices regarding methodology are outlined below.

Choice of Methodology

This research focusses on student engagement in a review of the programme for which I am joint programme leader. This means that, although a supercomplex HE environment (Barnett, 2000) and wider systemic impacts must be considered, the immediate context is bounded within my own institution. My aim as a practitioner was, by increasing student agency, to enhance the diversity of participants in the curriculum review process. My theory of change was that open discussion would achieve better outcomes and provide a learning experience, reflection on which could inform future iterations of the process. My aim as a researcher was to rigorously address research questions related to this. To address RQ.1, data collection prior to the commencement of the curriculum review was needed. Additionally, to answer RQ.2, data collection after completion would be necessary. In order to ensure opportunities to maximise the effectiveness of the process and take account of feedback, mid-process data collection was also required.

With these design issues in mind, it was important to select an appropriate methodology that would:

a) Be appropriate in view of a pragmatic philosophical orientation:
b) Allow me to answer my research questions;
c) Be perceived as legitimate in educational research;

d) Accommodate my involvement as researcher and practitioner in a local context;
e) Acknowledge that knowledge generated would be provisional and inform future iterations of the process;

Initially, two methodologies that appeared to offer most potential were those of a case study and action research. Many educational researchers use a case study methodology to research an aspect of their own institution (Macpherson et al., 2000) such as “an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals” (Creswell, 2012, p. 478). This methodology has been used to consider student engagement in curriculum design which indicated it could be useful (Carey, 2013b). However, Yin (2018) makes clear case studies are relevant for explaining social phenomena but not useful where control over behavioural events is required. Thus, a case study was not well suited to accommodating the foregrounding of collaboration and discussion and most importantly, seemed poorly suited to researching an intervention and ongoing process where I was part of the group implementing and facilitating change.

Educational practice is well represented in the action research literature which has many, unintegrated orientations and does not use a single definition (Ennals, 2009). I use the term action research to describe methodology, although some conceive it to be wider (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1982). Initially, because it facilitates the investigation of action to bring about change, it appeared to be appropriate (Adelman, 1993; Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014; Colucci & Colombo, 2018; Dick et al., 1996). However, although Dick (2002) defends use of action research where elements which others regard as prerequisites are not included, many action researchers advocate for strict inclusion criteria including multiple action research cycles with corresponding reflection and further action (Zuber-Skerritt & Perry, 2002). Additionally, action research grounded in the values and practice of the individual researcher (Whitehead & McNiff, 2006) involves high degrees of researcher introspection which I considered less appropriate for addressing wider policy or practice as reflected in RQs 3 and 4. In its critical orientation, action research is used in pursuit of emancipatory social justice (Carr & Kemmis, 2005; Carr, 2007; Kemmis, 2006). Drawing on Habermas’ categories of knowledge constitutive interests; ‘the technical,’ ‘the practical’ and ‘the emancipatory’, the critical orientation places ‘emancipatory’ as the ideal and those undertaking more practical inquiry, such as my own, as mistaken (Elliott, 2005; 2007) meaning there were some justifications for rejecting this approach within a wider pragmatic paradigm. Furthermore, less often referred to in educational literature, philosophically pragmatic action research focuses on practical knowledge generation and cooperation for constructive action within existing structures (Greenwood, 2007; Johansson & Lindhult, 2008). This appeared to me for some time to be a useful orientation appropriate for this research, however ultimately, I rejected this approach, which is more often used to understand and solve a problem, rather than focus on a change within a system (Patton, 2016a) and which typically requires multiple cycles of action, reflection and re-orientation.

I decided instead to frame this research using an evaluative methodology I had previously used to support a rapid response to moving a post-graduate teaching module online during the Covid-19 pandemic (Boyle & Cook, 2023). This methodology is developmental evaluation (DEval). In the section below, after setting out some of the relevant aspects of DEval, I return to my criteria to explain this choice. Finally, I highlight eight sensitising concepts for DEval which have informed the research design and discussion of the data in Chapter 7.

Developmental Evaluation

DEval is a utilisation focussed approach which can be used in real time and is participatory in nature (Rey et al, 2013). It was first presented by Patton (1994) and developed by him and others (Dozois et al., 2010; Gamble, 2008; Patton, 1997, 2005, 2008, 2011, 2016; Preskill & Beer, 2012). It embeds evaluation within an innovation, or change process, to allow for ongoing reflection and adaptation. It is distinguished from formative and summative evaluation, which are used to improve or to judge a model already in use (Scriven, 1996). Instead, DEval focuses on innovations or adaptations to an existing process or programme where the purpose is to explore possibilities. Highlighting two key aspects of DEval, complexity theory and systems thinking, it is seen firstly as useful where the main driver is systems change, but specific outcomes are emergent. Secondly, it has been described by its originator Michael Patton (2011, 2016), as supporting the development of interventions in complex dynamic environments. In terms of epistemological alignment, Wills and Lake (2020) argue for pragmatism in social research where inquiry is designed to be useful, and is orientated to working with a social group, building collective capacity to act. This aligns with DEval which is utilisation focussed and participatory. Furthermore, the combination of DEval and research has been argued to offer advantages. Rey et al. (2014) reflecting on their experience of DEval research, contend that it supports innovation in real time, is adaptable, and involves a deep understanding of the innovation, because the researcher is part of the project team (p. 57). In outlining situations in which DEval may be helpful, Patton (2011) identifies the adaptation of general principles to a new context as an innovation is tested and developed in a new setting (p. 21). Thus in this research, the innovation of partnering with students could be seen to be tested in a new setting, the law curriculum review process. Finally, in DEval, the evaluator is, ideally, part of the group implementing the change. In light of my criteria, DEval appeared therefore to be an appropriate approach. Applying each, it would:

a) *Be appropriate in view of a pragmatic philosophical orientation*.
   Methodology tends to follow from specific ontological and epistemological assumptions (Grix, 2002) and must at least be compliant with them. Pragmatism is one of the philosophical underpinnings of DEval (Patton, 2011, p. 19). This can also support use of mixed methods design as outlined in Chapter 5.

b) *Allow me to answer my research questions.* DEval allows for the simultaneous development and evaluation of the object of research. While it has a clear focus on utility, it allows for the answering of emic, or micro-level questions, (RQs.1, 2) and etic, or meso and macro-level questions (RQs.3, 4). In addition, as there appeared to be no studies taking this approach, it offered potential for new insight.

c) *Be perceived as legitimate in educational research.* Although DEval has not been used extensively in HE, there are some examples which show it is seen as relevant to the study of innovations in HE teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum change (Dickson & Saunders, 2014; Lam & Shulha, 2015; Leonard et al., 2016), the methodology therefore appeared to be a legitimate choice.

d) *Accommodate my own involvement as a researcher and practitioner in a local context.*
   DEval provides a way to study the experience of a situation while accounting for contextuality (Wills & Lake, 2020). The ability to make use of my own practice as a research opportunity allowed me to integrate my work and research but this researcher-practitioner role had implications for ethics and methodology. In DEval, the ideal evaluator stance is seen as being part of the innovation team, facilitating change and evaluation, relying on respectful relationships and supporting shared values (Patton,

2011). Thus in DEval an insider role, discussed in detail below, and context dependent research are seen as necessary.

e) *Acknowledge that knowledge generated would be provisional and inform future iterations of the process.* DEval provides a basis for decision making but highlights dynamic complexity in research environments. Its developmental nature means it is used in emergent designs. Biesta (2007) argues research can only ever provide information about possible relations between actions and consequences. As knowledge is only ever acquired through action, we can know *what worked* but not *what will work*. In undertaking research related to my own practice, this context dependent aim for warranted assertions which consider the nature of engagement and why engagement might be desirable, would allow me to answer my research questions.

Patton (2016) refers to DEval as evaluation which informs social innovators making adaptive developments in complex dynamic environments. Social innovation, in contrast to economic innovation, aims not to create economic value but to create just, moral and sustainable ways to enhance elements of society including education (Lam & Shulha, 2015) by implementing change using alternative approaches. Here the innovation was the involvement of students in partnership with staff within curriculum review. This was adaptive and informed by data collection in three phases as detailed in Chapter 5. DEval highlights complexity concepts, and as explained in Chapter 2, the HE environment and the process of curriculum change can be seen as complex and dynamic. In addressing the question of what DEval is, Patton (2016) asserts a checklist is neither justified nor helpful. He contends that while each evaluation requires contextual interpretation and application, compliance with some essential principles is nevertheless required. In distinguishing between strict fidelity criteria and more general indicators, he sets out eight sensitising concepts which should be manifest in processes, outcomes, design and use. These concepts are outlined below.

Co-created – The innovation and evaluation should be interwoven and the processes collaborative, active, reactive, interactive and adaptive (p. 257). While initiated by me, the partnering between students and staff was developed jointly. Situations such as traditional curriculum reviews might be characterised as problematic due to lack of interaction between staff and students. Therefore, details of how the partnership would be implemented were left open, in order to allow for input from students and staff, and adaptations to emerging feedback as the review progressed. Joint evaluation continued after the review and emerged from the change process. Although students and staff were part of the innovation and ongoing evaluation, ultimately, those responsible for implementing further iterations of partnership curriculum review will be the academic staff.

Alert to Complexity – Complexity theory (Mason, 2008), uncertainty and dynamical patterns affecting the innovation context are considered. The term dynamical is used to highlight non-static and evolving characteristics. The complex and dynamic nature of the HE system formed the wider context for this research. The LLB curriculum review, a further example of a complex group level situation, was the specific locus (Gates et al., 2021). Regarding the active involvement of students, and the outcome of the review, there was potential for conflict regarding the best way to proceed and unintended results were possible. Uncertainty in outcome is a feature of a complex, as opposed to a simple or complicated, environment (Glouberman & Zimmerman, 2002).

Approached using Systems thinking – Systems thinking involves consideration of the interaction between multiple dimensions and perspectives rather than looking at the research subject in isolation (Gates et al., 2021; Reynolds et al., 2016). I understand systems to be real, and also helpful in sense making. Boundaries surrounding, or within systems, are subjective. The locus of this research was the LLB curriculum review process, however this cannot be seen as taking place in a vacuum. All previous interaction within the programme and the university would have some effect on the actions and perceptions of those involved. Further wider systems issues such as the HE environment, including its neoliberal nature, performative culture, student fees and interpersonal relationships would affect perceptions and developments. In order to consider different perspectives, data was collected from a range of participants as detailed in Chapter 5 and systems issues are highlighted in the discussion of findings in Chapter 7.

Developmental – The evaluation is used to support development of the innovation. The use of a partnership approach was entirely new to all participants and there was no best practice guidance specific to the context. I considered my role to be a researcher collecting data, but also to facilitate and track the process and the implications of findings. Using a responsive design, I collaborated with staff and students to facilitate the process and create an ongoing evaluative culture and evidence-based approach which can be used for future planning.

Driven by innovation – Curriculum review had always been collaborative among staff, however the exclusion of students appeared to me to be problematic in practical, democratic and moral terms. This view was supported by other academic staff. Introducing a systems change by adapting the principles of partnership to the curriculum review was the innovation driving the evaluation. Positive impact was conceptualised as taking place at several levels, for those involved in the review, for future students studying the new curriculum, and the wider impact of a changed curriculum on graduates' thinking and professional practice.

Utilisation focused – Although my own aim was to produce research and record this within this theses, the main users of the evaluation would be the academic staff. The primary objective of the use strategy at the micro-level, would be to inform future curriculum review processes involving different students or programmes. As noted above, ultimately, academic staff are responsible for implementing further iterations of partnership curriculum review. For this reason, these staff were seen as the ultimate users of the evaluation. At the meso-level, reporting within the institution or a community of legal education practice might benefit others, as may discussion of theory at the macro-level.

Rigorous – In order to support rigour, empirical methods, including methods of analysis, and researcher reflections are outlined and explained in Chapter 5. In Chapter 7, I use theory regarding partnership and student engagement to discuss the data generated. Findings are intended to support next steps in the process of active student engagement in curriculum review and some examples of evaluative findings are set out in appendices D and G.

Timely – Feedback on initial student attitudes informed planning of the process. Data collection during three phases was planned to allow for timely adaptations as necessary. Within these phases, informal feedback allowed for adjustments and adaptations. Feedback regarding the findings also later informed co-created evaluation and reporting.

Combining complexity and systems thinking results in a perspective which highlights complex adaptive systems. In order to be appropriate for DEval, the subject of evaluation must be analysed and judged to meet the pre-requisites of being complex, evolving and innovative (Dickson & Saunders, 2014). Table 1 sets out Patton's (2011) complexity concepts and addresses them in relation to the partnership curriculum review.

Complexity characteristic	Description	Partnership in curriculum review
Nonlinearity	Sensitivity to initial conditions, small actions can stimulate large reactions. Unexpected events can have large impacts.	The context of the institution and programme were significant and created initial conditions of familiarity and trust. Early responses to student input had the potential to either increase trust in the process, or cause disillusionment.
Emergence	Patterns emerge from self-organisation among interacting agents who pursue their own paths. The whole of the interactions becomes greater than the separate parts.	Each example of student : staff partnership is unique. In the curriculum review process, participants had varying motivations and goals. The final outcome was not predictable nor achievable without student involvement.
Dynamical	Interactions within, between and among subsystems and parts within systems are unpredictable and turbulent	Interaction between established institutional systems and the students in the team were unpredictable and not always helpful. Interaction between the review and the HE context was dynamic, and sometimes contradictory, as were interactions between values.
Adaptive	Interacting elements and agents respond and adapt to each other. What emerges depends on ongoing	Those involved in the review and those supporting it from outside needed to adapt to each other and to individual contributions and requests. These were

	adaptation among agents and responses to the environment	affected by meso and macro-level environmental factors.
Uncertainty	Processes and outcomes are not predictable or knowable in advance	The exact nature of the process, involvement in it and reaction to it were uncertain. The outcome of the review was not predictable.
Coevolutionary	Agents evolve together within and as part of the whole system	Learning occurred as part of the review process and the evaluation, as each proceeded.

Table 1: Complexity in partnership curriculum review: adapted from Patton (2011)

Potential limitations for DEval include the fact that is relatively newly developed, hence it lacks an extensive foundational body of research. It is still heavily influenced by Patton as its originator, whose approach is not universally accepted. Furthermore, all eight sensitising concepts can be hard to achieve in practice (Miller, 2016). However, Patton is clear they are sensitising concepts, not fidelity criteria, emphasising they are not a checklist. Patton has also been accused of ignoring the importance of social and political interactions where not all actions appear rational, and external difficulties such as lack of resources can impact what people do (Smith & Chircop, 1989; Weiss, 1988). This echoes some of the criticisms of pragmatism, the underlying philosophy of DEval, referred to above. However using DEval does not preclude the inclusion by the evaluator of such considerations. This criticism can be addressed by the use of systems thinking to account for such external factors and by attempting to include sociological insight by considering values and norms within data analysis.

There are particular challenges to using DEval in academic research which include the need to generate knowledge within the evaluated context and more broadly, the temporality of the process, and the dual role of evaluator and researcher (Rey et al., 2014). While producing as much useful and timely knowledge as possible, my evaluation was also guided by the research questions. My choice to prioritise these questions maintained a focus on broader knowledge production though this could be argued to have been at the expense of more detailed local feedback. This links to the questions of temporality. I found there were tensions between the time required to undertake rigorous data analysis and the more rapid feedback envisaged within DEval. By using three phases of data collection (detailed in Chapter 5), I was nevertheless able to assess the need for adjustments as the process developed even though more rigorous analysis took place after the curriculum review was completed. My role as a practitioner, evaluator and researcher meant I was researching an area of my own professional practice, evaluating an innovation for all those involved, including myself, and conducting research. I did not take on a consultant role, which is sometimes the case in DEval, but I did facilitate the curriculum review process and reflection on it. I was thus, to some extent, both judge and judged (Rey et al., 2014). The evaluation itself was also therefore an example of a non-linear situation with multiple feedback loops where my own role and that of participants affected what happened and how it was interpreted. In order to acknowledge this and to increase transparency, I have set out my reflections on my own role and my interaction with others in Chapter 5. My role as an insider, undertaking research within my own organisation, facilitated a relationship of confidence and trust which was necessary for the co-creation of the new curriculum review process and the evaluation of it. In the following section I set out my understanding of this aspect of my role.

My position as an insider researcher

In this section I consider my position as a researcher examining my institutional practice. From a positivist perspective, this results in a lack of desirable objectivity. However, in DEval, the evaluator is part of the group co-creating and implementing the innovation. Acknowledging this, I consider the meaning of insider research and my insider role, including some of the benefits and challenges of insider research. I conclude by reflecting on the nature of the insider/outsider duality. I categorise myself as an insider researcher because my position allowed me to study complex issues within my own practice context in depth (Costley et al., 2010). I was an insider in terms of access (Merton, 1972), knowledge (Griffith, 1998; Labaree, 2002) and biography (Mercer, 2007). I worked with others to co-create the curriculum review. Mercer (2007) describes insider research as a double edged sword which can result in lack of objectivity, ethical and methodological dilemmas, an inability to see taken for granted things and conversely, greater rapport, trust, familiarity and ease of access. I will consider below the issues that might be relevant in my research. I have used Mercer's categories as a starting point and added additional comments addressing my multiple roles, ethics, benefits and complications.

Informant Bias

In insider research existing relationships can influence participants' responses due to the need to maintain relationships. In addition, if participants already have an idea of the interviewer's opinions, this too will influence what they disclose. I had an existing relationship with all the research participants. These ranged from a close working relationship and friendship with the co-programme leader, through academic relationships with students, to a formal, hierarchical relationship with senior managers. Students had a sense of my opinions regarding their involvement in the curriculum review. In introducing the possibility I made efforts to be enthusiastic and welcoming of their involvement. This may have influenced the way those who took part reported on the experience, though data from students who did not take part provides some counterbalance. While I often shared characteristics with students such as age, gender and ethnicity, and was an insider in relation to the programme and discipline, I assumed that they would see me primarily as an academic and outsider. Our previous interaction style, in teaching situations, may have also affected their responses and increased a desire to provide what they might perceive as acceptable answers.

Interview reciprocity

With all participants, pre-existing relationships facilitated expediency of rapport building. I found rapport was strongest when interviewing academic staff. I interpret this to be due to our shared academic and discipline identities and historic familiarity. In these interviews I was more likely to offer my own opinion. This was, in part, because to withhold it would have seemed unnatural and pointless, as teaching staff were already aware of my general approach. With students, I was much more careful not to influence the interview with my own views or comments. In these interviews I was more likely to stick to the interview script. With staff there was more digression and reordering of questions. Based on experience, I assumed staff were comfortable disagreeing with and challenging each other and this meant I did not consider my approach would prevent them offering views different to my own. However, it is possible that any staff especially newer or younger staff might have felt reticent in this regard.

Though openness can aid reciprocity, I was aware that decisions regarding how much information to give participants might affect the data. I was not questioned about the research by the majority of participants. For students, this may have been due to our unequal relationship and a feeling on their part that it was not appropriate. Senior staff were most likely to ask questions. This could be for several reasons. Both held PhD and this may have led them to identify with my research. Additionally, they may have used the connection to build rapport and mitigate the pre-existing employment power relationship between us.

Familiarity

Familiarity with the setting and good understanding of the political landscape were beneficial. Access allowed efficient scheduling of interviews and survey distribution. Furthermore, when the survey response rate was only 52%, I was able to visit classes to encourage survey completion resulting in a final rate of 73%. The equalised relationship between me and most participants meant the interview interactions could be fairly natural. In contrast, they felt able to influence interview scheduling in ways that would be unlikely for an outsider. Staff interviews were sometimes scheduled at the end of other staff meetings which caused me concern regarding fatigue, especially as they were online. Students sometimes gave short notice regarding availably or forgot to attend. Ultimately however, I do not consider these issues had a significant effect on the data. The greatest risk of familiarity is the difficulty in seeing things that might be taken for granted. Reflexivity (Chavez, 2015) can address this to some extent. As an insider I have attempted to remain self-aware and reflective, using personal notes and discussions with a critical friend to support this (Storey & Richard, 2015). I have used reflexivity as part of this research and within data analysis in an attempt to address my pre-understanding of taken for granted cultural issues and systems (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). Ultimately, I see the whole research process from my own perspective making it hard to judge the extent to which my insiderness has affected it. However as DEval also involves co-creation and thus demands reflection (Archibald et al., 2018; Hayes et al. 2016; Patton, 2011), it offers methodological advantages for an insider researcher.

Multiple roles

My role as programme leader and evaluator / researcher sometimes created tensions. Boundaries between multiple roles are rarely clear and this can cause difficulties (Hayes et al., 2016). I found Johansson and Lindhult's (2008) consideration of doing too little or too much as a researcher relevant. Integration of research and practice meant I needed to take some responsibility for action but I was constantly aware of a risk of influencing the process too much. For example, initially I was somewhat idealistic regarding the possibilities of working in partnership. However, it became clear that as a researcher, I needed to maintain distance from my own motivations, in order that the research be valid. This nevertheless led to clear conflicts in my roles. For example, in one instance, despite my desire to invite students to all planning meetings, I needed to recognise the preferences of other staff to exclude them. As the partnership curriculum review progressed I came to fully appreciate that research must mirror the scientific method in that failure is seen to generate knowledge that is as valid as success. My acceptance that the partnership approach may meet unanticipated challenges, or even fail, was a significant step by which I came to appreciate that either result could provide useful knowledge. However, this did not mean I was neutral regarding the benefits of actively engaging students.

Ethics

I needed to consider ethical questions regarding the use of incidental data. No data from meetings or other interactions not explicitly covered by the consent process was used. I had access to other institutional data regarding policy and practice on curriculum review and partnerships. Nevertheless, culture and other communications informed my overall impression and may have influenced the questions I asked. This means that despite an ethical stance which acknowledges participant rights over direct use of data, being an insider with privileged access still provided background knowledge. Questions of power and politics were also relevant. From the students' perspective, the curriculum review, though taking a partnership approach, could be characterised as top-down, implementing policy in an academic or institutional, not student, generated manner. In attempting to mitigate this, and follow the argument that DEval sits within and supports commitment to a wider system where top-down can meet bottom-up, I kept details of the process logistics open to accommodate student involvement and feedback (Patton, 2011). This required frequent interventions to address situations where student involvement was overlooked by others. For example, despite early discussion and agreement, diplomatic prompting was required to ensure students were invited to the final review and once there, invited to speak.

Despite her rejection of the need to be either an insider or an outsider, Mercer characterises insider and outsider research as constant shifting back and forth between end points on a continuum,. Labaree (2002), adds a third dimension and describes degrees of insiderness, outsiderness, and their change over time. This emphasises the infinite number of points that might indicate a researcher's position. However, it describes insider or outsider identity itself as shifting. Instead I see the focus on, and significance of, multiple identities as changing. For example, in interactions with academic staff, my own identity as an academic came to the fore, my position as programme leader was also relevant but my PhD was of minimal relevance. When explaining the research and recruiting students however, I emphasised my identity as a PhD student in order to enhance rapport and foreground this identity as opposed to my role as their teacher or programme leader. While I attempted to present myself as a *student insider* it is probable that students continued to see me as a *staff outsider.* This means I see insider/outsider questions as identity metrics in a complex multi-dimensional space. There is an infinite number of metrics and they may be understood differently by me or by others. The only shifting, is between which metric is chosen as appropriate for consideration (Appiah, 2019).

Many others have made the point that insider/outsider is a false dichotomy (Chavez, 2015). Hellawell, highlights the utility of the insider/outsider heuristic in prompting reflexivity (2006) while also questioning the simplicity of the dichotomy, even where a continuum is acknowledged. He contends there are multiple continua which provide different ways to frame relations with participants. I found Dewey's depiction of dualisms as "two monisms stuck loosely together" (Dewey, 1917a, p. 491) useful and prefer to acknowledge the multi-layered nature of the insider/outsider concept (Hellawell, 2006; Toy-Cronin, 2018).

In summary, a pragmatic meta-theoretical lens further highlights intermediate possibilities, the value of democracy and the power of communities of inquiry, the interaction of process and outcome. I have used DEval because it is appropriate in researching an innovation oriented towards changing a complex educational practice environment. Details of the design of this methodology are outlined in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Research Design

In the chapters above, I explained there is relatively little research and a consequent lack of knowledge regarding partnership in legal education or curriculum review. In order to test, challenge and refine understanding of what it might mean to engage law students in a curriculum review process, the research design must be appropriate to answer the questions:

1. *What are participant understandings and aspirations regarding working in partnership?*
2. *What factors inhibit and promote working in partnership in this context?*
3. *What are the implications of the answers to questions 1 and 2 for policy and practice?*
4. *What are the implications of the research findings in critically assessing the concept of students as partners and its position in relation to relevant theories of student engagement?*

This chapter therefore deals with the design of this research. After describing what student participants did within the curriculum review process, I set out in detail the DEval process and methodological choices associated with its use. Following a discussion of the design, mixed methods, three phases of data collection and methods of analysis, I set out my reflections. I have discussed ethical issues arising from insider research in Chapter 4, I also address ethics in a separate section below.

The curriculum review process, as shown below in Figure 7, was the focus for both evaluation and research. Three separate meetings with all students in each year group were initially held to explain what curriculum review involved and explore understandings of ESD and how it might be integrated into the curriculum. Following the recruitment of eight final year student volunteers, a discussion took place between myself and these volunteers to outline how the process might progress. General plans regarding the number of meetings, modalities to be used and the responsibilities of staff and students were discussed and agreed, though these were all subject to revision as the process progressed. A further meeting was facilitated by professional staff for these volunteers together with academic staff. In this meeting, the details of institutional requirements for curriculum review were outlined and a wide ranging discussion of possible changes was facilitated, to which all student volunteers contributed.

The review progressed using email, access to draft electronic documents and a further four meetings (online and face-to-face). Different configurations of student volunteers and staff participants participated in all these interactions, which took place over approximately ten weeks. Adjustments were made to the schedule of meetings which had been planned in light of discussions between me and student volunteers and changes were made to accommodate additional items that students raised for consideration. Student volunteer comments were sought on draft written proposals and a final proposal was submitted with the support of all volunteers. The formal curriculum review approval meeting was led by internal and external panel members and was attended by law academics, two law student volunteers and a student reviewer. The revised proposal was approved by the panel without conditions.

Integrating research and evaluation design

DEval uses an epistemic perspective which foregrounds action for change and utility. My understanding of DEval as a research methodology, is *a utilisation oriented approach that combines research on, and evaluation of, a change to support knowledge generation internally and externally*. This thesis examines the change of using partnership in curriculum review and includes planning for further iterations. The relationship between the evaluation, the curriculum review and the research is illustrated in Figure 7, which shows the dynamic relationship between the outcome, learning for the next review and answering the research questions.

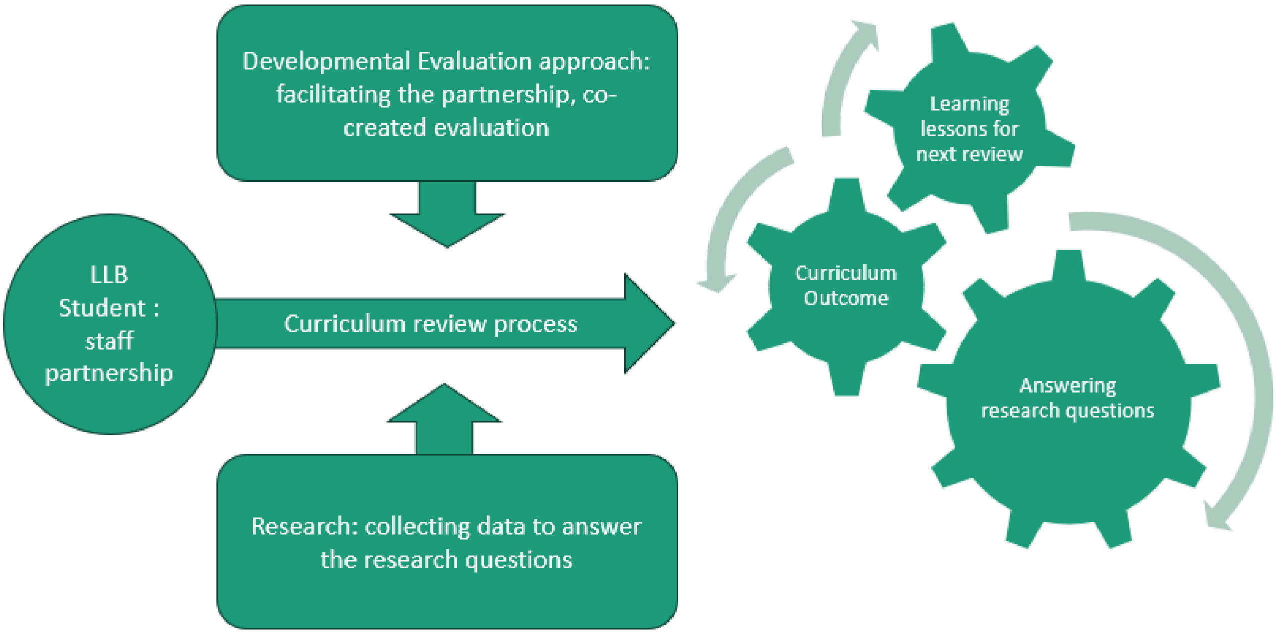

Figure 7: Developmental evaluation of curriculum review based on Rey et al. (2014)

The research is contextual and was influenced by the discussion and negotiation which took place between participants as part of a unique political organisational reality within which the curriculum review and evaluation were entwined (Coghlan, 2019). New practices occurred and learning was captured. Further evaluation and dissemination continued via conference presentations involving staff and students, and writing for publication.

RUFDATA (Saunders, 2000) is a framework depicting design aspects in an evaluation. The acronym stands for Reasons, Use, Foci, Data, Audience, Timing and Agency and is detailed in Table 2.

RUFDATA element	***Design features***
*What were the **Reasons** for the evaluation?*	Considering attitudes to, and evaluating effects of, using a partnership approach to LLB curriculum review. Gathering evidence to inform adjustments during the process, and future practice. Academic staff wanted to use a partnership approach in whole curriculum review, but did not know what drivers and barriers might exist or whether it might lead to a good outcome. Discovering participant perspectives, in a timely way, was required so adjustments could be made to the ongoing process.
*How was the evaluation **Used**?*	Before the process, data was used to gather information regarding different perspectives on partnership based curriculum review and plan the review process. During the evaluation, data was used to inform the conduct of the process. Immediately after the review, reflections were used to inform structured evaluation findings, future planning and make evidence-based arguments in support of future partnership in curriculum review.
*What were the evaluation **Foci**?*	The focus was the LLB partnership curriculum review. This adopted general principles from partnership theory to a new context. This was not mandated by top-down policy, nor bottom-up, student initiated, but arose in the dynamic middle ground (Patton, 2011). The process was considered from various perspectives within the institution, including those actively taking part and those not actively involved.
*What **Data** were collected and analysed?*	This is summarised in Tables 4 and 5 below.
*Who was the **Audience**?*	The primary audience for evaluative findings were the academic staff who would make final recommendations for curriculum change and decide if future reviews would use a partnership approach. Other audiences included existing students, notably those who were actively involved. Additionally, professional and senior staff were an audience who were likely to make decisions informed by the evaluative findings.

What was the ***Timing****?*	The timing of the evaluation was designed to coincide with the curriculum review to enable ongoing enhancements to the process. It was designed to culminate after the review was complete.
Whose ***Agency*** *was involved?*	The combination of evaluation and research meant only the researcher collected and completed detailed analysis of the data. An overview of analysis was provided to staff who were directly involved, to inform decision making during the review, and enable evaluative reflection, feedback to others, and planning.

Table 2: RUFDATA Elements of evaluation design

Three phases of data collection

In this section I outline decisions regarding methods, and comment on data collection at each stage. I begin by considering the meaning and justifications for mixed methods and relevant ethical issues. Appendix A contains participant information and consent forms. A tabular representation of the evaluative research design including data collection points is set out below.

Design element	*Phase 1 Orientation, reconnaissance & planning*		*Phase 2 Adjustment & adaptation*	*Phase 3 Completion and reflection*
Aims	Explore understandings & aspirations, (RQ.1); Inform Phase 2/3 of curriculum review and data collection		Learn of inhibiting / promoting factors (RQ.2); Adapt process if required	Explore reflections of participants and non-participants (RQs.1 & 2); Consider implications for policy / practice (RQ.3); Consider implications for theory (RQ.4)
Methods	Online Survey	Semi-structured Interviews	Semi-structured Interviews	Semi-structured Interviews
Sampling	All current LLB students n.45	Voluntary response and purposive sampling	Voluntary response sampling	Voluntary response and purposive sampling
Participants	Response rate 73%	Law staff n.5 Professional staff n.3	Law Staff n.3 Student participants n.2 Professional staff n.1	Law Staff n.3 Student volunteers n.6

		Senior Staff n.2 Student Union n.1		Student non-participants n.2 Professional staff n.1 Student Union n.1
Data	Mainly quantitative (some qualitative) Jisc Online surveys	Qualitative in Nvivo12	Qualitative in Nvivo12	Qualitative in Nvivo12
Analysis	Descriptive analysis	Reflexive Thematic Analysis of whole dataset Supplemented by interrogation by phase and role.		
Comparative analysis	Comparative analysis matrix (Bazeley, 2017)			

Table 3: Research Design Outline

Action and learning are central to DEval which is "purpose-and-relationship-driven not methods-driven" (Patton, 2011, p. 288), so methods are chosen for utility. Thus mixing methods is seen as advantageous. The term mixed methods is generally used to describe the use of quantitative and qualitative methods or approaches within a single design, though it is important there is integration rather than parallel studies (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Reference to either concurrent or sequential mixed methods design has been questioned, and I agree with Plano Clark et al. (2010) who contend this dual classification oversimplifies the complexity of mixed methods design. While the survey was administered immediately prior to interviews and some basic analysis sensitised me to some issues, the interviews were not developed as a result of the survey so were not sequential in the common meaning of that term. I used the methods that worked best in the local context (Biesta, 2010a). While survey data assisted orientation and clarified initial student attitudes, it was the interview data which informed the evolution of the evaluation. My approach can be described as embedded (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017) where the quantitative data is embedded in a qualitative methodology to provide increased perspectives, a more thorough understanding of attitudes and the opportunity for comparison of data.

Interviews formed the dominant method of data collection because I see participants as expressing knowledge and beliefs which, consciously or not, will affect future actions. Furthermore, the emphasis on co-creation within DEval favours qualitative data. All interviews were of the type using a pre-planned outline topic guide (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018). I was directed by what participants appeared to consider important. This provided comprehensiveness while remaining conversational. I also made use of DEval inquiry frameworks focussed on *learning* and *collaboration* (Patton, 2011, p. 227-263). The *learning* framework emphasises the distinction between beliefs, knowledge, and action and is premised upon the fact that action results from beliefs and knowledge. I saw this as useful in addressing my questions regarding understandings, aspirations, and their effects. The *collaboration* framework highlights the value of seeing levels of collaboration as context specific and dynamic. I hoped to capture data regarding participant reflections on the changing nature of collaboration within the process. Interview plans are attached at Appendix B.

Data was gathered at three stages, as set out in Table 3. This facilitated responsiveness during the change process. As this research involved an initial implementation of change, these three stages formed the framework for data collection. Reflections on this data supplemented by later co-created evaluation and reflection will provide a basis for planning the next cycle of curriculum review. Learning in this context may also influence planning for other institutional programmes. Though this necessarily reduces opportunities for comparison of data between cycles of curriculum review, within the cycle studied there were nevertheless opportunities for interactions between data. These included comparison between different participants, time points and between quantitative and qualitative data.

Phase 1: Orientation, reconnaissance and planning

The impetus for the innovation was a desire to review the curriculum in a way that allowed for maximum student engagement. The incorporation of ESD within the LLB curriculum acted as a trigger for this. The curriculum content became the locus of this research while the focus was acting in partnership. Discussion with professional service colleagues in this phase led to the abandonment of any incentives for students. It also led to one of those professional staff facilitating an initial workshop for academic staff and student volunteers to explain the curriculum review process and begin to voice possible changes. I designed a survey for all programme students to assess contextual and baseline data and spoke in person to them to promote completion. In addition I later met with final year students to explain the review process and to ask for volunteers. This resulted in 8 student volunteers from a cohort of 18.

In this phase I used group interviews with academic staff. The implications of this format are outlined below in my discussion of ethics. To gain a fuller picture of understandings and aspirations and expand participation beyond those directly involved, I used individual interviews with senior managers, professional staff and a student union engagement officer. Systems thinking highlights the value of seeing a phenomenon from different perspectives (Gates et al., 2021). Carey (2013b) argues the spread of student opinion can be poorly understood when the focus is only on students involved in projects such as this. Therefore, I surveyed all programme students in order to gain an understanding of attitudes to engagement in curriculum review. Consent was obtained within the survey. Due to the small number of students, care was taken to minimise the risk of identifying individuals. No gender or ethnicity questions were included but because of its relevance, information regarding student representative roles was requested. The survey instrument is reproduced in Appendix C. Questions addressed three main areas; student understanding of the curriculum and desire for change, reactions to student engagement including appropriate levels of student control of the curriculum, and reactions to the possibility of taking part in the review process. The survey allowed for early basic quantitative analysis to gain an understanding of frequencies. By providing a basis upon which to build questions within later interviews it also facilitated later comparison with qualitative data. It is important to note one of the drawbacks of surveys is that data is not sensitive. Assumptions cannot be made regarding each respondent’s view of scales and intervals. Though some amendments were made as a result of discussion with academic staff, it is possible respondents interpreted questions differently or were constrained by their closed format. Adding open questions addresses this point only partially, as these may be directive or understood in different ways.

Phase 2: Adjustment and adaptation

Regular meetings with the co-programme leader, academic staff and separately with student volunteers, were used to plan and discuss progress and led to some changes. For example, specific sessions with staff (which had occurred for all students) were added to explore the meaning of ESD. I maintained regular contact with student volunteers, via email and online Teams meetings, to discuss the review process and their attendance at meetings. Because I wanted to promote their agency, I did not impose a complete timetable on them but negotiated a meeting schedule liaising with staff and students. Many of these meetings were either completely or partially online and attendance by students and staff reduced as the process progressed. Non-meeting activities included the creation of documents on the staff SharePoint, some of which were provided to students, a space for student volunteers to post views, student volunteer liaison with alumni to gauge views, and a staff-student national conference presentation. These activities were useful but illustrated that institutional spaces, on campus and online, are usually designated for either students or staff but not both equally. Two individual semi-structured interviews with students and one group interview with academic staff were also used to check views on the partnership curriculum review process and highlight any adjustments needed. The same interviews were used to gather data to inform answers to the research questions. Ultimately there were four curriculum review meetings which students and staff attended, five students attended at least one meeting, while two attended all of the meetings.

Phase 3: Completion, reflection and evaluation

In the final phase, a formal institutional approval process was completed and an evaluation conducted by academic staff (Appendix D). Reflections and evaluation were also presented by staff and students as a conference paper within the institution. Later, all programme students approved the changes to allow for immediate implementation across all year groups. Interviews with student volunteers, non-volunteers, academic and professional staff and an SU representative involved at the formal approval stage were conducted. In order to address concerns regarding voices which may not be heard (Carey, 2013b; Papadopoulou & Sidorenko, 2022) I identified participants from those students who volunteered to take part in the review and those who did not. In this phase, while still using semi-structured interviews, I reduced the level of standardisation to increase conversational elements and my chances of capturing unanticipated data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Some changes regarding data collection design were also made at this stage (Cousin, 2009). For example, further student interviews were added to reflect different degrees of engagement in the process. While I had anticipated students would fall into two categories, those who volunteered to engage and those who did not, it became clear this was not reflective of reality. Of those students who volunteered to take part, some attended every meeting, some attended several and some, despite their initial intention, attended none. I therefore added interviews to capture data from the group who had volunteered, but had not taken part. Additionally, the inclusion of Daniel (pseudonym) a student from another programme who took part in the final formal curriculum review meeting, was a late addition which allowed me to gain a student perspective from outside the programme.

Ethics

Ethical approval was obtained from Lancaster University Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Management School Research Ethics Committee. My institutional research office accepted this with confirmation from the relevant Head of Faculty. All processes were in compliance with ethical guidelines (BERA, 2018). All research was with adults in private online interactions. Consent forms were signed prior to interviews and confirmation regarding participant understanding of information and agreement to recordings was obtained at the beginning of each interview. Interview data was not anonymous, so pseudonyms were allocated to maintain confidentiality. Some details were removed from transcripts in order to reduce the possibility of individual identification. It must be noted the identification of some staff, despite the use of pseudonyms, may be possible due to their positions. Staff were reminded of this fact. A small reputational risk was identified in being involved with an innovation that might be unsuccessful. However, this risk was mitigated by emphasising the desire to research all aspects, positive and negative, in order to developmentally evaluate the innovation and learn from the experience. My relationship with students required careful ethical consideration. When teaching staff undertake research with student participants questions of power are relevant (Johnston & Proudford, 1994). My position as programme leader and module tutor could be seen as causing pressure on students to participate. I approached final year students by talking to them at the end of classes, asking for volunteers and referencing this research. Introducing the research in a class setting allowed me to respond to questions and clarify the distinction between taking part in the curriculum review and taking part in the research. It was made very clear volunteering carried no obligations in relation to the latter. Significantly, students had to be assured their contributions would not affect their assessments in any way. Despite this, it is possible students may not have fully trusted that their participation would have no bearing on their assessments and they may have had concerns about conscious or unconscious effects. The majority of interviews with students took place after internal marking was complete. Although moderation and external examiner processes were used to aid transparency, it is not possible to fully discount any effect this relationship with students might have had on data provided by them.

The use of an online survey and interviewing via Microsoft Teams was beneficial in terms of maintaining data privacy and security. No portable devices were required, all data being accessed via my own personal computer in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the UK Data Protection Act 2018. Despite some disadvantages regarding transition spaces and timing, online interviews were efficient and enabled easy scheduling and transcription. While all other participants were interviewed individually, two professional staff and (on most occasions) academic staff, were interviewed in groups. Lewis-Beck et al. (2004) describe group interviews as “the systematic questioning of several individuals simultaneously” (p. 1). This format can be used where individuals have worked together for some time and share a common understanding of the value of exchanging views openly (Frey & Fontana, 1991). Advantages include the fact that different perspectives can lead to a more complete record. A further practical benefit included the time needed. Nevertheless, there are dangers I worked hard to mitigate, for example, that some participants are not given a chance to speak, they produce group think or that very personal information is not disclosed (Frey & Fontana, 1991). Counter views to the contested phenomena of group think indicate there is no consensus as to its effect (Park, 2000). I also judged that, in light of the subject matter, it was unlikely very personal information would be disclosed, even in a different format. Although I felt well equipped to deal with these considerations, the format of the interview will always have some impact on the data obtained (Arksey & Knight, 1999) as will the method of analysis, which is described in the following section.

Data analysis methods

In this section, I outline how data was analysed, reflecting on the benefits and limitations of the methods chosen. Although I agree with the rejection of a false dichotomy between quantitative and qualitative data (Brewer et al., 1999; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005), I have used the terms as a form of “shorthand” (Small, 2011, p. 60) to distinguish the survey and interview data because the survey results were mainly numerical.

Survey data

The survey used Likert scales although open comments were possible in response to some questions. Nominal data categories regarding year group demographics were used but as other demographic details were not considered relevant, most are non-parametric ordinal data (Rugg, 2007). The year categories were cross tabulated against student representative status. Table 2 shows respondent numbers by year group and student representative status. Survey questions addressed understandings and aspirations regarding partnership and curricula changes. The full survey instrument is in Appendix C.

Student respondents	**Year one**			**Year two**			**Year three**			**Total**
Number	13			7			12			32
Percentage	40.6			20.9			37.5			100
Student rep status sub-category	Current	Past	Never	Current	Past	Never	Current	Past	Never	
Number	1	2	10	1	0	6	2	1	9	32
Percentage	3.12	6.25	31.25	3.12	0	18.75	6.25	3.12	28.12	100

Table 4: Demographic data for survey respondents

The survey was written and analysed using the Jisc Online Survey platform and distributed via the programme VLE before the curriculum review process. In view of an initial response rate of 52%, the deadline was extended and I reminded students of the survey's purpose, resulting in a final response rate of 73% (33 out of 45). One respondent did not indicate consent and was removed from the analysis. This is likely to have been due to the lack of an appropriate survey progress gateway. Analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics to consider the responses to each question and facilitate contextual and practical insight (Frey, 2018). A brief analysis in phase 1 provided information for staff, and context for the curriculum review, while more detailed analysis occurred in phase 3. The data was not intended to allow for generalisation.

Interview data

This data comprised transcripts from twenty-three semi-structured interviews with staff and students of approximately 50 minutes duration. A summary of participant roles and phases is set out in Table 3 clarifying those interviewed more than once. All names are pseudonyms and these, with abbreviations signifying roles and phases, are used in Chapter 6 to identify quotations. Where participants were, or had been, student representatives this is indicated.

Role	***Phase 1***	***Phase 2***	***Phase 3***
Questions regarding:	*Understandings and aspirations for student engagement in the curriculum review*	*Perceptions of the process so far / need for adjustments*	*Reflections on the process, outcome and levels of engagement including promoters and inhibitors*
Students: volunteers (SV)		*Lilly (current rep)* *Nicki*	*Lilly (current rep)* *Nicki* *Hazel (past rep)* *Maisy* *Paul* *Ruth*
Students: non-volunteers (S)			*Holly *** *Carrie ***
Law Staff (LS)	*Group interview: Alison, Ben and Carl*	*Group interview: Alison, Ben and Diana*	*Alison* *Group interview: Ben and Carl*

	Group interview: Diana and Emma		
Professional Staff (PS)	*Amy* *Group interview: Rachel and Mary ***	*Amy*	*Pat*
Senior Management Staff (SM)	*Susan ** *Rick*		
Student Union (SU)	*Lena (sabbatical officer) ***		*Daniel (validation panel member)*

Table 5: Participant roles and relevant evaluation phase of interviews

**interview cut short*

*** not involved in the curriculum review process*

Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach

I used reflexive thematic analysis (RTA) (Braun & Clarke, 2019, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a) of transcripts to consider participant accounts of their understandings, aspirations and perceptions of factors inhibiting and promoting partnership. Braun and Clarke advocate for clear explanations regarding the use and rationale for RTA and these are addressed below. I see participant data as representing subjective knowledge, beliefs and experiences in ways that will inform future action (or inaction) (Kelly & Cordeiro, 2020; Morgan, 2014). Below I explain why I chose RTA and outline the process used. I do not view analysis as reliable in the sense that the same procedure undertaken by another researcher, or by myself a second time, would lead to the same results. Nevertheless, my aim is to produce a systematic and transparent account of how I “got there” (Ritchie, 2014, p. 278).

My primary reason for choosing RTA was its emphasis on reflexivity. DEval recognises the value of reflection to support evaluation (Patton, 2011). The terms reflection and reflexivity are sometimes conflated and not uniformly defined (D’Cruz et al., 2005). I see reflection as *exploring any experience to lead to new understandings*, involving taking chosen past experiences and considering them critically. I see reflexivity as habitual use of strategies to reflect and question values, assumptions and action (May & Perry, 2017). While other approaches consider researcher reflexivity, RTA makes reflexivity central (Braun & Clarke, 2019). Additionally, because it is commonly used and clearly articulated (Byrne, 2022; Trainor & Bundon, 2021) its use can facilitate rigour by allowing for comparison between the method and my own analysis. Though both Braun and Clarke work within a critical paradigm, RTA can align with pragmatic (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Dewe, 2014) and mixed methods (Byrne, 2022) approaches. RTA sees the researcher as integral to the research process and facilitates sociological insight, lack of which is a criticism of pragmatic research (Hammond, 2013). Furthermore, it allows representation of plurality within data, capturing complexity within themes. Through its use, I have come to see analysis as sitting at the intersection of data, theoretical assumptions, and researcher. Despite advantages, there were also limitations, notably, matching the time required to conduct RTA with the curriculum review schedule meant separate RTA at each phase was not possible. The temporal tensions between DEval and research can lead to compromises where research rigour must take precedence (Rey et al. 2014). Instead of treating each phase as a separate research unit, once the review was complete, I applied RTA to the whole dataset using NVivo charts to analyse coding by case attribute value (phase 1, 2 or 3) for multiple codes. This allowed me to consider coding by phase while retaining the essence of RTA, looking for unifying themes across the whole dataset.

Braun and Clarke (2019, 2020) refer to analysis as inductive or deductive (though a combination is possible). My analysis was informed by theory and undertaken in light of my questions and reading (Earl Rinehart, 2021), but developed according to my interpretation of salience in the data. Therefore neither an inductive nor deductive analysis was appropriate. An alternative, abductive analysis, is defined by Timmermans and Tavory (2012) as “a recursive process of double-fitting data and theories” (p. 179). This allows for moving back and forth between theory and data (Bazeley, 2017, p. 103). Thompson (2022) describes an abductive researcher as neither completely open minded nor “compelled to fit empirical data within established theoretical understanding through simplified testing” (p. 1411). My abductive analysis and discussion considers data in light of relevant theoretical frames, while being alert to data that does not fit, to concepts such as complexity and systems thinking, and potential explanations.

Although some are critical of Qualitative Data Analysis Software (Braun & Clarke, 2022a) after considering the disadvantages of a paper-based process (Robson, 2011), I used NVivo12 to manage the majority of the analysis. This was largely for systematic organisation and access, as opposed to sophisticated manipulation. While critiques of NVivo's claims to speed and a "realist, extractive model of research where the data reveal their (singular) truth" (Braun & Clarke, 2022a, p. 66) provide important cautions, I appreciated the efficiency of data manipulation (García-Horta & Guerra-Ramos, 2009; Jackson, 2019). I agree with Evers (2018) who states analysis still occurs "in the mind" (p. 65) as the software merely supports the researcher's work. O'Kane et al (2021) cite issues such as organization, searching, and creation of an audit trail, as advantages which I found NVivo12 supported. Nevertheless, there were points where I also used paper, or worked solely with Word documents. Braun and Clarke (2022a) set out six recursive phases of analysis. I have listed these in the following description to structure reflections on their use and explain what I did.

1) *Data familiarisation*

I read and annotated hard copy transcripts to record impressions and reactions. I removed filled pauses and did not record inflections, gestures etc. I found using hardcopy was easier (Clinton, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2022a) and made re-reading more practical. Rewriting annotations in NVivo12 provided opportunities for reflection exemplifying a challenge that persisted throughout the analysis; gaining the advantages of software without losing the benefits of hard copies. At various stages I returned to hardcopy transcripts, codes and themes to enable a different perspective on the data.

2) *Generating initial codes*

I began by open coding (Braun & Clarke, 2020) working through transcripts creating twenty-six potential codes. Although I had no definite a priori codes (Creswell & Poth, 2018), coding was influenced by sensitising concepts (Elliott, 2018). This list was refined and changed in line with the recursive nature of RTA. Key points in this progression were recorded, but no codebook was created. I used mainly semantic coding because I wanted to code prioritising participant word use. I used latent coding to capture underlying meanings where necessary. The categorisation of codes as either sematic or latent are necessarily subjective. Any latent meanings I have ascribed are also influenced by my own subjectivity.

3) Generation of themes

Initially I considered potential *bucket* themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022b) as topic summaries derived directly from my questions. The move from topic summaries to central organising concepts, entailed an uncomfortable shift from a descriptive orientation to a choice of themes I saw in the data. While themes telling an overarching story across the dataset allow for multifaceted content, differences between individuals, groups and phases of data collection can be obscured. To address this, I used NVivo features including text searching and charting by case attribute value, to interrogate the data. For example, I charted the ways in which data from groups and phases were represented within each theme (Appendix E). In Chapter 6 where data is presented, I have made clear in relation to each quotation, the individual, their group and the research phase (Guest et al., 2012). Comparison charts allowed me to check representation within each theme (Thompson, 2022). For example, regarding the theme *There's a risk*, I anticipated discussion of risks might predominate in phase 1, but experience would lead participants to reconsider their initial position. In fact, I found this was not the case, with relevant coding in all phases, most notably emphasising expectation management, power, authority and expertise. Thus participants continued to talk about risks during and after the process, sometimes disclosing initial doubts only in phase 3. RTA, in telling a story from the whole dataset, therefore allowed me to identify what might have been lost had I only used phase 1 to capture data regarding perceived risk.

4) Reviewing themes

Reviewing continued until writing began. At this stage I was also refining coding, guided by whether I had achieved an acceptable level of thematic internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Patton, 2015). In organising my review, I divided two themes into sub-themes. Changes to codes and theme names were ongoing. Some codes were retired as either too small, due to overlap, or because they did not fit into the overall story. A retired code example was one representing *learning, teaching and assessment*. Figure 8 presents the final versions with boxed codes linked to sub-themes and central themes.

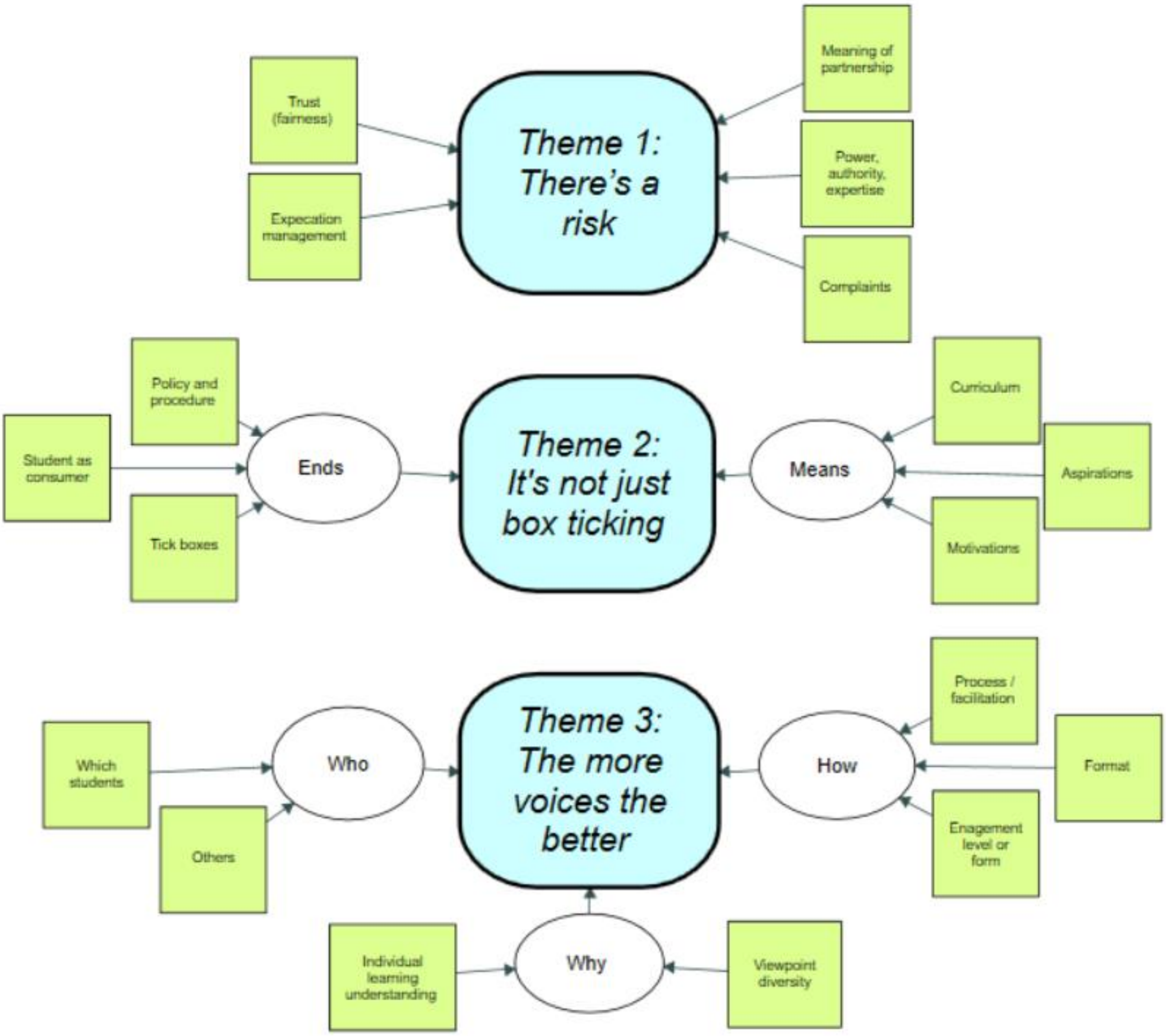

Figure 8: Themes and codes at phase four of reflexive thematic analysis

5) *Define and name final themes*

Although sub-themes were helpful for conceptualisation, after defining themes I put them aside. I did not find they helped to explain the final theme and its contents. Using multifaceted themes, I conducted the final stages of analysis using a flat theme structure. The final three themes remained those outlined above, and analysis of the data within each is set out in Chapter 6. I used a matrix to list and define themes noting relevance to the research questions. Extracts from this matrix, including theme facets, are reproduced in Chapter 6 where they are compared with survey data.

6) *Final thematic analysis*

Usually described as writing up, I refer to this stage as the final thematic analysis. It entailed aspects of all stages, distillation and selection of data. Writing is often considered as integrating analysis and discussion (Byrne, 2022; Thompson, 2022). Using an abductive approach meant I developed theoretical understandings as I completed the analysis, however I chose to present the discussion and analysis separately which allows comparison of the analysis from each method, before explicit discussion of theory and addressing research questions in Chapter 7.

Comparative analysis

To use the term mixed methods, explicit integration, rather than parallel or sequential methods is generally required (Bazeley, 2016; Green et al., 1989). Plano Clark et al. (2010) set out three alternatives to effectively integrate data and generate results “greater than the sum of their parts” (p. 156). These are merging in a comparison matrix, in discussion or by data transformation. Although merging in discussion is common, the decision to present my analysis separately made this impractical. Merging by data transformation would entail quantitizing qualitative data (Schoonenboom, 2023), which is seen as problematic within RTA, therefore, in order to remain true to the ethos of RTA within a mixed methods study, I chose to complete separate analyses of survey and interview data, before merging them in a matrix (Table 6).

Informed by the comparison process advocated by Bazeley (2017), I took Fitzpatrick’s (2011, 2016) use of data labels as a strategy for integration as my main framework. I adapted this by adding labels and indicating the relevant research question within a matrix to accommodate situations where the data might be relevant to more than one question. Fitzpatrick refers to the need to preserve “the integrity of each method” (p. 282) and, despite challenges, I decided this was important.

The mixed methods coding began with definitional elements (facets) of the qualitative themes. I see this as a form of what Caracelli and Greene (1993) refer to as typology development where "the analysis of one data type yields a typology (or set of substantive categories) that is then used as a framework applied in analysing the contrasting data type" (p. 197). Because the qualitative data is the main component, the themes were used as grouping variables. I summarised survey data in narrative form to aid comparison. Direct comparison between this and qualitative data was not possible due to the anonymous nature of the survey. All survey questions were included, however, as there was no definitive correspondence between themes and survey content, some aspects aligned more closely than others and survey data was allocated to assist in answering the research questions. Although comparison facilitates what Fielding (2012) refers to as "analytic density" (p. 128) it does not prove validity, I therefore do not use the term triangulation, which despite contested meanings, implies validation of results (Flick, 2004). I used the labels set out below in the comparison matrix presented in Chapter 6.

Label	*Confirm*	*Enhance*	*Contradict*	*Ambivalent*	*Silent*
Meaning	Reinforcing alignment	Alignment adding detail or insight	Opposing	Some alignment but with contradictory elements	No corresponding data

Table 6: Mixed Methods Data Labels Adapted from Fitzpatrick (2016)

Use of labels has limitations, in reducing data it is possible to oversimplify. However, I see coding as a process of simplifying, which facilitates an overview of connections that would otherwise be obscured by detail.

Researcher reflections

In DEval, the evaluator role generally involves active participation in the initiative. This means the evaluator is part of a subjectively shared experience connected to the context and the innovation (Reynolds et al., 2016). This research can be characterised as at one end of a continuum of involvement because the innovation of active student engagement, collaboratively undertaken, was initiated by me as part of my research. This has implications for neutrality due to my intertwined relationships with the context and participants (Rademaker & Polush, 2021). The neutrality of evaluation can be distinguished from neutrality regarding an innovation (Stake, 2004). Those in an evaluator role should aim not to be impartial, but to be *critically partial* (Reynolds et al., 2016). I saw active student engagement as a democratic and moral issue so was not neutral on this point. This meant, however, that it was important for this research and evaluation to be as rigorous as possible, to support successful partnership. Rigour is a contested concept but can be increased by transparency, including locating and critiquing my role (Cypress, 2017; Rolfe, 2006). I have attempted to address these issues by practicing reflexivity. In Chapter 4, I explained my ontological, epistemological and methodological approach and my role as an insider. In addition I have outlined methods of analysis in ways that would allow others to scrutinise my approach. I have also aimed to be transparent regarding my own motivations and reflections.

Although reflective practice is seen as important, there is little guidance on reflective practice within evaluations (van Draanen, 2017). For this reason, some writers take inspiration from the action research literature. For example, Rademaker and Polush (2022) proposing an integrated framework for action research and evaluation, highlight reflection as a shared feature of both. Lessons from action research can also help reconcile the evaluator and researcher roles (Rey et al., 2014). Archibald et al. (2018) propose consideration of four levels of reflection for evaluators and I have attempted to address these below. They are micro, day-to-day reflection-in-action, meso reflection on my various roles, macro reflection on values and contribution to the common good, and meta reflection on how I think and reflect.

I have also drawn on the work of Coghlan et al. (2019) who refer to three levels which are used to demonstrate rigour and show doctorateness in insider action research (Poole, 2015; Wellington, 2013). Adapting these for DEval they are in summary:

- First person inquiry, involving the reflections of the evaluator / researcher
- Second person inquiry, centred on co-creation and interpersonal dialogue, including working with others to effect and evaluate change.
- Third person inquiry, addressing the wider significance of the research, extending small-scale projects to create wider impact as discussed in Chapter 7.

Below, I clarify my use of the term reflection and set out reflections regarding the first and second person inquiry levels within the curriculum review process and DEval research.

Schön's (1995) development of Dewey's conception of reflection (Dewey, 1909; Hébert, 2015) using reflection-in-action allowing for self-awareness in the moment and reflection-on-action which entails a later reflection on what was done were useful when considering my reflections during the research. The concept of reflection is not without difficulty, it can be ill defined (Nguyen et al., 2014) and takes time and effort (Tight, 2023a). In addition, if there is reflection on reflection, it can be subject to infinite regression. In addition, although it can increase self-awareness, it should be used with caution to avoid self-indulgence or self-justification (Van Draanen, 2017). Reflection as defined by Dewey, calls for an initial doubting, but I have found doubt itself sometimes only arises on close examination. For these reasons, my own definition is similar to Boud's (2009), as noted above, I see reflection as *exploring any experience to lead to new understandings*, and reflexivity as habitual use of strategies to reflect and question values, assumptions and action. Reflexivity makes clearer the relation between thinking and doing by considering the self, relations with others, and context (May & Perry, 2017; Patton, 2016a).

Journaling is often recommended as a method supporting first-person reflection including within evaluation (Hayes et al., 2016). I used a private blog and note books to record and reflect on progress. I found notes on interview transcripts provided useful records of initial reactions which could be subjected to further consideration. However, I also found reflection in interaction (Rodgers, 2002, p. 846) important as a way to challenge my own perspective. For this reason I found journaling insufficient, and made use of a critical friend who was completely removed from the context, to support personal reflection throughout the process (Storey & Richard, 2015). Reflection with others involved in the curriculum review took place in all phases of data collection. This was sometimes part of formal data collection and sometimes outside it. For example, in phase 1 interviews, participants were encouraged to reflect on their own understanding of the curriculum and the ways others might see it differently. Throughout the process, regular discussion with my co-programme leader enabled reflection on the curriculum review process and identification of adaptations. After data collection and analysis was complete, participants continued to develop reflections through the joint preparation of conference presentations and publications.

First person reflection

Coghlan (2019) describes first-person practice as inquiry into a researcher's own "beliefs, values, assumptions, ways of thinking, strategies and behaviour" (p. 30). As such it is a targeted form of reflection. Because reflection is personal (Smith, 2011) but benefits from structure, I used prompts based on the "theory of action" approach of Argyris and Schön (Dick, 2002; Argyris, 1976) to guide reflection. I was motivated by firstly, the need to recruit as many students as possible, increasing the democratic validity of the process, secondly to respect their views (and those of staff) on the process by involving them in planning rather than pre-determining process issues and finally, to embed ESD in the curriculum. I saw student engagement as a democratic and moral issue, and as educational, providing experience in deliberative decision making (Nussbaum, 2006). These beliefs were based on evidence from the partnership literature regarding power redistribution in favour of students (Cook-Sather et al., 2014), they also resulted from the requirement for co-creation in DEval, and from national data regarding student aspirations for ESD in their curricula (SOS, 2022). These led to a theory of change for the curriculum whereby ESD was embedded by involving students in the review process. Although the exact nature of this change was unpredictable, I was hopeful the outcome would be a curriculum informed by students' perspectives. Nevertheless, such an outcome would reflect my own values regarding sustainable development and democratic action. Thus, my initial view of my role could be characterised as instrumental as well as facilitative and evaluative. I needed to recruit student volunteers and facilitate a process that was sufficiently clear and inclusive but also adaptive, flexible and open to change while the underlying premise remained fixed. Being open to ceding control and accommodating unforeseen changes does entail some risk. However my position as co-programme leader meant I did not perceive this as significant. I viewed the process as an experiment where the outcome was uncertain but where risk was manageable. It became clear from the data that many participants saw risk as more significant. The process and outcomes were not as I had expected in a number of ways and I set out four of these below.

Firstly, despite a high level of interest from student volunteers, only two were able to commit fully throughout the entire process. There are many reasons for this, but a more clearly defined structure of meetings from the start (i.e. pre-defined) may have allowed students to make more informed decisions about their level of commitment. With this information it might have been possible to accommodate more student involvement. I underestimated the effect that time pressures would have on staff and students. Despite this, the views of those who contributed had a significant impact and were endorsed by other students. As such, the aim of reflecting students' perspectives was met. Although a desire not to impose structure and process on students was motivated by my own aspirations towards equality in power, this had a potentially negative effect on students' ability to plan their time. Therefore a more clearly defined process appears justified in the next review.

Secondly, in relation to the content of the revised curriculum, despite my expectations, students indicated they placed greater importance on wellbeing and employability than on ESD as such. Both of these issues reflected students' rather than staff priorities. However, they can be framed as meaningful aspects of ESD (reflecting Sustainable Development Goals 3, *health and wellbeing* & 8, *decent work and economic growth*) meaning they accord with the overall aims of working in partnership, though not with staff expected outcomes. In relation to content, I see the gap between expectations and the final outcome as positive, because it demonstrates a result that would not have been possible without a partnership approach. Nevertheless the prediction that students would correspond in their views to those in national data was mistaken. Despite my own and other participants' expressed value of different perspectives, I had assumed (because it suited my own agenda) that their views would more closely align with expectations. This reinforces the need for critical distance, the importance of context and the dangers of extrapolating findings. From the perspective of complex adaptive systems, causality is non-linear and depends on multiple environmental factors (Reynolds et al., 2016). Importantly DEval research cannot be seen as providing generalisable evidence-based predictions. It is context dependent and governed by a transactional epistemology (Biesta & Burbules, 2003) that is, a way of knowing what is happening here, now, not what will happen elsewhere in future (Biesta, 2010b).

Thirdly, despite warnings in the literature, I was mistaken about the extent to which the partnership process is *messy* (Matthews et al., 2019a). Messiness is used in research literature to account for ambiguity and the need for judgement from researchers (Clark et al. 2007; Patton, 2011). Schön comes closer to its organisational aspects when he describes the “swampy lowland, where situations are confusing messes incapable of technical solution” which usually involve “the problems of greatest human concern" (2008, p. 54). I interpreted *messy* as referring to complications rather than to compromises but learned in relation to DEval and organisational politics it can be both. In the following section, regarding second person practice, I reflect on some examples.

Finally, my assumption that real partnership work achieves equality between students and staff, and anything less than equality is less acceptable, was in my view, mistaken, and supports Seale et al.’s (2015) conclusion that though a sound ideal, equality may be unrealistic in practice (p. 548). While progressive models of engagement such as the ladder of participation (Bovill & Bulley, 2011) initially framed aspirations, they also created concerns for some. I entered the space naively and accepted the discourse surrounding power without fully interrogating my own ontological and epistemological rationale or considering those held by others.

In conclusion, although most student volunteers did not consistently engage, I would nevertheless argue the process was successful. This is because it resulted in a revised curriculum that would not have been the same without student involvement. Furthermore it was supported by participants as a model for future curriculum reviews and evaluative knowledge was generated. Ultimately I was able to collaborate with staff and students to facilitate a process where students felt their voices were genuinely valued and staff, despite concerns, were able to implement students’ suggestions. The central element of my own learning was the utility of a philosophically pragmatic approach which values participation, plurality, practicality and provisionally (Brendel, 2009) and where power is situated in a community of inquiry.

Second person reflection

Second person practice involves engagement with others in an inquiry process including all that is needed to co-create, sustain and evaluate the innovation, and I reflect on these issues in this section. Szijarto and Bradley Cousins, (2019) propose a concept map to aid reflection on working with others in DEval. This illuminates interrelated aspects that can be obscured which are: utilisation focus; developing the relationship between the evaluator and the group; managing tensions, bringing out collective wisdom; looking forward; bringing rich data to the table, and meaning making. I have attempted to address these issues as part of my reflection.

To maintain a utilisation focus, the process of second person inquiry used was an informal one where group membership was fluid, taking place in online and physical spaces. My aim was to facilitate a process using dialogic principles (Gravett et al., 2020) to generate collective wisdom. In relation to the overall process, I judged that keeping logistics open was preferable, meetings were planned on this basis, experiencing, understanding and judging participant preferences regarding timing and modality. However while participants raised no concerns mid-process (phase 2) possibly as it was too early, their final reflections led me to conclude this fluidity was not always helpful because their time planning was affected.

One of the most challenging aspects of second person practice was dealing with participants whose views were in tension, or who I perceived as dismissive of one or more of the content, process or premise of the curriculum review. For example in relation to the premise, on several occasions Carl (LS:3) questioned students' contribution describing them as "*passengers in those meetings*" speculating they were "*just there for the sake of being there*". In Carl and Ben's (LS:3) final interview together, both appeared to me to be somewhat negative. Ben (LS:3) stated, the process "*didn't feel like a partnership…[though] I think it could have been, and I think it should have been."* My reaction to these comments highlighted for me the importance of relationships between all members of the group involved, the interaction of my roles as evaluator, researcher and facilitator, and the need for critical distance. Carl and Ben probably saw me as a trusted colleague rather than a researcher or evaluator, leading to honesty. However, at the time, although I tried to hide it, my spontaneous reaction was irritation. Even later I noted on the transcript “*reading through this makes me feel a bit annoyed*.” My initial judgement of this data was influenced by the challenge to the premise and value of the process of the curriculum review as I saw it. I worked hard to maintain a forward looking inquiry focus while interacting with others and to present my views as open to challenge, but in reality as a relatively novice researcher I lacked sufficient tacit knowledge (Polanyi, 2009) to fully achieve this, especially in the initial stages. It was only later, when considering these comments as part of analysis, I was able to fully appreciate them as useful and potentially disconfirming data.

As an insider researcher creating and facilitating a community of inquiry, at various points I used four parts of speech, framing, advocating, illustrating and inquiring (Torbert & Cook-Greuter, 2004). Initially, I took care in framing the curriculum review, evaluation and research to students, meeting them to explain the process, answer questions and collecting baseline survey data. However, despite initial staff briefings, due to a focus on recruiting and building trust with students, I took academic staff commitment and trust somewhat for granted. At the facilitation stage, my efforts appeared effective for student volunteers, after the initial meeting Amy (PS:1) commented “*I was so impressed by the students. I thought they were really on the ball. They knew what you were trying to do, knew what you were talking about*.” In addition when asked how it was going mid-process, Nicki (S:2) said “*I think it's been running very smoothly…we've all had like on level conversations*.” However when discussing the pay-off between speed and student involvement, some staff were less positive. Carl (LS:3) said “*I've cursed at times when I've had stuff on and I've got a, you know, two hour meeting… it did slow down the process …I think we would have dealt with it more quickly without them, but then we might not have dealt with it quite the same*.” This indicates Carl was only somewhat convinced of the value of the process and while it is possible that better framing might have helped, this cannot be taken for granted. I found there was a certain degree of tension between the timeframes for research, evaluation and the process of curriculum review. For example, preparing conference presentations and articles, was ongoing until submission of this thesis, and continued to provide insight into participants’ meaning making and lessons learned (Appendices D and G).

As noted above, I found that in light of organisational politics, messy compromises were needed to facilitate the process. Exclusion of students by standard institutional policy and practice presented dilemmas. A developing critical distance, seeing processes through the lens of partnership, allowed me to see many taken for granted cultural practices as unnecessarily exclusionary. At my suggestion, students were invited to the final validation panel. On reflection, it would have been preferable if I had stepped back, and facilitated a group approach to this. A co-created decision would be more likely to facilitate long term change, but tensions between my various roles led to a reluctance to cede control of the decision. It was clear the panel was not used to having programme students in the meeting. Despite this, having seen benefits in terms of outcome, professional staff appeared happy to consider a future change in their practice. Pat's (PS:3) comment: "*having their involvement from the outset's been really, really helpful and it did come through really strongly that collaboration between the team and the students from the start … it is definitely something moving forward that I will be advising program teams to take into consideration*" is illustrative and shows impact on institutional practice.

The reflections above have drawn on issues arising throughout the process but were completed in phase 3, after data analysis. Having outlined the research design and set out my reflections, I present, in the following chapter, the results of data analysis.

Chapter 6: Data and Analysis

As described in Chapter 5, this research uses a mixed methods design in which survey data is analysed separately and later combined with qualitatively analysed interview data. Using DEval, I aimed to examine perceptions of student engagement in curriculum review and reflections on outcomes from multiple student and staff perspectives in order to answer the questions:

1. *What are participant understandings and aspirations regarding working in partnership?*
2. *What factors inhibit and promote working in partnership in this context?*
3. *What are the implications of the answers to questions 1 and 2 for policy and practice?*
4. *What are the implications of the research findings in critically assessing the concept of students as partners and its position in relation to relevant theories of student engagement?*

Because the survey was directed to all programme students it provided a mechanism through which to represent wider student voices and thus a more complete picture. I felt it was important, in research regarding partnership and engagement, that an attempt was made to include data from the wider student population and increase opportunities to gather perspectives from every student. Use of the survey and interviews also allows for comparison of qualitative and quantitative data. This chapter is therefore structured as follows: firstly, I explain the use of the survey and set out a descriptive analysis of the data generated; I then outline the results of my reflexive thematic analysis of interview data. Finally, I explain how I have integrated the data. The analysis in this chapter is mainly illustrative (Byrne, 2022) with discussion of the analysis in the context of relevant theory in Chapter 7. A reminder of the three phases of the curriculum review and data collection is provided in Figure 9 with data collection points highlighted in bold.

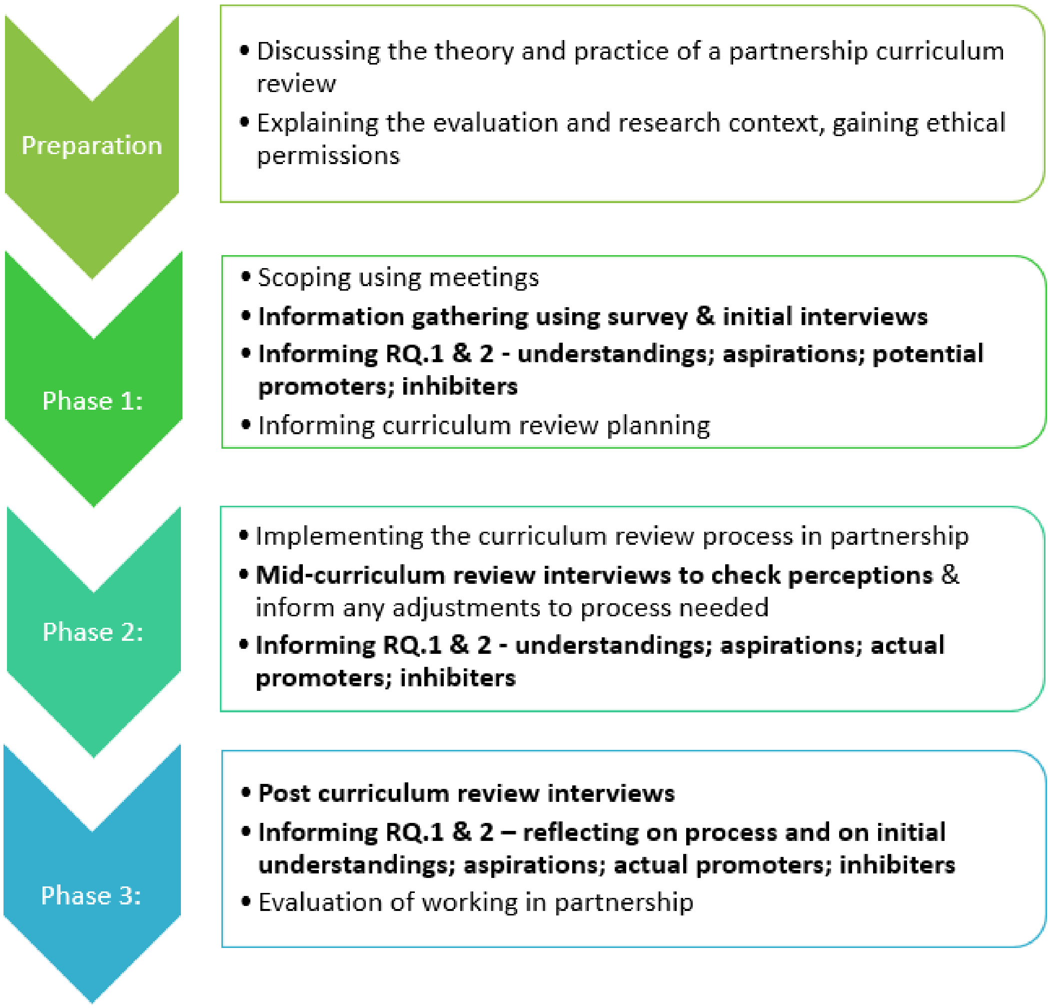

Figure 9: Phases of data collection within the process

Survey data - Phase 1

Survey questions addressed understandings and aspirations regarding the process and outcome. The survey was analysed using Jisc Online Surveys. Initial analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics to consider responses to each question and facilitate contextual and practical insight (Frey, 2018). The analysed data was collated using elements from RQ.1 and 2 as topic areas. RQ.3 and 4 address wider policy and theoretical implications and are considered in detail in Chapter 7. Elements from RQ.1 and 2 were divided to provide a framework for consideration of the results as set out below. The analysis presented relies on my summary of responses. To aid clarity, numeric values and rounded percentages are provided. Relevant survey questions are indicated in the format (Q.n). Standard deviation figures are noted only where I saw these as contextually high or low (SD above 1.1 or below 0.7).

What are participant understandings regarding working in partnership in curriculum review?

Results regarding student perceptions of their current control over the curriculum (Q.6) showed a skew towards negative perceptions of student control. These are illustrated in Figure 10 below and can be compared to aspirations in Figure 11.

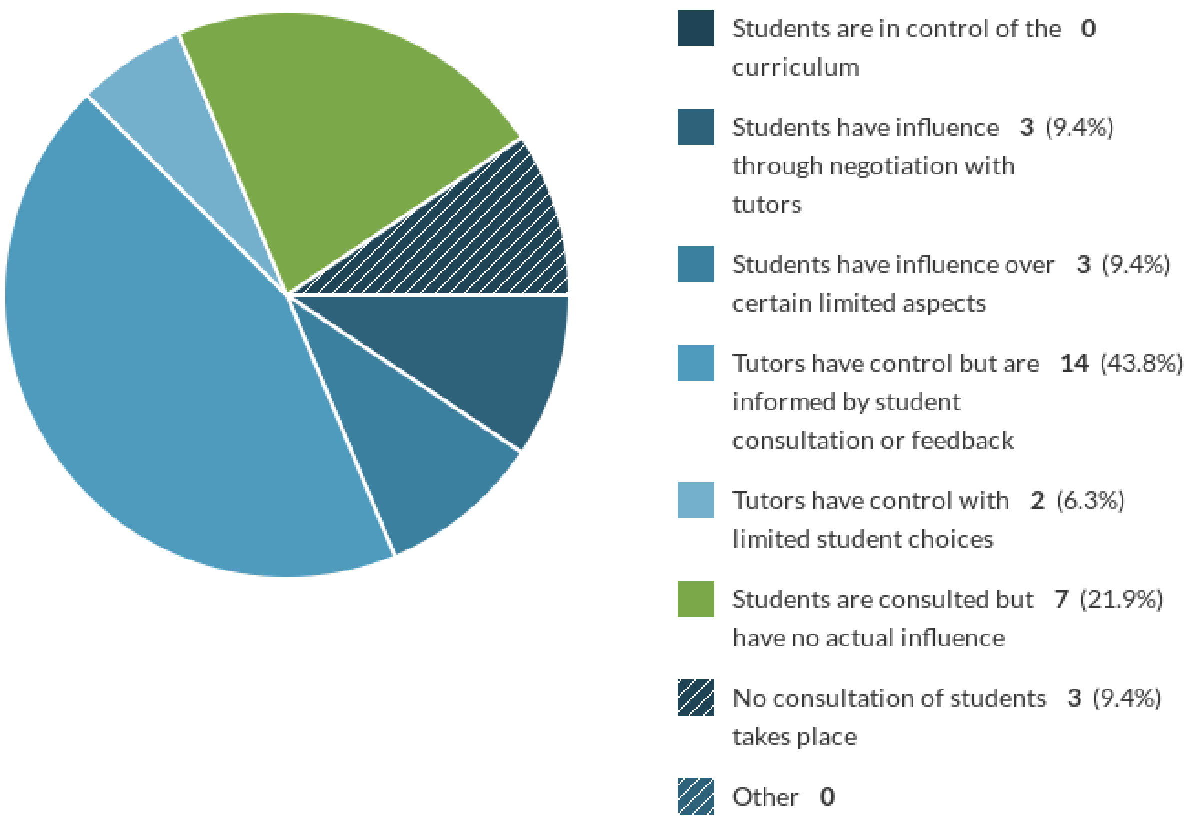

Figure 10: How much control do you think students currently have over the curriculum?

When asked if they thought the process would give them more power (Q.5.16.) students appeared largely neutral. Most neither agreed nor disagreed that student power would be affected (n=14; 44%). Furthermore, equal numbers (n=8: 25%) agreed and disagreed that the process would increase student power. This mixed response might be due to several factors such as varying levels of trust or confidence in the process or perceptions of power relations. Underlying attitudes are obscured and it is not possible to conclude whether respondents saw their answers in positive or negative terms. (Q.5.13) Most students felt it was important for their views to be taken into account in view of the fees they pay (n=29; 91%; SD 0.65) showing a marked skew towards strong agreement. This may point to their understanding of their position as consumers and use of discourse regarding fees as one justification for increased voice.

What are participant aspirations regarding working in partnership in curriculum review?

In contrast to Q.6, regarding the level of control students should have over curriculum (Q.7), there was a clear positive skew, the majority indicating that students should have some form of influence. Overall therefore, it appears students would like more influence than they currently perceive they have. Beyond that it is hard to draw detailed conclusions in a small sample, as differences in category responses to this question might be accounted for by different understandings of the wording.

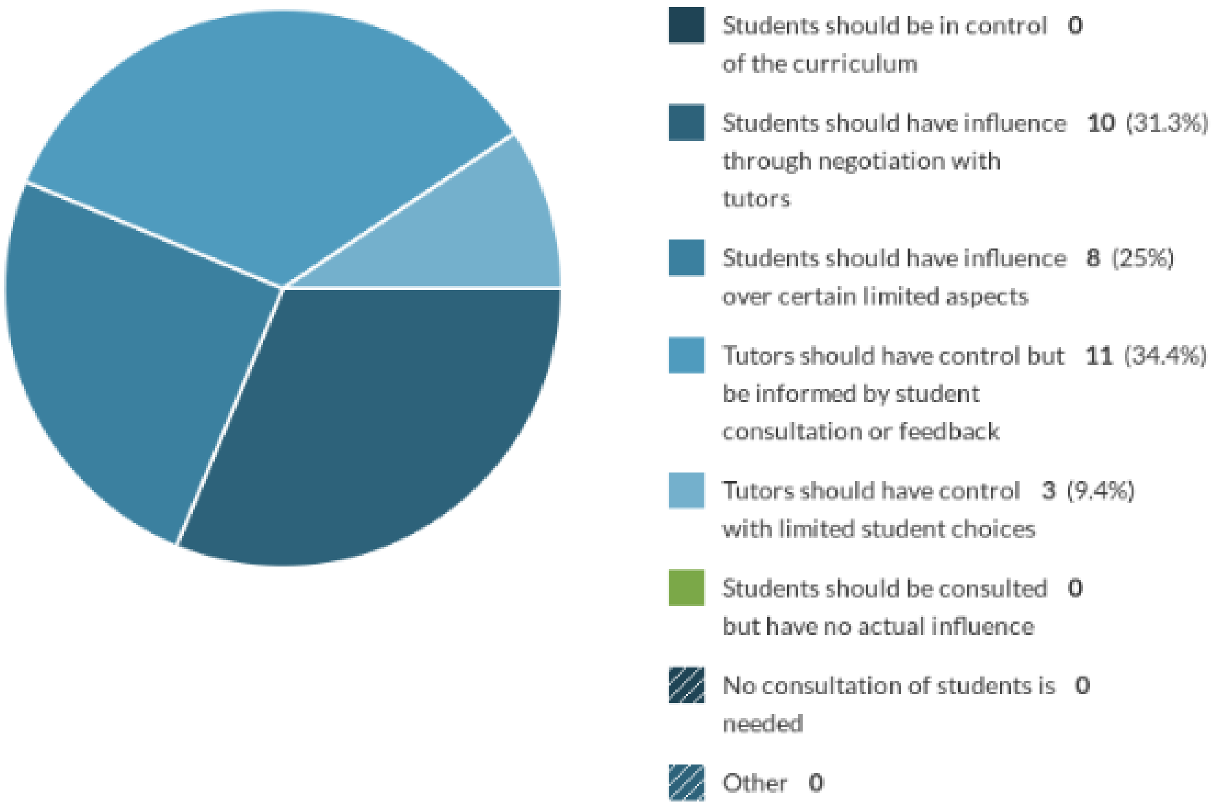

Figure 11: How much control do you think students should have over the curriculum?

Regarding what should be the subject of discussion and change (Q.4); the most important issues for students were *preparation for employment* (n=19; 59%; SD 1.21) and *skills* (n=17; 53%). This may reflect concerns regarding post-graduation planning. This is corroborated somewhat by cross tabulation showing year 2 and 3 students were more likely than year 1 students to agree regarding employment and skills. Interestingly, *knowledge* was considered the least relevant issue for consideration of change (n=6; 19%) with *ESD* only slightly higher (n=8; 25%). My theory of change regarding the incorporation of ESD was that involving students would tend to amplify demand for curriculum change in this regard. It was therefore surprising ESD was not considered a priority by students which contrasts with national figures showing 79% undergraduates support ESD in the curriculum (SOS, 2022).

Student perceptions of the possible benefits of the process (Q.5) indicated a range of anticipated outcomes of student engagement. It is important to note this question involved participants indicating their degree of agreement to a list of predesignated survey items. They were unable to add further items, nevertheless, responses suggest a desire for more student influence was underpinned by a variety of considerations. The chart below (Figure 12) illustrates aspirations.

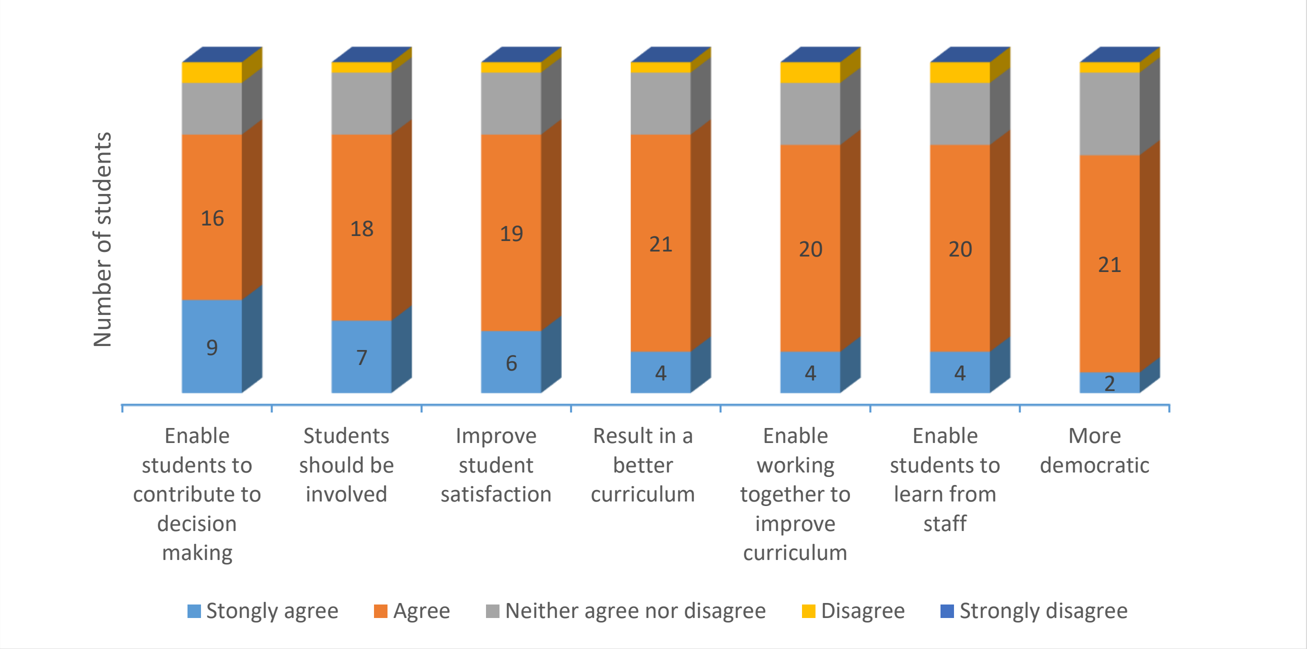

Figure 12: Student hopes for engagement process ordered by total in agreement (Q. 5)

What factors inhibit working in partnership in this context?

Here I have considered factors indicating either a generally perceived barrier for the engagement process or a factor that might inhibit engagement for individual respondents. In relation to the first point, some students thought the process might be used as an excuse to make complaints (Q.5.12). Responses were spread (SD 0.98) and despite a slight skew towards disagreement, it appears many (n=12; 39%) were neutral which suggests overall, making complaints was seen as a possibility, albeit not a very strong one.

I was aware from previous research (Carey, 2013b; White, 2018) some students might be cynical about staff motives to include them, additionally it would be hard for others to get involved even if they wanted to. Notably, only a small number of students (n=5; 16%) were clear that it would *not* be a 'token gesture' (Q.5.3). While most n=12; 39% felt a different outcome would result, some (n=8; 25%) thought partnership would *not* make a difference to the outcome (Q.5.14), indicating these students may not take part. There was no notable concern that volunteers would be unrepresentative (Q.5.15), most (n=13; 41%) did not think so and many (n=10; 31%) were neutral. When asked specifically about whether they might volunteer (Q.8) over half indicated they would (n=17; 53%). One open comment referred explicitly to the need to "*balance uni work with my job.*" This respondent also noted they would be "*more willing if it was all online (find coming into uni quite scary due to covid)*." These comments hint at personal priorities as possible inhibitors. In the context of diverse student needs, they are important to consider as a partnership approach is not possible without sufficient engagement from as wide a range individuals as possible. Nonetheless more data would be needed to explore why some students felt unable to take part.

What factors promote working in partnership in this context?

This question is closely related to aspirations for the process. While aspirations considered hopes for outcomes, here I focus on individual intentions and motivations for volunteering. Opening opportunities for involvement widely (Q.5.11) was supported with most (n=22: 69%) agreeing volunteers from all years groups should be invited. However, the largest proportion of those who would volunteer, were final year students, with three-quarters of these students saying they would be likely to volunteer. Additionally open text comments indicated a preference for more experienced students who "*have a bit more insight*" as first years *"are still getting adjusted to the university."* Targeting these students might lead to greater engagement, as might addressing these preconceptions and highlighting the benefits of wider participation to encourage some form of appropriate involvement. Motivations (Q.9) that might act to promote student engagement are illustrated in Figure 13.

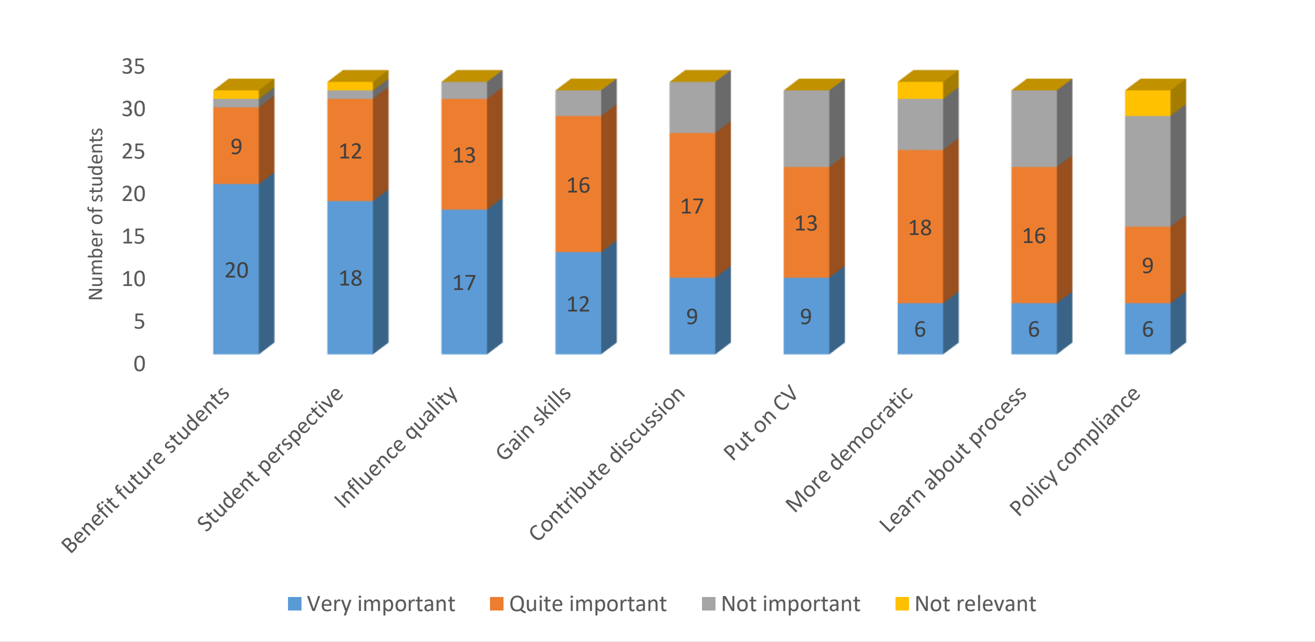

Figure 13: Motivations for volunteering by response 'very important' (Q.9)

It was notable that despite the apparent prioritisation of employability (Q.4), when asked about motivations, students rated benefiting future students highest and above gaining skills. Their altruistic motivation contrasts with compliance with policy, which was seen as least important. As above, while this data provides a contextual overview, detailed insights are lacking. Below I summarise the qualitative data analysis which aimed to address this gap, before comparing and combining the analyses to inform the answers to my questions and a future cycle of curriculum review.

Qualitative data - Phases 1, 2 and 3

In this section, I summarise the qualitative data. Pseudonyms, with abbreviations signifying roles and phases, are used to identify quotations as set out in Table 3 in Chapter 5. My understanding and judgement regarding data from phases 1 and 2 informed discussion and adjustments to the curriculum review process. However, to reflect RTA's requirement for analysis of a whole dataset (phases 1, 2 and 3), I have used the themes generated as the organising structure. In relation to each, I highlight predominant facets and include illustrative quotations (Braun & Clarke, 2022a). Where thematic facets are represented by either staff or students only, this is noted. In other cases, references to participants include students and staff. I have attempted to include some sociological insight by considering values and norms, in addition to context, as an agent of socialisation. To avoid overestimating the agency of individuals, I included students who were unable to take part despite an expressed desire to do so. By considering the neoliberal context I also recognise institutional political interests. Despite taking a pragmatic approach, I have thus aimed to retain criticality, so as not to merely validate what already exists.

Theme I : There's a risk

This theme captures participant concerns and relates mainly to understandings that might inhibit partnership. In this way it directly addresses RQs 1 and 2 and informs answers to RQs 3 and 4.

Questions of power and expectation management were most represented in phase 1. However in phase 3, participants reflected on early aspirations, admitting they initially *"felt a bit dubious"* (Carrie S:3) reflecting, *"[w]e didn't really know ... if it was going to be an absolute disaster"* (Alison LS:3). Throughout, many described their understanding of partnership as implying a level of equality they perceived as potentially problematic. For example Carl (LS:1) stated *"I automatically think equal partners ... the students may get the wrong end of the stick".* Understandings of partnership and their alignment with aspirations to alter relationships are important in promoting or inhibiting partnership. While staff tend to initiate partnerships, student scepticism may affect their involvement. One student noted:

> I think the word partnership can lead to the slippery slope of the way people might view what their role is in the partnership… I look at it as if to be partners in a law firm and everyone's on this like level, but we're really not on the same level, as you are the ones that make the decisions and students won't like the fact that if they have their opinion put forward and it doesn't get spoken on. (Maisy SV:3)

This observation raises the question of whether conceptions of partnership are discipline specific and thus a contextual variable.

Participants often framed inequality using the concept of power, pointing to their own lack of power. In phase 1, students described this in normative terms, *"that's just how university is"* (Lena SU:1). However, academic staff invoked this in resisting a shift in favour of students. Ben's (LS:1) comment, *"I really feel like they [students] feel that they're running it and we're here to satisfy them…I wouldn't want to rebalance"* is indicative of academic views. This disrupts the idea that partnership is seen as a positive mechanism to empower students. Staff positioning as lacking in power might be problematic where engagement is presented as a way of increasing student power in a zero-sum conception where students gain what staff lose.

Participants also framed inequalities in terms of expertise, responsibility and respect. As with power, while students described this in normative terms, academic staff appeared to see threats to their status. A student observed *"you are the professionals and not us"* (Ruth SV:3), but staff noted, *"there isn't that much respect for university lecturers.. there isn't so much appreciation of the role and the experience and expertise anymore"* (Emma LS:1). This concern appeared to imply partnership might further erode respect. It also challenges partnership as a means of developing staff identities and was echoed by a student stating, *"If you bring in the word partnership … why should I have any respect for you?"* (Lilly SV:3).

At phase 2, staff justified their desire for respect and some control by referring to the demands on them, *"it is ultimately our responsibility to make a good proposal"* (Alison LS:2). Also invoking expertise and responsibility anticipation of the process, a senior manager stated:

> I think it's quite hard to set up, to develop, a genuinely collaborative working relationship if you're starting from a position of a power struggle … the questions about power, I would think have to be addressed, but they can be addressed in terms of the power as a responsibility, who has the responsibility to make the final decision. (Susan SM;1)

It appears presenting student engagement in this context as giving students increased power simplifies complex conceptions of the differentials in student and staff contributions. For example, at phase 2, participants referred to tensions in ensuring students were not overwhelmed by information, as a student volunteer explained:

> We could walk in and say that, you know, we want this to happen in the classroom and it would be wrong for us to expect that, because there's a lot of things that go on in the background that we're not aware of. There's compliance, there's rules and regulations. (Lilly SV:2)

This underlines the comments regarding expertise and suggests students might be less inclined to challenge staff expertise than staff themselves imagine. While many participants appeared to accept the existence of a role hierarchy, academics were most insecure, situating themselves as under pressure as explained by Carl (LS:1) *"from below with the students and on top from the university."* This may reflect the wider HE context in which academic staff feel overworked and underpaid (Morrish & Priaulx, 2020) and it is unclear whether partnership might reinforce or challenge this.

Participants often referred to the need to avoid risk by managing student expectations. All participants referred explicitly to uncertainty in negative terms. Their logic appeared to be that if partnership might cause difficulties it was better avoided. Risks often appeared to relate to student satisfaction, before the process an academic stated:

> My concern and fear would be if … they weren't aware of why they're involved and what their role of involvement is. If that was misinterpreted to a power issue, an issue that I have power and I can tell you what to do … I think that would be a heavy risk of dissatisfaction and problematic review. (Ben LS:1)

While the process and its outcome were often conflated, the outcome appeared to be foregrounded as the source of potential dissatisfaction, though in contrasting ways. At phase 1, professional staff warned: *"if you're creating something that's better than the programme, they're just literally about to finish, they can get a bit frustrated"* (Amy PS:1). Emphasising the need for policy guidance to mitigate risk, a senior manager said:

> [W]hat we don't want to do is open a massive can of worms for both staff and students… I think the key thing around that, is managing both student expectations on that, but also giving staff sufficient guidance. So they're clear, so they don't put themselves - feel they're under particular risk of getting it wrong. (Rick SM:1)

These concerns remained at phase 3, Daniel (SU:3), stated in relation to future partnerships: "*They're gonna give you all these ideas and then if they're not implemented, the students are gonna kick up a fuss*." These comments demonstrate the way staff participants situate themselves as responsible for student satisfaction which appears to be a benchmark to assess action. Although this might often be positive it may lead to risk aversion. Staff concerns are clearly significant if student engagement is to be encouraged because seen in this way, perception of risk seems likely to inhibit rather than promote this practice.

Staff were positioned as needing to maintain the trust of students to avoid adverse consequences. One student volunteer expressed doubt mid-process stating, *"if you don't agree you can still overrule us… so then it's like we are doing this, but then it's like, pointless"* (Nicki SV:2) reflecting later "*I didn't expect you to properly take on what we said into consideration and implement into like, the whole process" (*Nicki SV:3). This student appears not to have fully trusted staff to act on feedback, due to an implicit expectation of disappointing outcomes. Linking outcomes with trust, a student union official similarly described an alternative risk that student expectations were met, which *"leads to problems further down the line when .. lecturers, burnout or they can't deliver on what they've promised and then the trust has gone in that relationship"* (Lena SU:1). Senior managers were aware of the risks of breaking trust with students and the playing out of a *"kind of psychological trickery of persuading students that they have been involved and consulted so that they think this is their thing, when it may not be at all"* (Susan SM:1). Trust was also implicitly conflated with fairness, one academic explained:

> [Y]ou start thinking more in terms of colleague rather than student, which you don't want to fully do when you're still marking their assessments and having to approve their request for extensions of time. There is an appropriate distance that you have to maintain to make sure that you're being fair to everyone. (Alison LS:2)

Reconceptualization of students as colleagues is presented as one of the benefits of partnership (Cook-Sather et al., 2014), but staff appeared resistant to changing the relationship to this extent. Thus, staff understandings of partnership as a way to form collegiate relationships with students may inhibit rather than promote engagement.

The notion of risk was explicitly used when participants considered the likelihood that students would use the process to raise complaints. While this did not happen, some students appeared to position themselves as making informal complaints, for example, one explained she would not have volunteered in year one because *"I wouldn't have really had any complaints in the first year"* (Ruth SV:3). Staff also evoked notions of a process where students bring complaints rather than constructive suggestions. One stated *"I was kind of expecting a whingefest and it hasn't been … It could have gone very different had it been other students"* (Ben LS:2). While a student volunteer was dubious about use in other disciplines saying *"I hear the things … that other people on their course have complained about…. I feel like it wouldn't work"* (Maisy SV:3). Thus, fear of complaints appeared to persist in phase 3 where they were often mentioned, even after none materialised, indicating that despite any benefits of the process, participants may retain concern about its use which could inhibit engagement.

Risk of complaints was also linked to the notion of the power of student voice. Academic staff appeared to feel caught between students and managers situating themselves as at a disadvantage and echoing the points made above regarding their relative power. For example, an academic stated:

> You always have to work within confines, that's fine. I just think the confines are too confining now… the students get listened to a lot more than we do but that's because they're terrified of student complaints. They're not terrified of staff complaints. (Ben LS:1)

One participant also referred to legal complaints, warning: *"if you … don't deliver, then the students have got a kind of claim … against you, so we just have to be really careful that we're not over promising"* (Amy PS:1). This is important because fear of formal repercussions may lead to a reluctance to engage in partnership by academic staff or a desire by managers to control any such activity to such an extent that it cannot achieve its potential.

Finally it is worth noting there were some implicit references to risk which arguably framed the concept more positively. Some staff participants positioned themselves as open to challenge from students that did not materialise, resulting in safer and more predictable outcomes. A manager reflected on her own experiences of co-creation observing, *"[I]t was always a bit disappointing ... I would say, you know, 'grab it, grab it, I'm giving it, we can do this'. I can remember students saying, 'but you know what you're doing and we've never done this'..."* (Susan SM:1). This disrupts the idea that staff view risk as always to be avoided. However, there are potential problems in reconciling staff desire for robust discussion with their other stated desire that their expertise should be recognised.

Theme II : It's not just box-ticking

Theme two captures feelings from all participants about why they engaged in the review despite their concerns. While the reference to box-ticking was negative and has implications for policy, many expressed aspirations which might promote partnership as a means by which to achieve a variety of ends from personal, to institutional and societal.

Staff felt one of the reasons for involving students was to allow them to see, as Carl (LS:1) described it, *"inside the sausage factory"*. However, a powerful element was that taking part was seen, notably by students, in altruistic terms as giving back or leaving a positive legacy. Reflecting mid-process, a professional staff member observed students wanted: *"to help make the next version of their degree even better than the one they've done, which is amazingly kind of generous of them, really"* Amy (PS:2). A student volunteer explained:

> I think it comes back to why I want to go into his career. So like, I want to help people and this is like another opportunity where I can help people, and I think knowing that I've helped people… I found that quite rewarding. (Nicki SV:2)

Only some students will be in a position to act on altruism alone but no comments were made in clear support of payment even by those who did not volunteer. Hazel (SV:3) reflected, "*I'm* *definitely someone that, if I think I would be able to help in a situation I definitely will do if I can. Yeah, money wasn't the motivation for me"*.

A number of participants saw student involvement as a means of enhancing employability. Some saw it simply as evidence for future employers while others spoke of the value of the experience in more complex terms. Hazel (SV:3) felt it provided *"something good to put on my CV and look like I'm proactive."* One manager considered this in the context of the benefits of partnership, stating:

> We're not only going to make you someone who is almost ready to practice law … we're going to turn you out as someone who knows how to engage with other professionals and to manage those power relations and to self-assess .. and maybe even to assess [the] skills, expertise and confidence of other people, including people who are above you in a hierarchy. (Susan SM:1)

Susan appeared to accept student instrumentalism and that framing partnership as enhancing employability might be of benefit in promoting its use. A contrast between instrumental or wider societal benefits was evident regarding curriculum content. Many participants had something they wanted to change which was a motivating factor for involvement. Despite framing the process as a means to incorporate ESD, for students, these mainly related to wellbeing and employability. For example one student noted his cohort had faced considerable stresses, reflecting: *"if there's a little bit more emphasis on it [wellbeing], you know, it might not have been as hard on them" (*Paul SV:3). This was presented, in part, as an employability issue because *"anybody who's studying at university is probably going into, you know, fingers crossed a well-paid job, but most likely a stressful one and it's learning that you have to make that balance because if not, you will burn out"* (Lilly SV:2). At phase 1, staff appeared more motivated to incorporate ESD but were sceptical about student support. One stated:

> I don't think students are naturally aware of a lot of the issues .. I think it's really important… a lot of it you could do without the students even really realizing what they're doing, couldn't you? … routes we have for hearing students, it's just taken up

> with all the little detailed day-to-day things ... it's not the environment or poverty. (Emma LS:1)

Emma's quote indicates staff felt an obligation to change the curriculum to include ESD but also positioned students as more instrumental. The logic that staff, not students needed to consider the wider societal and global issues appeared to lead to a desire to incorporate ESD despite, rather than because of, student opinion. This understanding could act as a further barrier to staff use of partnership if they feel their priorities might be hindered by differing student priorities.

Academic staff felt policy requirements might act to diminish the value of the process. One said *"they [students] might suspect that it's a box-ticking exercise to satisfy some sort of requirement of ours ..."* (Alison LS:1). Students also expressed this view, one stating *"it kind of felt like you kind of have to do it, you know, I mean get our input .. but you didn't necessarily need to actually listen to it"* (Carrie S:3). This view of student engagement as policy compliance contrasts with phase 1 comments from professional and senior staff, who saw benefits in bureaucracy by which the institution shows compliance with wider policy. Rachel (PS:1) stated *"we just look for evidence of student engagement, but I think ... academic colleagues see it as a tick-box."* Additionally, senior managers appeared to want "*very clear policy and guidance"* (Rick SM:1) and hinted at the need for policy to promote action:

> We have all sorts of internal and external drivers for it [student engagement] … I don't feel there's anything either internally or externally to put it really bluntly, that is punishing us if we don't do it … There is nothing in our infrastructure that either forces people to do it or actually supports them to do it. (Susan SM:1)

It seems, therefore, that while some see policy as means, others see it as an end. This points to a tension in the context of policy and practice between factors that might inhibit or promote engagement and is worth consideration because it indicates that, while managers may wish to force action, this could be counterproductive.

Many participants positioned students as consumers and invoked fees as a reason for engagement, though none saw it as a primary issue. An SU officer stated: *"we're always going to have the thought in the back of our minds"* (Lena SU:1). A student volunteer who also did not see it as the main reason for involvement considered: *"maybe because I am paying a lot of money, I think I should have my opinion heard … Why should I pay all this money and get no [input]… ?"* (Nicki SV:2). This reflects the current HE context and appeared to be used by students as an additional justification for involvement. Notably, academic staff seemed aggrieved by their co-option into this model, which they saw as a driver of student engagement in all contexts. Academic staff noted *"that's something we're fighting against, which is that the university seems to be, whether it's deliberate or not, fostering the consumer culture"* (Ben LS:1). Another stated *"I feel that students now there is very much an attitude of we are paying a lot of money which I appreciate, and therefore we have a full say in what goes on"* (Diana LS:1). These comments position reasons for engagement as grounded in neoliberal bureaucracy, indicating academics saw engagement motivated in this way as illegitimate. This is important because presenting student engagement in curriculum review as connected to students as consumers could result in resentment or scepticism from those most likely to be involved.

Theme III : The more voices the better

This theme was generated to reflect that participants expressed strong positive attitudes towards increasing the diversity of those involved in the review. It relates to understandings, aspirations and actions likely to promote engagement.

All participants described the process in positive terms. At phase 1, invoking the increased diversity of views as an intrinsic good where "*[a]ll the voices are there and are heard and understood*" (Emma LS:1) because "*at the end of the day, the more voices the better"* (Lena SU:1). Similarly, reflecting at phase 3 on the inclusion of students a volunteer stated, "*it is [a] really positive thing because you can hear that student side of things"* (Maisy SV:3). Including students was often referred to in terms highlighting diversity within the student group.

> I know the way I look at it … would be differently to how a younger student may have looked at it, having a mixture and a diverse opinion should be involved, I think it was really, really beneficial. (Hazel SV:3)

Many participants appeared to take the view that each individual contributed unique insights, one student stating:

> At school ... I was my label, like, my disability label, rather than an individual. While at uni and through this process I've been an individual before I've been, you know, the label. I think that highlights again that everybody is on just a level and it's just inclusive, very inclusive. (Nicki SV:2)

This quote appears to conflict with observations regarding inequalities made by Nicki and others in Theme I. It is possible that being "on the same level" is not understood in the same way as equality. The complexity of what equal means, arguably reflects definitions referring to "the opportunity to contribute equally, although not necessarily in the same ways" (Cook-Sather et al., 2014). A non-volunteering student commented:

> [I]t was good that some people wanted to, because then maybe not everyone had the same thoughts that I did about the degree … I think you kind of feel like your opinion is like, it's valuable. So if you don't take up the opportunity you still have that chance … it makes you feel like you're more a part of the university. (Holly S:3)

This reference to opportunity also reflects the definition above and points to the benefits of widening openings for engagement in this context.

All participants indicated their belief that engagement led to better outcomes. These were identified primarily as improved decisions but also increased understanding or changing attitudes. The benefits of diversity and varied perspectives in reaching decisions were commonly invoked. For example one manager stated: "*there is something about a much more genuinely mutually respectful and collaborative dialogue that goes on, to say we each have our expertise and the best outcomes come when there is a discussion"* (Susan SM:1). When reflecting in phase 3 on the outcome, all participants did so in moderately or extremely positive terms. This is important in terms of their future actions and in the way they might promote similar engagement to others. Exemplifying this one academic stated:

> They were actually a very positive addition to what we did, especially in terms of wellbeing ... So, I was glad and obviously having their support reinforced it when we were asking to have those things at the end, it made our argument an awful lot stronger that they'd been involved and they wanted it. So that was a big positive. (Alison LS:3)

In contrast to her discussion of risk, when talking about benefits, Alison appeared to position herself with students, against institutional management. This repositioning may indicate some reconceptualization of her position even if did not reach the level of colleague. Professional staff also felt outcomes were enhanced. One noted regarding the final curriculum "*there was a lot of things in there, especially the student wellbeing that came through really strongly and you would possibly not have got as much of that had you not had the students involved* ..." (Pat PS:3). Students also attributed outcomes to their involvement. One reflected *"it's been brilliant, you know, we've talked, you've listened, you've talked, we've listened and I think it's been a fair exchange of ideas and hopefully we've created something great"* (Lilly SV:3).

Participants often referred to the value of seeing other perspectives and insights gained from working together. This benefit was anticipated in Phase 1, for example Lena (SU:1) observed "*it's a range of different perspectives and you might pick up on something that you never really thought about before."* Reflecting on the process students commented on changes in their own understanding. One noted "*my opinions on a few things have changed because I've heard the other side of the story"* (Nicki SV:2). Staff also felt they had benefited from insights that they may not have otherwise predicted. For example, one noted "*I was quite surprised that they did want to go back to … more exam based things…it is useful to sort of understand where they're coming from*" (Diana LS:2).

When evoking diversity, participants referred to including as wide a range of voices as possible, potentially in different ways. Using student reps was advocated by one academic, "*having them represent the whole cohort rather than just themselves would be better. To get* *a bit more of a diversity of views*" (Alison LS:3). However, a student disagreed with this logic saying:

> I feel like it's something they do to be able to say, 'oh I was a student rep, I did this, I did that', rather than actually being they actually want to help and stuff… I don't feel like some of them have been that approachable either. (Carrie S:3)

Alumni and employers were mentioned as potential contributors by senior and professional staff. Professional staff noted "*alumni is actually better than a current student because they've got that distance"* (Amy PS:1). One manager expressed his hope for "*co-creation of curricula and assessment practices involving learners and employers*" (Rick SM:1). Involving third parties was not referred to by students, and only after completion by one academic:

> At the end it was kind of a bit of a rush I think because we were so focused on the students we kind of let some other things [go], the external examiners and the stakeholders we should have contacted at an earlier point. (Alison LS:3)

This quote indicates that the focus on student-staff partnership may have obscured potential contributions from others. While participants wanted to increase the quality and quantity of engagement, their understanding of how best this might be done thus differed. This is significant because it shows strong support for student engagement in decision making but highlights different, and sometimes contradictory, ideas about how this should be achieved.

Increasing the quality and quantity of engagement was also used to justify contrasting views regarding online or face-to-face meetings. In general, participants felt while quality might be better face-to-face, greater numbers were possible online. Overall, there was no consensus regarding modality. Many participants referred to their own preferences, contrasting these with others. One student noted "*I'm more of a face-to-face kind of person, but I know there's a lot of people that prefer doing things online*" (Maisy SV:3). Another appeared ambivalent but foregrounded engagement as the driver for any choice. *"Engagement is way better in person in terms of asking people for their help or advice or thoughts and opinions … if they're shy, people do feel that they can't say things online that they could maybe in person"* (Hazel SV:3). One academic noted *"If we're looking for different opinions and different* *ideas, we've got to pick online"* (Carl LS:3). In contrast another said, *"sitting around a table with actual people, I think sometimes you spark off each other a little bit better, you know, there's just a little bit more depth to the standard of communication"* (Alison LS:2). All participants referring to modality appeared to see personal interaction as important. Some contrasted the process with evaluation questionnaires positioning these as of considerably less value. Paul (SV:3) appeared to speak for other students:

> I think surveys are very easy just to overlook... I don't think you get the same sort of data as you do when you sit down in a group like you have with the curriculum review and people actually put opinions forward rather than just answering questions.

This was confirmed by Carl (LS:3) who noted "*at the end of the year you get your module feedback… I just shove them in a drawer, forget about them for six months and I'll go back teaching the same module. And you know, this really helped, just being part of the process."*

Finally, it is notable that, because engagement was always expressed as something positive to be increased in quality and quantity, dissatisfaction that engagement levels varied was voiced. One academic admitted:

> [I]t was a bit frustrating with colleagues, you know, if I'm being honest… sometimes I thought the students were a bit more on board than colleagues … I thought engagement with colleagues could have been really much better … I did find that quite disappointing. (Alison LS:3)

Volunteer attendance diminished as the process proceeded which was seen as disappointing. Another academic said, "*I think the beginning started with about 10 to 15 students signing up? And that got whittled down to two or three.*" (Carl LS:3). A student noted:

> I would have loved to [have] been more involved and come to the meetings … and I thought I would have been. But then when I actually came around to it, the workload I had, it was just too much… the firm I work for have been struggling with staff and they've offered me a future; I didn't want to say.' Oh no, I can't work'. (Paul SV:3)

Paul's comment clearly explains the context for student priorities. While is it less clear why staff did not always engage, it appears likely workload commitments were factors for staff and students showing individual priorities impact on engagement.

Analytic comparison

As explained in Chapter 5, the survey enabled contextual insight into aspirations and understandings while interviews provided more complex data. The comparison matrix integrating both follows.

Primary component: Qualitative theme	Qualitative data: individual facets of theme	Secondary component: Relevant survey questions	Quantitative data: descriptive analysis narrative summary	Data convergence label	Relevance to RQs:
I. There's a risk	Participants saw partnership as implying a 50:50 relationship between staff and students which they appeared uncomfortable with and did not aspire to.	6, 7	Considerably more students felt there should be influence or negotiation with staff over the curriculum than was currently the case. Many appeared dissatisfied that despite consultation they had no influence. A minority appeared to feel excluded from influence over the curriculum. This indicates that from students' point of view, change is required, but the precise level of their desired influence is harder to pinpoint.	Enhance	Understandings that might tend towards inhibiting working in partnership

This form of equality was positioned as a concern and described in terms of power, expertise and authority.	5.5, 5.16	The majority of students were neutral as to whether the process might give them any power. This is unsurprising as it was hard for students to predict how such a process might work in practice. Most disagreed or were neutral when asked if the process might give students *too much* power.	Ambivalent
Managing student expectations was also seen as an important factor in reducing perceived risks.	5,4, 5,8, 5.17	Expectations appeared to include personal learning, satisfaction and a better curriculum.	Enhance
Risk was invoked as a counter to trust and fairness.	5.3, 5.14, 10	Some cynicism was indicated. Just over a third disagreed with the statement 'it would not make much difference to the outcome' indicating possible lack of trust by the rest. A majority also agreed or were neutral as to whether the process would be a token gesture. Open comment "*I find that tutors are happy and encourage feedback from students but then don't act or try to implement anything that is recommended.*"	Enhance

	There was explicit reference to the possibility of student complaints.	5.12	Respondents were mixed in their predictions regarding use of the process as a forum for complaints. While most were neutral on this point, slightly more felt it would not lead to complaints than felt it would.	Enhance	
	Uncertainty was referred to in negative terms by nearly all participants though a small number also invoked the notion of challenge in a more positive way.			Silent	
II. It's not just box-ticking	Participants had varied and diverse motivations for engaging in the curriculum review.	9	Reasons to take part with strongest agreement (over 90%) included to influence the quality of the degree and to gain new skills. Other reasons with between 70% and 81% agreement were to put on CVs and learn about the process.	Enhance	Aspirations which would tend to promote working in partnership (though policy compliance may act to inhibit)
	Rather than being motivated by payment, students often evoked altruism as a reason for their involvement.	9.7	Volunteering to benefit future students was a fundamental driver and the highest motivating factor measured by the number who thought it very important.	Confirm	

Regarding specific curriculum change, while staff were energised by their desire to incorporate ESD, students appeared to see employability and student wellbeing as priorities.	4	In order of importance respondents indicated issues that should be considered for change were: 1. Preparation for employment 2. Skills 3. Delivery format 4. Methods of teaching 5. Assessment methods 6. ESD 7. Order of modules & EDI 8. Knowledge	Enhance
Participants appeared uncomfortable with the idea that students should be involved to comply with policy requirements and ‘tick a box.’	5.3, 9	While most were neutral, there was some agreement it would be a token gesture to comply with university policy. Respondents placed policy compliance as the least likely reason they would volunteer.	Confirm
The notion of students as consumers within a wider institutional management and international neoliberal context was evoked as a reason for engaging students.	5.8, 5.9, 5.13	Fees were seen as an important driver. The majority agreed it was important for their views to be taken into account in view of fees. Furthermore, over three quarters agreed involving students would improve satisfaction though students were largely neutral on whether it would be used for marketing purposes.	Enhance

III. The more voices the better	All participants evoked the notion of diversity in positive terms.	5, 8	Only one participant disagreed that students should be involved in the process. The majority felt they would be personally motivated by the opportunity to help staff see their perspective and by the chance to contribute to the discussion. Over three quarters felt it would make the process more democratic and agreed students should be involved and contribute to decision making.	Enhance	Understandings (and some aspirations) that might tend to promote working in partnership
	Diversity was positioned as a means by which to achieve a better outcome, enhance understanding and as an inherent good.	5.17, 9	Regarding student involvement, the statement with which most students agreed was that it would enable students and staff to work together towards improving the curriculum. The two strongest reasons to volunteer were to influence the quality of the degree and help tutors see the student perspective.	Confirm	

This was evidenced by explicit reference to the desire to include other students.	5.11, 5.15, 8	Over half agreed students from years 1 and 2 should be included, though a small number disagreed. Most disagreed that the views of those taking part would not be representative but many were neutral. Open comment "*Because I'm first year we are still getting adjusted to the university programme but from year 2 it makes more sense but take year one's feedback into consideration on the current fresh studies.*"	Ambivalent
Though diversity of participation was referred to as being positively enhanced by student engagement the involvement of other non-students was also seen as desirable.			Silent
Diverse involvement was understood to be enhanced by the modality of engagement, though in contrasting ways.	8	Open comment *"Not sure what the format is, more willing if it was all online (find coming into uni quite scary due to covid) and it depends on how well u can balance uni work with my job*."	Confirm

Variation in the level of engagement was seen as inevitable but disappointing.	5.2	More respondents disagreed than agreed that only the confident students would take part and many indicated they were likely to volunteer: **Year 1** likely (7) unlikely (3) unsure (3) **Year 2** likely (1) unlikely (2) unsure (4) **Year 3** likely (9) unlikely (0) unsure (2) already volunteered (1)	Contradict

Table 7: Integrated analysis matrix

As can be seen from the matrix, in four instances, the data from each source was confirmatory. In two cases I was unable to find survey data corresponding to the relevant instance and in eight cases data was enhanced. For example, the matrix highlighted that quantitative results showed students saw fees as important. However the qualitative data indicates fees are used as a justification rather than a primary reason for student desire to influence the curriculum. Furthermore, while quantitative data suggested many students would take part in the review, the qualitative data was helpful in illuminating why this did not happen in practice. Finally, while I endeavoured to ensure thematic internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity (Patton, 2015), comparison with survey data highlighted some potential overlap in theme coverage. For example, survey data considering whether respondents agreed that partnership would be a "token gesture to comply with university policies" aligned with qualitative data in two separate themes. One involved consideration of a risk of broken trust (theme I) and the other whether policy compliance is a reason for engagement (theme II).

In summary, I found across the data, participants were very supportive of the inclusion of students in curriculum review despite the perceived risks. Participants had multiple and varied motivations for engaging, though the idea of engagement to comply with a policy requirement was viewed negatively. Students' focus for curriculum change centred on employability and wellbeing, while staff were more concerned to incorporate ESD. Despite the perceived lack of equality in student-staff relationships, all participants placed a high value on an approach incorporating diverse perspectives. Having set out the results of my analysis, as indicated in Chapter 5, I now move to a separate discussion of the data. I have used my research questions to structure my discussion in Chapter 7.

Chapter 7: Discussion

Having set out my data analysis, I now consider the research questions in the context of my own practice, situating this within the broader legal education field in England and Wales (Cownie, 2012). The disciplinary context is a significant variable which relates to (inter-alia) meanings, attitudes, behaviour, motivations and values (Healey et al., 2023, p. 7). I begin by considering the micro-level, which I define as the context for the curriculum review, to answer RQ.1 and 2. Addressing RQ.3, I provide tentative suggestions regarding policy and practice at the meso-level which I define as law school curriculum review practice and policy. Finally, I discuss RQ.4 with reference to the leading conceptual model for partnership in curriculum design (Bovill & Bulley, 2011) and consider its relationship to student engagement theory at the macro-level. My discussion is informed by the sensitising concepts of systems thinking and complexity and use of pragmatism, outlined in Chapter 4.

What are participant understandings and aspirations regarding working in partnership?

Seeing understandings and aspirations as elements within a complex adaptive system entails acknowledging their unpredictable effects. These effects may manifest as drivers or barriers and will not necessarily correspond to individual or collective stated intentions. To aid clarity, RQ.1 and 2 are presented separately, despite this inter-relationship. I define understandings as values and beliefs regarding concepts, and I define aspirations as what participants wanted to achieve by including students. As explained in Chapter 5, the frameworks which supported my interview design, are premised upon the fact that action results from beliefs and knowledge, and levels of collaboration are context specific and dynamic. I contend that while partnership practice was supported, some understandings of partnership appeared to work against this.

Understandings

Partnership and its use is context dependent and the data indicates this includes understanding of terms. The term *partner* and conception of partnership as an equal relationship, appeared not to correspond with participant understandings. This was highlighted at all phases of the research, most notably in phase 2, when it became clear an alternative descriptor might have been useful. In law, definition of terms is given considerable attention and consistent interpretation is highly valued (Jopek-Bosiacka, 2011). *Partner* is used to denote permanent, spousal or business relationships, and some participants referred to legal understandings which may have contributed to concerns. In a legal partnership, there is generally equality of rights and responsibilities, which was not the case in the curriculum review. Patton (2016) suggests concepts are best treated in the same way as the principles inherent in DEval, that is as sensitising, rather than operational (p. 258). This, he argues, addresses the problems of variable, subjective and disputed meanings in different contexts and allows for the generation of context specific definitions.

A disciplinary focus is also relevant to participant understandings of the term *equal*. The definition of SaP where “all participants have the opportunity to contribute equally” (Cook-Sather et al., 2014, p. 6) may have contextual implications. The notion of contributing equally appears to rest on value judgements regarding contributions, but in legal contexts, *equality* is used in similar ways to *partnership*, to infer commensurate rights and responsibilities with some level of permanence, and it may be this understanding that caused difficulty. The data indicated academic staff and students saw themselves as lacking in power, but for staff, a radical notion of equality may have been threatening (Bovill, 2020b, p. 1024). It appears that discussion of the most appropriate descriptor could accompany early framing of the process, involve students and build trust. Options might include collaboration, negotiation (Seale et al., 2015), co-inquiry (Bell, 2016) or co-creation (Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2023) as well as partnership.

Understandings regarding the role of students where the university is an open system, affected by the wider HE environment, appeared relevant. The concept of student-as-consumer was invoked in sometimes contradictory ways. It was often linked to student satisfaction metrics and complaint behaviour (Alves & Raposo, 2007; Nixon et al., 2018). Although some participants saw student satisfaction as a driver of positive change (Mantzios et al., 2020) it was also clear staff saw themselves as being held responsible for student satisfaction which was referred to as a benchmark by which to measure performance. Matthews (2017) refers to unpredictable outcomes as inherent in SaP, arguing that pre-specified outcomes can indicate a neoliberal appropriation (p. 5). Seeing the curriculum review as complex and adaptive, underlines that outcomes are nonlinear and unpredictable. However, in this already neoliberal, metric driven environment, unpredictable outcomes and transformative experiences are seen as risky (Blackmore, 2009). This is particularly so for academic staff if they do not feel they have a voice (Seale, 2016, p. 222) which appeared to be the case. Thus the use of metrics may be distorting action (Frankham, 2015) and the risk aversion demonstrated could function as a significant barrier.

Aspirations

Aspirations tended to connect the process to outcomes. In pragmatic terms this exemplifies the link between means and ends. Students' aspiration to change the curriculum to better address employability (Cheng et al., 2021, Yorke, 2006), and wellbeing were highlighted. Emphasis on employability can be seen as a problematic function of neoliberalism (Zepke, 2015) or as important, but poorly addressed, by consumerist models. Nevertheless, these priorities indicate students may see the curriculum primarily in terms of their development (Barnett & Coate, 2005) not of specific knowledge content or learning outcomes, though this may also reflect their perceptions of where expertise lay. Staff conceptions of the curriculum appeared to encompass students' development in terms of knowing, acting and being (Barnett & Coate, 2005) and also programme content (Fraser & Bosanquet, 2006) within the constructively aligned (Biggs, 1999) institutional framework. Students' focus was on employability generally, whereas staff focussed on ESD learning outcomes, including employability skills (Thomas et al., 2013; AdvanceHE, 2021). The data therefore supports the argument that co-creation is more likely where conceptions are less prescriptive. It appears to demonstrate that within a complex adaptive system, diversity between constituent elements (here, the participants and their ideas about curriculum change) facilitates emergence of unpredictable outcomes (Mason, 2008). Because participants saw student involvement as evidence for prospective employers and a way to develop skills, the data also supports arguments for partnership to enhance employability (Pegg et al., 2012). Nevertheless, it does not appear to support Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) point that only when teachers take an emancipatory view towards student empowerment can content be negotiated.

Aspirations regarding employment, and wellbeing for future cohorts, also highlight student altruism. Notably in phase 3, students reflected on aspirations to help others connecting this to becoming professionals. The data therefore supports the argument that students are motivated by altruism rather than "tick-box exercises" (Cook-Sather et al., 2021, p. 227). However, highlighting the interdependence of variables connects altruistic motivations to vocational aspirations which might otherwise be seen as conflicting.

Finally, although no payment was provided to the students, I do not suggest altruism and payment are incompatible. Payment is a complex issue and while evidence shows payment can have negative effects on motivation (South et al., 2014) partnership literature indicates lack of payment adversely controls which students participate (Mercer-Mapstone et al., 2017). In some contexts payment may not be an option. Here, its absence was not highlighted as affecting engagement. Some of the factors that did promote or inhibit partnership are considered in the following section.

What factors inhibit and promote working in partnership in this context?

In this section I use values from the SaP model presented in Chapter 3, to inform discussion. Systems thinking tends towards consideration of the whole, while still making boundary judgements (Gates et al., 2021). Though the values are often considered in isolation, I examine their dynamic complexity and interaction. I consider how some reinforce each other, while others act in opposition (Byrne, 2001; Mason, 2008). The curriculum review boundary was interpreted expansively to include involved participants and some who were not. I show perceptions of risk interact with *trust*, *courage* and *empowerment* and may inhibit working in partnership. Use of policy may also inhibit practice. However, accommodation of *plurality* of perspectives and motivations can be seen (in interaction with *inclusivity, reciprocity* and *honesty)* as *empowering* in ways that might promote practice.

Inhibiting factors

It appeared that concerns regarding risk may be inhibiting. Risk connects to *trust, empowerment, courage* and *responsibility*. DEval seeks to highlight dynamics within an evaluation context, and dynamic interaction between values in light of risk, is discussed below. Following this, temporal considerations, a practical factor cited as inhibiting participation, is considered.

Risks in partnership

While relevant literature refers to risk (Bryson, 2016; Healey et al., 2014), its significance is not foregrounded, but it was a key theme in the data. *Courage*, which is connected to risk, does feature as a model value. *Courage* might refer to decisions, in the face of uncertainty, to embark on partnership.

Notably, complaints or consumer law breaches were seen as risks among all participants. Data from phase 3 confirms staff reservations may not be dispelled by successful partnership work. This may be because staff feel vulnerable within a neoliberal and managerialist context. It is possible that acceptance of risk might be increased if integrated within expert professional roles. Although students were accepting of staff authority and possibly saw this in relational, rather than dominant terms (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004), staff perceptions of the authority of the institution and of students in their capacity to complain, were negative and zero-sum in character.

Risk was juxtaposed with *trust* and as a variable interacting with *trust*. Trust is related to risk because when certainty or control cannot be relied upon, trust is important. Academic staff were positioned as crucial in maintaining the trust of students and managing expectations. Overall, the process and outcome were seen as positive, which demonstrates that some lack of trust can be accommodated. Trust was improved when students felt their views were implemented, although staff remained concerned that should this not have been possible, trust would have been damaged. This illustrates the link between trust and risk and further highlights that although trust is cited as a prerequisite for successful collaboration, acceptance of risk, with its more negative connotations, is often acknowledged only obliquely (Matthews, 2017).

It appears trust must encompass those not taking part, who also need to trust in wider academic systems, the process and outcomes (Trinkner & Cohn, 2014). Within complex systems, multiple variables will interact. A further interaction was seen between perceptions of risk, trust and *responsibility*. Responsibility was seen partly in terms of where *responsibility* lay, here it was seen to remain largely with staff. Academic staff also saw trust and responsibility in a systemic sense, referring to the need to maintain trust in staff roles as assessors and guardians of procedural fairness for all students. This element of trust is again relevant to perceptions of risk. Legal academics may be alert to rule of law considerations where trust in a rules based system is foundational (Keymolen & Voorwinden, 2020). Furthermore, the need to avoid not only actual bias, but the perception of bias from non-partner students, also builds on familiar legal concepts (Tyler, 2003). There appears to be an acknowledgement of a more collegiate relationship between staff and students, and of the need to retain this change within boundaries, preventing impact on other areas of their relationship or relationships with others. Systems thinking highlights the need to consider where boundaries are drawn and by whom. A bounded, third space offers potential for partnership (Hawley et al., 2019) but the data shows its ambiguous nature was cause for concern. Though falling short of confirming Patrick's (2022) assertion that partnership risks corruption, patronage and tokenism, participant concerns appear to acknowledge these as possibilities.

Only one participant framed risk positively appearing to see it as necessary for satisfaction in the process and result (Huxham et al., 2015). Using a contextual analogy, pursuing a legal case, could be used to illustrate risk and reward where just action is taken after consideration of the merits of a case, despite uncertain outcomes. Viewed pragmatically, action cannot escape risk and uncertain outcomes are inherent (Allen, 2008). Biesta (2013) argues a *strong perception* of education sees risk as something to be managed or eliminated whereas a *weak perception* acknowledges students' agency, seeing risk as inherent and necessary. Strong perceptions misunderstand education as predictable and controllable, whereas weak perceptions accept it involves qualification, socialisation and subjectification where subjectification (the opposite of objectification) relies on agency (Biesta, 2020). Though policy often aims to reduce risk, subjectification requires risk. The data supports this view to the extent that despite power relationships, students felt their agency was increased. Thus it appears risk cannot be eliminated, so should be acknowledged, if not embraced. To do so, another value, *equanimity*, might be seen as useful.

The data shows *empowerment* is also seen as risky when power is understood as belonging to groups in a zero-sum format. It is vital to be aware of the existence of power differentials and their impact on student participation, however the data confirms they are often seen as appropriate and ubiquitous (Symonds, 2021). In fact the data shows staff may see themselves as already in a position of diminished power. This casts further doubt on Fraser and Bosanquet's (2006) assertion that curriculum negotiation must be emancipatory, not merely practical. An alternative view, where power is understood to reside in the collaborative community as a place for rational deliberation, means empowerment can be seen as enabling action. Framing empowerment in this way may reduce perceptions of risk and therefore promote, rather than inhibit, partnership. However, doing so requires alternatives to hierarchical models illustrating the complexity of relationships within a partnership learning community. Here, staff participants as well as students, appeared less motivated by power redistribution than by more instrumental reasons (Marquis et al., 2019).

Time

Supporting other findings, an inhibitor perceived to prevent participation was time (Bovill, 2017; Marquis et al., 2019; Pearlston et al., 2020). In the integrated analysis matrix (Table 6), this was the only issue resulting in a contradictory finding. Although many students expressed initial interest, some later decided not to volunteer or were unable to attend meetings. Using a pragmatic lens, time can be seen, not as possessed, but in terms of its practical use, which turns the focus to prioritisation. Students prioritised existing employment or academic work. While participation was seen as important, participants implicitly accepted the legitimacy of student choices not to engage (Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2023). Moreover, institutional timeframes meant the latter part of the process encroached on assessment preparation. This illustrates the way institutional norms can act as barriers for students, confirming other research highlighting this challenge (Bovill et al., 2016; Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2020). Importantly, the data indicates lack of engagement by staff may have been for similar reasons. Lubicz-Nawrocka (2020) points to high workloads as inhibiting staff and this is supported by the data though it is uncertain, given more time, whether staff would prioritise partnership or other activities.

Promoting factors

Despite negative perceptions outlined above and their potential inhibiting effect, participants supported the review process. An inclusive process was perceived as leading to better outcomes. This was linked to the values *of plurality, inclusivity, reciprocity* and *honesty* which appeared to be mutually reinforcing. Collaboration in a community of inquiry using different modalities appeared to promote working in partnership. Students wanted to help staff and all participants wanted to benefit future students.

Outcomes

Acting in partnership in curriculum matters entails process and outcome considerations. Improved decisions enacted after consideration of diverse perspectives was a strong theme. Furthermore, the idea of emergence in complexity theory, explains the creation of new knowledge from a whole, collaborative process, as being more than the sum of its parts

(Hager & Beckett, 2022). Legal practice and education place emphasis, explicitly and implicitly, on the utility of diverse perspectives to reach a provisional truth and practical solutions (juries are an example), and this disciplinary view may be reflected in the data, though it extended beyond discipline participants. All participants valued this dimension and reflected on how their views changed through interaction. This is a key element of a relational approach to education and engagement where knowing depends on interaction (Pike & Kuh, 2005; Thayer-Bacon, 2010). This research provides an example of bringing students into relation with the whole curriculum and with staff. Seeing partnership as relational is advocated by Bovill (2020a) and is useful as a lens acknowledging problematic, as well as positive relations, where the relationship is dynamic and power might be equalised, but could be used in unhelpful ways (Bingham & Sidorkin, 2004, p. 7). Seeing partnership as relational therefore accommodates the concerns from students, that staff may not respond to their contributions, and from staff that students might complain or prove demanding.

While participants were positive regarding *plurality* within the process, a greater level of engagement from staff and students could be achieved. Evaluation highlighted the need to address how to allow different people (staff, students, alumni, employers) to contribute in diverse ways. *Inclusivity* also relates to institutional processes and the data supports the point often made in literature (Bovill et al., 2016; Marquis et al., 2019) that wider cultural change is needed to fully support inclusive practice. These values also relate to disciplinary conceptions of democracy, where the law making process is seen as legitimate insofar as it represents those affected by laws (Leiviskä, 2020).

Modalities

The use of a blended approach including online and in person modalities was seen as promoting diverse participation, supporting other research (Trowler et al., 2018). The data may reflect post-covid changes to teaching and working practices and priorities regarding interaction with others, travel and technology use (Nikolopoulou, 2022). Lubicz-Nawrocka (2022) and Border et al. (2021) argue adopting blended approaches to partnership activities offers additional benefits, including increased student autonomy. Though not fully explored in this process, it may be that the online space provides a less hierarchical, more inclusive (Bovill et al., 2016) forum in which to interact due to the relative lack of special access available to staff in some physical spaces. Connectivity between participants, the rate of information flow and the diversity of constituent elements are all seen as necessary drivers of complex adaptive systems (Mason, 2008; Stacey, 1996). It may be therefore, that a variety of modalities is useful in supporting these features.

There appears to be a gap between participant espoused theories regarding diverse views and theories-in-use which see engagement as time consuming and risky (Argyris, 1976). Regarding risk, reasons given by students referred to other discipline contexts, for staff they might include self-defence within a managerialist culture (Jones, 2009) while some voiced concerns regarding lack of student expertise (Murphy et al., 2017). The data shows despite appreciation of exchanging perspectives, perceptions of risk persisted. Applying Argyris' concepts of single and double-loop learning it seems that while single-loop learning regarding changes to action strategies for planning occurred, the extent of double-loop learning leading to changed beliefs for staff is less clear. Importantly, although other research found SaP to be a threshold concept (Cook-Sather, 2014), the extent to which this was true here is questionable. The evidence here is mixed, while it may be the start of a transformation (Seale, 2016) it did not meet all criteria for the irreversible crossing of a threshold (Cousin, 2006; Marquis et al., 2016; Meyer & Land, 2005).

Using Seale's (2016) evaluation framework with staff and students (Appendix D) indicated the final outcome was viewed positively. Participatory, ethical and empathetic validity were relatively high, though catalytic validity was less high. A matrix (Appendix F), completed to reflect the review process, builds on that proposed by Bovill (2017, p. 3) and can also be used to enable participants to identify where risk exists and prompt consideration of timing. In light of the data regarding staff perceptions of threats to their expertise and the concerns this caused, it facilitates consideration of terms and shows rationales for action, highlighting where norms are shared, as well as where they are not.

What are the implications of the answers to questions 1 and 2 for policy and practice in curriculum review?

Seeing partnership in curriculum review as operating within a complex adaptive system highlights relationships, interactions and influences not only at the micro-level within the review, but also at a meso, policy and practice level (Lam & Shulha, 2015). Partnership in curriculum review is likely to be dependent on system influences such as discipline and institutional factors together with external cultural and political influences (Healey & Healey, 2018; Norris, 2020, 2023; Raza Memon & Jivraj, 2020). Furthermore, barriers can be exacerbated in the context of disciplines such as law where professional requirements influence content (Bovill & Woolmer, 2018). The data showed potential resistance and cynicism to partnership enacted not as a means to curricula ends-in-view, but as an administrative end in itself, or ‘tick-box exercise.’ I therefore discuss this issue in relation to institutional policies before considering three reasons law schools are currently well suited to actively engage students in curriculum review. These are, increased curricula autonomy, the valuing of diverse learning communities, and discipline understandings which align with student involvement in curriculum review as a negotiation.

Use of policy

Engagement in curriculum design is seen as part of a culture of good practice in HE which I argue, can be incentivised but should not be bureaucratised (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). Use of a learning community model for curriculum review has the advantage of retaining micro-level autonomy in light of participant attitudes to meso-level policy compliance as a technocratic, performative end in itself. A ‘symbolically compliant’ (Teelken, 2012) attitude to evaluation questionnaires was demonstrated by students and staff, which indicates that policy requiring any form of partnership may be counterproductive. Furthermore, reliance on staff training and development is not always practical in view of time constraints and priorities. Therefore incentivising staff requires either different heuristics or use of narratives to support a decision to engage in partnership in the face of uncertainty (Gigerenzer, 2023). Narratives might inform newer students about partnership in curriculum review as a way to promote a culture of engagement where student involvement becomes habitual (Thorburn, 2020; VanWynsberghe & Herman, 2015). Complexity frameworks within DEval emphasise progress can emerge, and need not be imposed from outside. Furthermore, self-organisation can adapt to local micro-level needs, which may not be visible at higher levels of a system (Reynolds et al., 2016, p. 663-4). In policy terms, White (2018) argues partnership enacted through policy can be an unjustified intrusion undermining relations between academics and students reliant on their authority and discipline expertise. It is possible disciplinary views of rule based systems influenced the ways students and academic staff viewed power and authority. The data supports White's (2018) argument that academics will take an ambivalent attitude to partnership policy initiatives (p. 164) but goes further in showing this is also the case for students. This indicates that policy where it exists, might be more effective offering general guidance rather than prescriptive terms or practices.

Increased autonomy

Despite concern (Mason & Guth, 2018), changes in professional control present significant opportunities to engage with the curriculum (Gibbons, 2019; Ryan, 2021; Waters, 2018). The advent of a revised benchmark statement (QAA, 2023) provides further possibilities to use new content to trigger inclusive discussion. Because disciplinary conceptions may, to some extent, remain as systemic barriers (Graham, 2014) involving students in more democratic review processes can catalyse change, although the exact nature of change is unpredictable and subject to negotiation. Here, the data confirms other research considering law student attitudes to curriculum (Roper et al., 2020) regarding priorities for the development of employability through "experiential and dialogic learning experiences" (Hall & Rasiah, 2022) not professionalisation (Morrison & Guth, 2021), and for enhanced attention to student wellbeing (Baik et al., 2019). Partnership practice in curriculum review is potentially therefore a way to increase student autonomy and address wellbeing concerns (Huggins, 2012). In relation to wellbeing, Barnacle and Dall'Alba argue for the consideration of care to encourage "students to take a stand on what they are learning and who they are becoming" (2017, p. 1329). Caring is a skill often required for legal professional employment (Noddings, 2012). Additionally, care would account for the data regarding participants' altruistic desires to assist with the curriculum review to incorporate ESD and wellbeing content.

Learning communities

The SaP model places a learning community at the heart of partnership activities, this is built on ideas about social learning, reflecting the need for appropriate structure and process, relationships and behaviour (Healey, 2014; Healey et al., 2016). However the nature of this community is necessarily undefined in the model. The term learning community is used flexibly (Kilpatrick et al., 2003) and inconsistently in HE, and specific models have been called for (Prodgers et al., 2023). Healey et al. (2016) refer to the application of the communities of practice literature. A community of practice (Wenger, 2011) is generally defined in terms of a group, deepening expertise by addressing issues impacting shared futures on an ongoing basis (Bowles & O'Dwyer, 2022) and has been used to consider partnership activity (Khouri et al., 2017). Though it could be argued to be relevant to the law school learning community as a whole (Wallace, 2018), in this research the community of practice concept appears less relevant due to differing repertoires drawn on by students and staff, and the time bounded nature of the process, which is cyclic, but not ongoing, from a student's point of view (Wenger, 2000). Using complexity as a sensitising concept, highlights that a learning community can be seen as what Hager and Beckett (2022) refer to as a co-present group. Such dynamic, relational groups work on a shared project where the output is emergent, because it results from interaction between members, not merely from aggregated individual contributions (p. 6).

A philosophically pragmatic alternative to the community of practice which shares many similarities with co-present groups, is the community of inquiry (Burgh, 2021; Cam, 2011; Pardales & Girod, 2006; Shields, 2003). One specific framework derived from this, which retains the emphasis on process and social learning is Garrison's (2016) community of inquiry framework. This has not been explicitly applied in the context of partnership although it is linked closely to the idea of a learning community (Prodgers et al., 2023; Shea, 2006). It has been applied in the context of legal education (Fried, 2020, Sweany, 2020) and other HE settings (Warner, 2016) including course redesign (Vaughan, 2010). Lower (2019; 2022) has suggested its use as a tool for law curriculum design within which staff and students function as partners in knowledge production. The potential benefit of this model is that it avoids staff:student dualisms and power redistribution constructs, instead focussing on *empowerment* as the power of collaborative knowledge production. As a process model which has been developed to support engagement, the community of inquiry framework offers a practical template that might assist in curriculum review processes in light of the answers to RQs 1 and 2. Furthermore it is applicable to situations where a blend of modalities is used to enhance or facilitate engagement. As post-pandemic distinctions related to modalities in learning continue to blur (Cahapay, 2020; Cameron et al., 2020; Plancher, 2020) it is possible this model will be applied more widely. The framework encompasses three presences, social, cognitive and teaching, which direct attention to engagement between participants and affect (enhancing trust, authenticity and honesty), engagement in discussion of the subject (enhancing inclusivity, courage and plurality) and facilitation of the process (enhancing responsibility and empowerment through joint action). It further uses a practical inquiry model (Garrison et al., 2001) comprising four phases: problem identification as a trigger for inquiry, followed by exploration of the subject including reflection, leading to integration and application of newfound knowledge towards resolution. In this research, cognitively, the triggering event was the question of how to incorporate ESD in the curriculum, exploration involved students and staff considering alternative proposals, and integration of their priorities finally led to resolution in a revised curriculum. Socially, issues of trust and open communication were highlighted and my role in facilitating can be seen as the teaching presence. A disciplinary community of inquiry, set within the HE context, and subject to dynamic interaction between partnership values, is illustrated below.

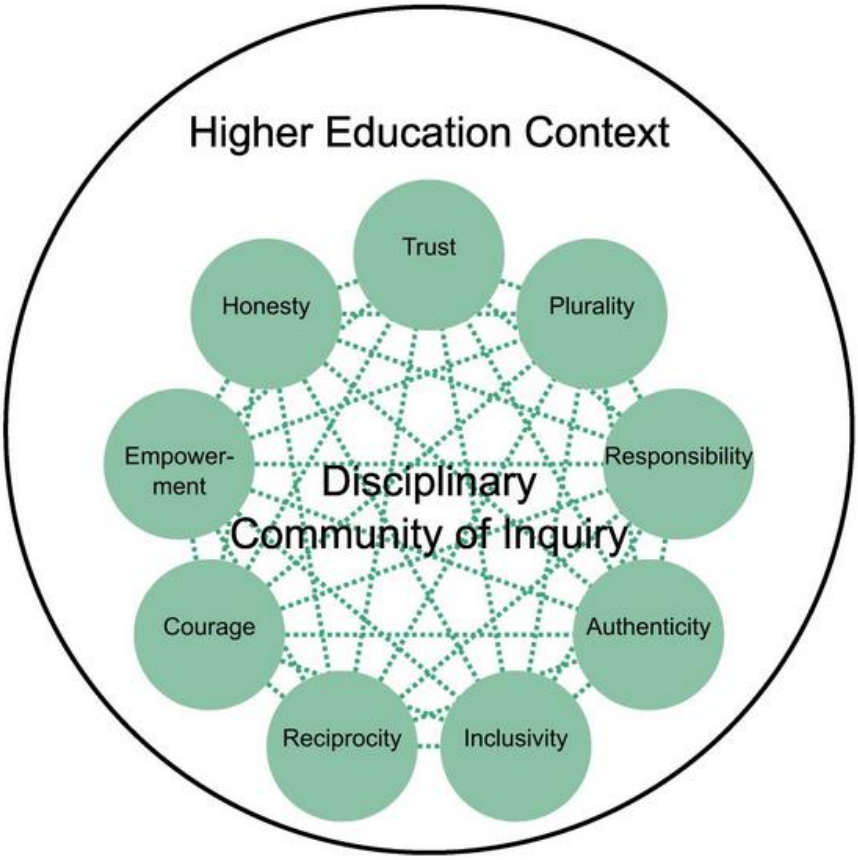

Figure 14: Partnership as complex and dynamic

Disciplinary concepts

Finally, in order to promote partnership practice it may be the case that the term *partnership* is replaced by one according with discipline understandings. While partnership denotes a static state of division, terms such as negotiation, collaboration or co-creation are etymologically related to action and may be seen as more appropriate. Collaboration and negotiation are seen as discipline skills (Bugden et al., 2018; Turner et al., 2018) which, together with other skills, such as interpreting formal documents, debating and reflective practice (Leering, 2019; Twining, 2010) are relevant to curriculum review. Notably, negotiation is often cited as part of partnership (Bovill & Woolmer, 2018) for example, Lubicz-Nawrocka (2023) defines curriculum co-creation as a "process in which staff and students work together to share and negotiate decision making about aspects of curricula" (p. 135) and Trowler et al.'s (2018) student voice continuum (p. 15) presents negotiation as a form of partnership. In principled negotiation, as understood in a disciplinary context, focus is on (re)creation of relationships or objects, power redistribution is not central (Menkel-Meadow, 2006), procedural fairness is relevant (Hollander-Blumoff, 2010), risk is acknowledged and complete trust, though desirable is not essential. Effective legal negotiation is seen not as adversarial and zero-sum, but as creative, problem solving, social activity (Menkel-Meadow, 1983). Outside the partnership literature, others also characterise student engagement in curriculum design as a negotiation (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000; Collins & Clarke, 2008). Using the concept of a process syllabus they frame curriculum as provisional and always subject to further negotiation. Breen and Littlejohn (2000) describe negotiation as shared decision making that does not entail the teacher "giving up his or her status as highly experienced and authoritative" or "imply power sharing in which everyone is reduced to the same levels of opportunity" (p. 18) but rather focusses on a procedure where "overt and shared decision-making through which alternative assumptions and interpretations are made clear, the range of achievements and difficulties in the work are identified, and preferences and alternatives in ways of working can be revealed and chosen" (p. 9). This description appears to align with participants' perceptions. Seen in this way, negotiation therefore aligns with the data and may have the benefit of resonating with legal academics and law students, by building on existing skills and reducing perceptions of risk.

In summary, it is important to restate that any conclusions regarding policy or practice in curriculum review in legal education must be drawn with extreme caution. However, the concept of negotiation, or use of a community of inquiry model where the outcome is seen as greater than the sum of its parts are worthy of consideration. While in some contexts, the view that disruption of power hierarchies is central (Mercer-Mapstone & Abbot, 2020) will be useful and appropriate, this research shows this is not always the case, or that such disruption can be more effective if use of power, rather than power redistribution, is the prime focus. Law schools that have often taken traditional approaches to engagement in curriculum review might consider their context, motivations and philosophy as part of planning for a similar process.

What are the implications of the research findings in critically assessing the concept of students as partners and its position in relation to relevant theories of student engagement?

As outlined in Chapter 3, I see partnership as a form of active student engagement (Barrineau et al., 2019). This means theories regarding student engagement apply to partnership as a sub-set. Having discussed the answers to RQs 1, 2 and 3, I now focus on the concept of SaP and its position in relation to engagement. From a complex adaptive systems perspective, a micro-level consideration of engagement needs to account for macro-level influences (Westman & Bergmark, 2019). I therefore return to the debate regarding engagement's place within a neoliberal and managerialist culture (Tight, 2019) and apply the ladder model of engagement in curriculum design (Bovill & Bulley, 2011) and the theoretical framework for partnership proposed by Holen et al. (2020). I argue that a pragmatic approach to partnership recognises the plurality of institutional priorities and participant mindsets which may not completely align with all the values generally presented as inherent in partnership, but this should not prevent partnership practices. This is relevant in terms of the overarching argument that conceptions of partnership, as opposed to negotiation, infer values regarding power redistribution and neoliberalism which may interact with other elements within a complex system to inhibit practice in some contexts.

In Chapter 3, I discussed the difficulties in defining and understanding student engagement. One consequence is that theories suggest engagement (and its research literature) can be positioned as in alignment with neoliberal agendas (Zepke, 2014, 2015, 2018) or in opposition to them (Buckley, 2018; Tight, 2020). Student engagement is presented by those who see it as at one end of this spectrum as "the product of a marketized, neoliberal system which seeks to appropriate the student voice" (Lowe & El Hakim, 2020, p. 16) and at the other end as radical and humanising (Fielding, 2006, 2011; Mercer-Mapstone & Abbot, 2020). A fear that partnership will be similarly co-opted by neoliberal institutions is expressed in the literature (Lubicz-Nawrocka, 2023, p. 143). However both neoliberal and strong counter-narratives, because they are ideological, could have the practical effect of inhibiting practice. Partnership models (Healey et al., 2016) require that values be shared (p. 8) however this requirement has the potential to inhibit partnership where values are not entirely shared. A pragmatic approach considers the utility of such framing and its effect on advancing goals such as more moral, democratic curriculum review leading to enhanced curricula.

If partnership is seen as a process, it is a means to various ends. These ends are context dependent and characterised by different actors with potentially multiple ends-in-view (Hildreth, 2011). The data shows elements of neoliberal and managerial influences in the ways students positioned themselves as fee paying consumers and in the concerns of staff regarding student satisfaction. However private and public good aspirations regarding outcomes for students, the institution, and for society, show motivations are mixed. Zepke (2015), argues there is a potential alignment of engagement with neoliberalism due to connections made between engagement and employability, the influence of performativity including metrics, accountability and student satisfaction as a proxy for quality (p. 695). Using a lens that is sensitive to complexity and rejects simple dualisms, the research data demonstrates the macro-level neoliberal and managerialist context had varied and sometimes conflicting effects. Aspirations regarding employability motivated engagement which in pragmatic terms, has moral value where it is seen as directed towards ethical ends, whether for students, society or the world (Lacković, 2019). Different elements of a neoliberal HE system appeared to act in opposition. Fees appeared to motivate students, however metrics, student satisfaction and a performativity culture appeared to function as inhibitors. Models shifting focus towards the benefits of engagement and the plurality of ways it might take place are more practical. The positioning of SaP in sections of the literature as the antithesis of neoliberal approaches relies heavily on challenges to existing power hierarchies. In contrast, positioning SaP as in support of such approaches appears likely to be viewed negatively and increase resistance to its use, especially if enacted through promotion in directive policy requirements. This research therefore supports Marie and Sims (2023) who raise the possibility of a pragmatic conception of partnership (p. 124). The authors warn that in order to maximise the potential of partnership, the neoliberal context must be accommodated and any alignments between the values based aims of partnership and this context be exploited in ways that prevent the best being the enemy of the good (Shackleton et al., 1988). Although this is a less common way of presenting partnership work, the data and analysis support this view.

Ladders of participation in student engagement

Many models situating partnership in relation to student engagement show it as a form of enhanced engagement placing it at the upper end of a participation and equality continuum and beyond co-creation (Bovill, 2020; Bovill & Bulley, 2011; Peart et al., 2023). The depiction of "genuine" partnership (Matthews, 2017) as aspirational but also potentially unattainable, might have mixed practical effects and may be why, in this context, the concept of partnership was less helpful than the concept of negotiation might be. While it may be useful to challenge traditional practices and provide models that assist in doing so, it is clear perceptions of risk can function as a barrier (Trowler et al., 2018).

Many definitions of SaP refer to the power relationship between students and staff (Kehler et al., 2017). Ladder of participation models depicting this are very widely used (Bovill & Bulley, 2011; Buckley, 2018; Carey, 2018; Healey et al., 2014; Varwell, 2023). The most influential in this context is that presented by Bovill and Bulley (2011) based on Arnstein's (1969) original model (p. 217) which is premised on power hierarchies (Collins & Ison, 2006). Importantly, pragmatism is often criticised as lacking any theorisation of power. This is problematic as power is a central consideration in the social science domain, therefore Wolfe (2012) sets out a pragmatic theory of power which is not 'power over' or 'power to' but 'power with' as a form of transactional collective intelligence within a particular social setting (p. 7). Arguing the setting or social medium created by participants is the mode through which action is taken, he states that power can be supplemented or replaced by other modes such as regulation or expertise, that social paradigms and experiences motivate and inform praxis and values influence judgements (p. 15). This indicates the partnership learning community is the format in which power is both understood and experienced (Hill Collins, 2012), power is a tool used with others for impact in the world and the context of institution and discipline are significant.

Ladder models tend to present power as static, but even proponents (Arnstein, 1969; Bovill, 2017; Hart, 2008) acknowledge the models can obscure complexity. Participants' views indicated they saw the process as fluid and complex which makes the ladder model difficult to apply as there is no shared view of where power is held. As with the zero-sum concept itself, which has been argued not to apply in complex situations (Wright, 2000), more dynamic, nuanced versions of this ladder have been called for, reflecting the breadth and depth of participation and accounting for the plurality and interdependence of power sources (Tritter & McCallum, 2006). Such calls appear to draw on complexity theory in highlighting unpredictable, non-linear and emergent relations within a system (Beckett & Hager, 2018). Though Varwell (2023) argues that critiques of ladder models as lacking in nuance are unfair (p. 269) many others also argue for models reflecting complex social learning (Collins & Ison, 2009) or offer adaptations to reflect complexity (Hurlbert & Gupta, 2015). Furthermore, it is not easy to place the process forming the focus of this research at a precise point on the ladder. Students were not in control of decision making. Most participants appeared to feel students had significant, but not substantial, influence, though this is a contextual value judgement. On this measure, the process could be argued not to reach the level of partnership. Despite this, at the micro-level, questions of power, expertise and authority appeared to cause concern.

Tritter and McCallum (2006) argue ladder models over-simplify, conflate means and ends and do not recognise the agency of those who participate in diverse ways at different times. Notably, Bovill, who first proposed the ladder model, has also highlighted, with others, the complex and risky dimensions of negotiating partnership work (Woolmer et al., 2023). A pluralist pragmatism accommodating different ends-in-view might address these problems by requiring values to be made explicit (Martela, 2015). This is similar to the point made by Buckley (2018, p. 730) who argues clarity regarding underlying aims and values at the level of engagement practice is important. However, this may cause difficulty where aims and values in institutional policy, and those of academics or students do not align. Buckley (quoted in Varwell, 2023) appears to acknowledge this, cautioning against transparency regarding ideology in relation to ladder models as a mainstream tool, on the grounds that they may be seen as “radical” (p. 268). I understand this to mean transparency might be counterproductive in some contexts and the data supports this view and goes further in showing that even where no explicit use of such models is made, concerns may be precipitated by rhetoric regarding power redistribution. Thus, a more unificatory pragmatism (Martela, 2015) might be needed, avoiding these models and using alternatives accommodating wider conceptions of power including the shared use of power to act (Allen, 2008).

The dynamic complexity of partnership

Using the DEval concept of complex adaptive systems, highlights that innovations are located within social, economic, political and institutional systems which can act as both promotors and barriers (Reynolds et al., 2016, p. 664). Moving beyond value based partnership definitions, Holen et. al. (2020) present an institutional level analytical framework using four idealised visions of the university (Olson, 2007). The framework attempts to locate partnership within wider macro-level systems. It addresses the static dualism of neoliberal or critical contra-narrative (p. 2) within which ladder models are arguably conceived, by considering the dynamic complexity of partnership practice at the meso-level. The idealised visions of the student role within the framework are as apprentice, as follower of political agendas, as democratic participant and as consumer (p. 5) and the extent to which they can be applied at the micro-level in this context are considered below and were incorporated in the planning matrix adapted from Bovill (2017, p. 3), (Appendix F). Doing so, I argue, provides evidence that in this context, and potentially more broadly, conceptions encompassing dynamic complexity and plurality provide more practical utility in encouraging practice for diverse actors with different motivations.

Macro-level factors such as conceptions of HE and the role of students, are interdependent with those acting at the micro-level. Data showed student motivations to take part in the review reflected an apprentice ideal and included learning from staff, but this was not a strong theme in the qualitative data. The student as apprentice, aligns with a Humboldtian vision of HE (Olson, 2007) where pressure towards partnership is internal, and students and staff work together, often in a research process. Although in this context the co-creation activity was initiated as is characterised in this model (p. 5) by experienced academic staff, there was only general, but not specific consensus. Because students are often planning to enter the legal profession rather than pursue academic careers, this element may have been somewhat overlooked. The data therefore underlines the move away from perceptions of the university as truth seeking, to the university as preparation for employment. Furthermore this mode is characterised by emergence and complete informality, which was not the case in this context.

In contrast to the apprentice ideal, the consumer ideal was strongly represented. This illustrates what Holen et al. (2020) refer to as a service enterprise model of the university where new public management results in the fact that actors involved in partnership have conflicting objectives. In this context, the proximate drivers for engaging in the partnership were located at the academic staff level, rather than external pressure but this might be different where policy is directive. Though objectives were not in full alignment, they were not in direct conflict. However, from participant perspectives, one apparent reason to engage students and thus a factor promoting this, was the notion of students as consumers. The fact that the practice might be taken up within the university as a whole could also be argued to reflect managerial practices. In their research, Holen et al. (2020) found neo-liberal influences do not hinder partnership practices (p. 10) and the data confirms the multi-faceted nature of partnership and the ways in which notions of student consumers can function as barriers and drivers within the same context. El Hakim et al. (2020) warn "'customer' rhetoric increases the likelihood of creating an environment where it is harder for students to work closely with staff" (p. 28). Although students appeared comfortable in using this language themselves, the data showed a larger concern was the associated use of performative policy. The data therefore supports other research showing identification as a consumer to some extent, is not necessarily a barrier to engagement (Bunce et al., 2023, p. 77) but consumer rhetoric within policy might have negative effects.

In a conception which sees partnership as set by political agendas, pressure towards partnership is external and practice is consensual. If Holen et al.'s definition of national political agendas is defined widely, the use of guidance (Ramsden, 2008) appears to correspond with this type, and acted as a trigger for action. The goal was not to "gain support and funding" though this may have influenced senior management support, nor was the practice wholly formal in character. In fact the more formal policy requirement that might entail "participation forms" (Holen et al., 2020, p. 5) appears to be exactly the box-ticking perceived negatively by participants. Holen et al. characterise this conception as instrumental, in compliance with national rather than institutional policy. Here, no specific policy regarding partnership was in place. As set out in Holen et al.'s framework, to the extent this element was relevant, there was a general consensus, though sometimes this was in opposition to the prospect of policy. Findings therefore confirm to some extent Holen et al.'s contention that "political pressure ends up fostering internal incentives towards partnership" (p. 10). Here the pressure was minimal and acted to enhance the environment in which partnership was cultivated rather than to mandate its use, which may align more with the consumer model (Olsen, 2007, p. 33).

The idea of democratic participation was reflected fairly strongly in the data. This ideal aligns with concepts of student voice and is driven by a desire to empower students (Holen et al., 2020, p. 5) as seen in ladder models. It is characterised in the framework by conflicting objectives between students and institutional actors, which is only supported in the data to a small extent, though it may account for some of the perceived risk. Holen et al. (2020) depict partnership in this area as internal, and mostly student driven, but they found in their data that conflict and student pressure towards partnership were not evident. Similarly, in this case, partnership was not student driven though it was internally staff driven. This ideal type is based on Olsen's (2007) vision of the university as a representative democracy where student voices are heard in quality assurance and governance. As such it may be better reflected in cases where there is formal representation and students' unions are involved. Questions regarding the representativeness of the students in this research were raised by participants, and the data indicates participant views regarding democracy were more deliberative than representative. This is because deliberative democracy supports rather than supplants representative democracy as a way of enhancing established practice, often allowing for more radical change (Gutmann & Thompson, 2000; Keutgen, 2021). Patrick (2022) sees partnership and representation as exclusive but this is not necessarily the case. Though not acting in a representative role, some volunteers were, or had been, representatives. Dickinson (2022) appears to support a model for student engagement that more closely reflects this complex reality and involves communities of, rather than lone, representatives. He asserts that "students are (positive) consumers, partners and clients all at the same time" (2023, p. 120) and this dynamic complexity is discussed further below.

Within this research, participants saw more than one ideal type as relevant. This supports Holen at al. (2020) who note "many practices and their rationales and development processes have some features of more than one of the four 'ideal' types" (p. 10). The data confirms their contention that within one area of practice individuals' engagement can align with different understandings (p. 9). It also appears not to align with the argument that neoliberalism has subverted democracy in universities (Giroux, 2014). Others have argued neoliberal metaphors are impossible to disentangle from democratic citizenship metaphors when enacted in practice (Nordensvärd & Ketola, 2019) and I found this to be true. Using this framing assists in making this intertwining of democratic and neoliberal elements explicit and confirms the notion that partnership, even at the micro-level, is a complex and dynamic process rather than a static state. Although they arise in a different context and at a micro-level, these findings therefore support Holen et al.'s (2020) conclusion that partnership practice is complex, multi-faceted and requires multiple models.

In Chapter 3, I highlighted the questions raised by Marquis et al. (2019) who ask how disconnections between participant perceptions and partnership literature can be reconciled in ways recognising diversity but preserving the essential value of partnership. Applying Holen et al.'s (2020) framework demonstrates that theories describing engagement, and partnership, as either neoliberal in nature or as a means to overthrow neoliberal institutional practice present a false dichotomy. This data supports Tight's (2018) conclusion that if working within a neoliberal context is unavoidable, rebalancing using small acts offers a preferable alternative to not acting (p. 280). A more pragmatic view of partnership as negotiation or "inquiry with ethical ends-in-view" (Martela, 2015) might go some way towards addressing this, because it accommodates the principle that while remaining open to a range of motivations, perspectives (p. 1251) and descriptive terms, varying interests and goals can be accommodated.

In this chapter I have addressed each question, highlighting connections with relevant literature, the sensitising concepts of complexity and systems thinking, and resources from philosophical pragmatism. In doing so I have considered implications at micro, meso and macro levels, addressing the wider significance of the evaluative research through third person inquiry. In the concluding chapter, I return to the main elements of this research including the aims, before summarising these answers and linking them to the contribution of this research.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

This chapter concludes by summarising the thesis and findings as they relate to the aims and research questions. It sets out the contribution of this research and makes some suggestions regarding further research while acknowledging limitations summarised in Chapter 1.

My aim was to undertake DEval research corresponding to the partnership curriculum review to consider understandings and aspirations, together with perceived promoters and inhibitors from a variety of perspectives, to consider implications for law school policy and practice and wider theoretical implications for the concept of SaP and its relationship to student engagement theory. My objectives were to facilitate the review using a partnership approach to integrate ESD while reflecting student and staff preferences, to evaluate the review informing future action, and collect data during three phases, to answer the research questions. Using DEval within a pragmatic paradigm, supported use of mixed methods to collect data representing a variety of perspectives to support a micro-level participatory, plural, practical but provisional process (Brendel, 2009), and the consideration of implications for meso-level policy and macro-level theory.

Overview and summary of answers to the research questions

Chapter 1, introduced this research, highlighting the moral and democratic reasons for active student engagement in curricula formation. I set out the focus and locus of the research together with the research questions which I address below. The questions address micro, meso and macro-levels. I define micro as the curriculum review process undertaken in partnership between students and staff within the undergraduate law programme I co-lead. The meso-level is defined as undergraduate legal education in England and Wales, and the macro-level is defined at that considering theories of partnership and student engagement more broadly. In Chapter 2, I outlined salient features of the micro and meso contexts together with my understanding of curriculum and the purpose and value of HE. The literature review in Chapter 3 highlighted the fact that discipline context is argued to be an important variable, but that evidence regarding partnership practice in the discipline of law is scarce. I examined the concept of SaP and its relationship with student engagement. I considered the ways in which partnership is generally seen as a process model, either supporting or directly opposing neoliberal influence in HE. The model proposed by Holen et al. (2020) was introduced, which attempts to accommodate dynamic conceptions of partnership. The review also highlighted avenues for research related to the model presented by Healey et al. (2016). These included the fact that the concept of the learning community has yet to receive much theoretical consideration, as well as opportunities to consider and critique the values in the model and their interaction. A further opportunity arose from the fact that the topic of partnership has often been researched from a critical theory perspective. This perspective has arguably also led to the use of ladder models, which highlight levels of cooperation, but which can be seen as more static and zero-sum in nature. Finally, the tendency to emphasise positive findings in partnership research presents a further opportunity to consider other, challenging aspects of practice. In Chapter 4, the use of philosophical pragmatism as a meta-theory and DEval as a methodology were explained. The mixed methods design, ethical issues, methods of analysis and researcher reflections were presented in Chapter 5. In Chapter 6, I presented analysis and integration of the data from a student survey and interviews with students and staff. I used the framework of my questions to discuss this data in Chapter 7. Addressing RQs 1 and 2, the analysis demonstrated the importance of the discipline context to understanding the terms *partnership* and *equality*. Aspirations were connected to the discipline and encompassed altruistic and instrumental motivations. They also highlighted connections between the process and outcome. The analysis showed motivations and concerns can interact with other elements within a complex system to inhibit practice. Concerns regarding risks (for example, of student complaints) were identified as potentially inhibiting, as was the notion of policy requirements regarding partnership practice. However increased plurality and diversity of perspectives were highly valued, as were enabling modalities. The role of trust, not just between participants, but in the wider HE system, was highlighted. Connections between, and among, inhibiting and promoting factors were identified, such as those between risk, trust, and empowerment.

When considering policy and practice in curriculum review within the discipline of law (RQ 3). I presented three reasons law schools are well suited to actively engage students in curriculum review. These are, their increasing curricula autonomy, disciplinary attitudes to diverse learning communities, and discipline understandings which align with student involvement as negotiation. Findings indicated that seeing active student engagement as a negotiation, focussed on the achievement of a democratically informed outcome, may be beneficial. This is because, although participants saw great value in diverse perspectives informing an enhanced outcome, they had several concerns articulated as risks, which were not fully allayed by experience. Use of policy might be seen as an alternative means to encourage partnership practice. However in this context, participants were suspicious of performative requirements promoting use of partnership. Consequently it appears that it may be a mistake to assume policy requirements would be useful. Findings also show perceptions of risk, and antipathy towards policy, can be explained to some extent by a lack of trust between different actors within the system. Due to the connection between risk and trust, it may be necessary to consider whether and how trust within and between participant groups can be increased. However it is important to acknowledge that complete control over interactions within the process, and outcomes, is never possible. This means risk cannot be eliminated.

Complexity theory and systems thinking are important in understanding complex systems such as partnerships and HE. Complexity theory is the study of complex systems, emphasising non-linearity, emergence and the interaction of multiple components. Systems thinking is an approach that views issues as part of interconnected systems, considering the relationships between parts and the whole to understand behaviour and outcomes. Thus partnership can be seen as a complex environment at the micro level, embedded within a macro-level complex HE system. Complexity theory and systems thinking are also key to the DEval methodology used. Patton (2011) defines DEval as supporting “innovation development to guide adaptation to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments” and as “informed by systems thinking” (p. 1). Systems thinking offers a philosophically pragmatic way to examine the subject of research holistically, rather than considering individual elements in isolation. In particular, it directs attention to micro, meso and macro level features, their interactions and influences within the research context. As such, a micro level partnership process is seen in interaction with the meso level disciplinary environment and the macro level HE system. Furthermore, an emphasis on interdependence and relationships within a system highlights the ways that these elements can influence each other and the system as a whole.

Complexity theory highlights the fact that some environments, where multiple factors interact in unpredictable ways, cannot be fully understood if they are not recognised as such. This is because in simple environments, the effect of responses based on identifying the nature of the environment are predictable, even in complex environments, after detailed analysis, the effect of appropriate responses can be predicted. However in complex environments, clear cause and effect relationships do not exist. As outlined in Chapter 4, complexity theory provides six characteristics of such environments, namely, nonlinearity, emergence, dynamical interaction, adaption, uncertainty and coevolution. These are seen as features of the complex and multi-level systems within which DEval can be used. Patton, (2011) asserts that because complexity is a defining characteristic for DEval, it takes place within contexts exhibiting these six characteristics which are referred to by Patton as sensitising concepts. A sensitising concept is a loosely, or nominally, defined concept which requires particularisation within a specific context. A sensitising concept acts as a container which can be used to examine the context and also to see patterns and implications (Patton, 2011, p. 146). Both student engagement and partnership can be seen as container concepts, which must be particularised in context.

Using a DEval methodology meant that the six characteristics of complexity listed above also functioned as sensitising concepts. For example, in this context, it was clear that the development of a partnership approach was nonlinear, because there was potential for this to progress in diverse ways, both in terms of content and process. Attention to emergent issues facilitated the exploration of unanticipated student concerns. The emergence of wellbeing and student priorities regarding employability as important aspects of the review resulted from nonlinearity and from dynamical interactions between participants and the system within which they were operating. The notion of dynamic interaction highlighted the diverse ways in which perceptions of risk interacted with notions regarding power, trust, courage and responsibility. In particular, at a system level, it was clear that pressures on students in the current HE context brought to the fore these two issues, i.e. wellbeing and concern regarding future employment prospects. There is a complex relationship of interaction between the six characteristics referred to. For example, it can be seen that the emergence of unpredictable concerns from students required adaptation on the part of staff. Because DEval is co-created and utilisation focussed, the methodology was sensitive to unpredicted issues and allowed for adaptation and timely adjustments in the process and the focus. Staff desire and ability to respond and adapt was influenced by system features. For example, staff concerns regarding their lack of power can be seen as a result of macro system features which nevertheless had micro level implications. Their perceptions of risk arose within a system where they saw student satisfaction as a key metric. The development of both the process and the revised curriculum can be seen as evolving from these interactions and dynamical relations between participants and multi-level system features. This means that, as within all complex environments, neither the process nor the outcome was predictable. As such, complexity sensitising concepts were important in informing the outcomes of this research. Firstly, they helped to highlight the discipline context as an important variable. Discipline, as a subsystem, can introduce key factors affecting the behaviours of participants and their dynamic interaction. Here a key factor appeared to be disciplinary understandings of terms such as partnership and equality, however in other contexts or different disciplines, factors are likely to vary. Secondly, acknowledgement of uncertainty, articulated as risk by participants, is accepted as inherent when using complexity concepts. Thus complexity helps to plan for and acknowledge uncertainty and the potential for unexpected events. Complexity also helps to recognise that because uncertainty is dependent on interaction between partnership participants and other system features such as neoliberalism, it cannot be avoided. Finally, highlighting dynamic complexity aligns with Holen at al.'s (2020) model and clearly shows the ways in which different conceptions of, and motivations regarding partnership co-exit and interact at the micro-level. Thus, seeing values within partnership as in interaction, and capable of creating patterns and emergent properties beyond any shared intention, helps to explain features of this research such as perceptions of risk which appear to be influenced by notions of student empowerment within a neoliberal model of HE.

In critically assessing the concept of SaP (RQ 4), it can be seen that partnership is complex and dynamic. Institutional priorities and participant mindsets may not align with all the values presented as inherent in partnership. For example, participants may not be motivated by empowerment as traditionally understood in the literature. It appears the relationship between partnership, engagement and neoliberalism cannot be reduced to a binary because the elements within a partnership, including motivations, interact. Complex dynamic relationships are not well represented by ladder models which can appear static and obscure complexity. However Holen et al.'s (2020) model can be used at meso and micro-levels to represent the complex dynamism of partnership practice.

Contribution and limitations

Three broad themes arise from the answers above. These relate to the importance of the discipline context, the fact that participant perceptions of risk in partnership practice were, in this context, significant, and finally, that partnership in curriculum review can be seen as a complex, dynamic process sitting within a complex dynamic HE system. These themes are outlined below. Together with an additional section considering methodology, they are used to address the contributions and limitations of this research.

Disciplinary context

This research contributes by addressing calls for discipline based studies in an area currently not well represented, adding to knowledge regarding partnership practice. There is value in research which considers the ways that discipline may impact understandings, aspirations and practice regarding partnership. Considering the use of partnership in law curriculum review highlighted disciplinary orientations towards the use of learning communities as vehicles for inquiry, negotiation and decision making. This research therefore contributes to arguments in the partnership literature that the discipline context is an important variable (Baumber et al., 2020; Bovill & Woolmer, 2018; Healey et al., 2023). While some aspects of disciplinary understanding may have had inhibitory effects, overall this partnership was seen as successful. This knowledge can inform practice, though due to scale, scope and context dependence, any claims to contribution beyond the research context, within the discipline field and especially beyond it, are highly tentative. Innovations such as that studied are unique and situated, meaning they cannot be assumed to be replicable (Levers, 2013). Nevertheless, it may be possible to make “fuzzy generalisations” (Bassey, 2000, p. 44), to transfer findings to other contexts and disciplines. Participant reflections were collected immediately after the review. While later conference presentations and jointly authored journal articles have added insights into participants’ developing views on the partnership approach, any longer term changes would need to be evidenced via a more longitudinal study. Finally, although I make suggestions regarding the use of negotiation, rather than partnership, as an organising concept in the discipline of law, the focus of this research was on partnership, and any detailed investigation or testing of this suggestion was beyond its scope. Future discipline research might usefully consider this aspect, together with partnership approaches where the student population is larger, or the goal for curriculum change is different.

Risk

The partnership literature has been critiqued as too often highlighting the positive aspects of partnership (Peart et al., 2023). It has been suggested that valorising partnership may exclude some perspectives (Marquis et al., 2019). While some of the existing literature mentions risk, concerns are often presented as being allayed following successful partnership activity. This research contributes important evidence which shows this may not always be the case, and even after a positive experience of partnership, concerns may remain. It challenges ladder models of participation and indicates that if partnership is seen as aimed toward student empowerment where power is understood as zero-sum, this may act to inhibit practice. Perceptions of risk arose for participants in this research in interaction with values, including empowerment, but the data indicated that a response to risk that uses policy requirements would be counterproductive. Because different approaches to research offer new perspectives, the pragmatic orientation utilised contributes to a fuller understanding of partnership, highlighting the possibility of alternative conceptions of power, where power is seen as resulting from a community of inquiry. Further research might use the concept of the community of inquiry as the model for partnership learning communities, especially those taking place within hybrid modalities. This may be helpful for example, in addressing the concerns and supporting action regarding the aspiration but lack of realisation, regarding student involvement in curricula design. These ideas offer insight into understanding problems identified in the partnership literature concerning the conflict between motivation for student empowerment expressed in literature, and employability motivations articulated by students themselves. It is important to note however, that in other contexts, perceptions of risk may be different. In addition, the use of any philosophical orientation foregrounds some issues and obscures others. Use of a specific ontological and epistemological approach results in a perspective grounded within this. Use of pragmatism tends towards seeing power as jointly constructed and used, but this may have drawn attention away from power dynamics which were operating within the curriculum review, affecting perceptions and actions.

Dynamic complexity

The question of how to accommodate a wide range of motivations in partnership has been raised in the literature (Marquis et al., 2019). This research addresses that question, contributing to understandings of the relevance of the neoliberal HE context by showing Holen et al.'s (2020) model of dynamic conceptions of partnership can be applied at a micro-level. Use of this model in other contexts could add to the ongoing debate of whether partnership supports or challenges neoliberal processes in HE. Highlighting the dynamic complexity of partnership has involved consideration of the ways values in the SaP model can interact positively and negatively.

Complexity theory does not support the use of ideal models to make predictions, but it can support explanation. As such it helps to understand where complexity exists and its effects, but underlines the fact that certainty is not possible. It emphasises the context dependency of partnership practice, its emergent properties, the dynamic complexity of motivations to engage and the interaction between values. While complexity theory and systems thinking encompass entire fields of research which must be understood at a deep level to reflect their full impact, their use has provided important insight. Further research investigating the dynamic complexity of values in the SaP model (Healey et al., 2016) could consider in more detail the ways in which values interact.

Methodology

As DEval is relatively new, this example adds to knowledge regarding its affordances and challenges when used in research. The use of an action research reflective framework addresses calls for supporting reflexivity within DEval and contributes an example of how reflective practice can be addressed (van Draanen, 2017). While supporting evaluation of an innovation and research regarding the process, adopting a methodology emphasising co-creation and context dependence limits claims to wider impact. The intertwined nature of evaluator / researcher roles combined with participation in the change process exacerbates this, as does the use of RTA, which acknowledges the impact of the researcher, and theory, on data analysis. Nevertheless, considering questions which address systemic micro, meso and macro-levels allows for knowledge generation at each level. Making methods and contextual factors clear means that others can judge the extent to which they are trustworthy. Furthermore, in the absence of claims to complete neutrality, including researcher reflections and learning adds to rigour.

Potential for future outputs and concluding remarks

There are a number of outputs that might result from this research. Firstly, the findings may be helpful for others undertaking partnership in programme curriculum review. No final fixed model is recommended for use by others, but warranted assertions are useful in pointing a way forward. DEval allows for the development of general “principles that can inform practice and minimum specifications that can be adapted to local context” (Patton, 2011, p.

26) . Such principles derived from this research, which can be framed as lessons learned, include the need to acknowledge and address perceptions of risk. Emphasising the positive aspects of the process or potential outcomes in a narrative manner may assist is addressing perceptions of risk. This research highlighted the ways that power can be seen as a tool to be used by students and staff together. Where questions of power redistribution add to risk perceptions, a more pragmatic framing using the community of inquiry model may be useful. Additionally, it is important to be open to various and even contradictory motivations on the part of students and staff for engaging in the process. Finally, it is important to avoid prescription and tight control by managerial staff of partnership practices. Minimum specifications might include paying initial attention to gaining support and confidence among both students and staff, emphasis for student volunteers on the value of their contribution and their own satisfaction and development of employability skills, the value of a diversity of viewpoints and of student perspectives (whether positive or negative) in achieving optimal outcomes.

The findings of this research could also be used to add to debate and influence discussion in the partnership literature. Notably, use of the community of inquiry framework offers potential to expand the discussion regarding partnership learning communities. Consideration of the emergent nature of risk perception as a result of the dynamical interaction of factors at multiple levels of the environmental system may influence discussion of this, less commonly explored, aspect of partnership. Additionally, the findings and pragmatic approach, can be used to address questions that have been raised in the partnership literature concerning how to avoid the danger of a false dichotomisation between valorised practice and instrumental motivations.

Importantly, others can also use DEval to highlight the complexity and systems issues within their own contexts and thus enhance their ability to identify dynamical relationships and emergent issues. Using a DEval approach offers an alternative to action research methodologies while accommodating the collaboration of the evaluator and co-creation of the evaluation. When used in conjunction with research, its grounding in philosophical pragmatism and consequent focus on utility makes the choice of methods flexible and non-prescriptive. Use of DEval allows for timely feedback to support innovation, learning and development and is of particular utility in situations where top-down and bottom-up influences are relevant. A practical guide that might assist others using a similar pragmatic approach to evaluating practice could be developed as an output of this research. A short practical guide to DEval would need to summarise elements outlined in detail in Chapter 4 including complexity characteristics and systems thinking, while setting out the contexts in which DEval can be used, and its essential principles. An initial draft framework which could be developed further is presented below.

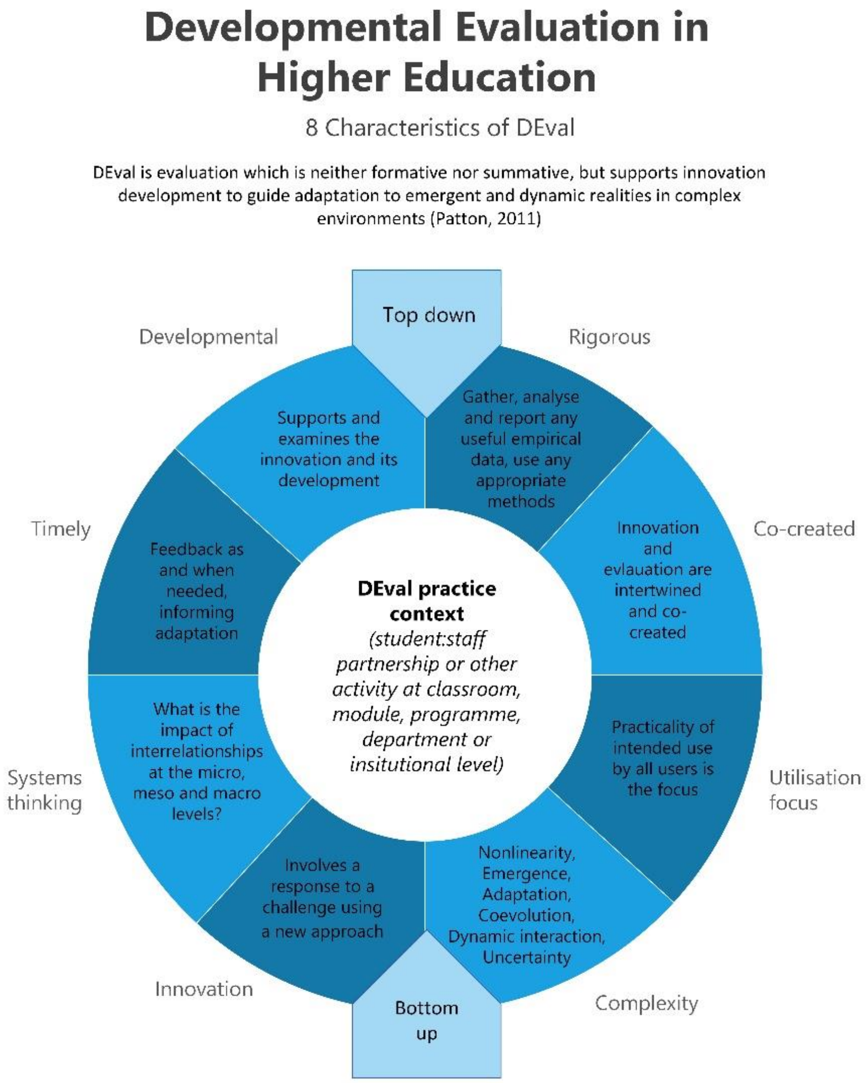

Figure 15: Draft Guide to DEval in HE

Having undertaken this research I see the concept of partnership, when translated into action, as sensitising, rather than definitive or operational. It therefore defies precise definition or a list of necessary attributes (Blumer, 1969). This means context specific definitions are always needed. This research considered how the concept was given meaning within the context of an LLB curriculum review process. Problems inherent in operationalisation within a complex HE environment, included variable meanings, a lack of alignment between scholarly definitions and subjective definitions, and multiple potential approaches (Patton, 2016). Participants saw risk *and* reward in partnership. It was seen to matter, and make a difference. In order to move from aspiration to realisation, some acknowledgement of risk appeared necessary. Therefore any recommendations for partnership in curriculum review should foreground the impact of disciplinary understandings. Ultimately, it is clear that partnership practice, though conceived in multiple ways, had the capacity to fulfil its democratic and moral potential and empower those involved to actively engage with each other, and the curriculum, to create positive outcomes.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant information and consent forms

Participant information sheet: students

Research on using partnership processes in the law school curriculum review process

For further information about how Lancaster University processes personal data for research purposes and your data rights please visit our webpage: www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/data-protection

I am a studying for a PhD in Higher Education Research Evaluation and Enhancement at Lancaster University and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about staff and students working in partnership in the curriculum review process. Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the study about?
This study aims to research how university students and staff think and feel about working together to review the curriculum. The study will take place in the context of a review of the LLB and integration of education for sustainable development.

Why have I been invited?
I have approached you because I am interested in understanding how law students think about working with staff in this context. I would be very grateful if you would agree to take part in this study.

What will I be asked to do if I take part?
If you decided to take part, this would involve agreeing to be interviewed or to take part in a focus group. If so, the interview or focus group may take place either face to face or remotely and will be audio or video recorded. All recordings will be password protected to ensure confidentiality is maintained. A transcript will be produced for analysis. You will be asked questions about working in partnership before, during and/or after the curriculum review process. If you take part in the curriculum review process itself, you may be asked to take part in more than one interview and/or a focus group in order to gain an understanding of how your experiences affect your thoughts. Each interview or focus group will last for up to 50 minutes.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?
In the past, despite the very important impact the curriculum has on students' experience, students have not been involved in the discussion and decision making leading to curriculum change in this context. This is therefore an important change to process, involving student voices, which needs to be understood as fully as possible. Gaining understanding of the perspectives of all those involved

will inform future policy and practice. Taking part in this study will allow you to share your thoughts about, and if relevant, experience of working in partnership. Your insights will contribute to making adjustments to the process as it proceeds, and to understanding the ways that people think about partnership and how best to engage students in curriculum review in future.

Do I have to take part?
No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Your participation is voluntary. If you decide not to take part in this study, this will not affect your studies or the way you are assessed on your course.

What if I change my mind?
Your participation is entirely voluntary.

If you change your mind about taking part in an interview, you are free to withdraw at any time before or during the interview. You do not need to give a reason. If you do not wish to take part, then please let me know via email or in person. You can also withdraw up to two weeks after completion of the interview by letting me know. There is absolutely no obligation on you to continue nor penalty for withdrawing within this time. Your related data (emails, recordings, notes) can be destroyed and all reference to them removed. After this point the data cannot be removed and will remain in the study.

If you change your mind and withdraw from all or any interviews this will not have any effect on your ability to continue to take part in the curriculum review process.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
It is unlikely that there will be any major disadvantages to taking part. Taking part will mean investing up to 50 minutes for each interview.

Will my data be identifiable?

After the interview only I, the researcher conducting this study and my supervisor will have access to the ideas you share with me. I will keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will remove any personal information from the written record of your contribution. All reasonable steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in this project. Recordings will be transferred if necessary and stored on my institutional account (two factor authenticated and password protected) and deleted from any portable media. Identifiable data (including recordings) on my personal computer will be encrypted. A pseudonym will be given to protect your identity in the research report and identifying information about you will be removed from the report as far as possible. All pseudonyms will be securely stored and kept by me.
Participants in the focus group will be asked not to disclose information outside of the focus group and with anyone not involved in the focus group without the relevant person's express permission.

How will I use the information you have shared with me and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the information you have shared with me for research purposes only. This will include my PhD thesis and may include submission to other publications, for example in the form of journal articles. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences.
When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you share with me. I will only use anonymised quotes (e.g. from your interview), so that although I will use your exact words, all reasonable steps will be taken to protect your anonymity.

How my data will be stored
Your data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than me, the researcher will be able to access them) on my personal space within institutional cloud storage accessible using a password-protected computer. I will store hard copies of any data securely at my home address. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views on a specific topic). In accordance with University guidelines, I will keep text data securely for a minimum of ten years. Any audio or video recordings will be destroyed on completion of my PhD.

What if I have a question or concern?
If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself or my supervisor.

Research Student: Fiona Boyle, Office SKG10, University of Cumbria, Fusehill St, Carlisle, Tel: 01228616234 Email: f.boyle@lancaster.ac.uk or Fiona.boyle@cumbria.ac.uk

Supervisor: Prof. P Trowler, Educational Research Department, County South, Lancaster University, LA1 4YD, UK, Tel: +44 (0)1524 510851 Email: p.trowler@lancaster.ac.uk

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact:

Professor Paul Ashwin – Head of Department
Tel: +44 (0)1524 594443Email: P.Ashwin@Lancaster.ac.uk
Room: County South, D32, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YD, UK.

Sources of support
I do not anticipate that any sensitive or potentially distressing topics will be discussed as part of the research. If you do need support you can contact support via these links:
Students – https://my.cumbria.ac.uk/Student-Life/Support/Student-Support-Appointments/

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for considering your participation in this project.

Participant information sheet: staff

Research on using partnership processes in the law school curriculum review process

For further information about how Lancaster University processes personal data for research purposes and your data rights please visit our webpage: www.lancaster.ac.uk/research/data-protection

I am a studying for a PhD in Higher Education Research Evaluation and Enhancement at Lancaster University and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about staff and students working in partnership in the curriculum review process. Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part.

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What will I be asked to do if I take part?
If you decided to take part, this would involve agreeing to be interviewed or to take part in a focus group. If so, the interview or focus group may take place either face to face or remotely and will be audio or video recorded. All recordings will be password protected to ensure confidentiality is maintained. A transcript will be produced for analysis. You may be asked questions about working in partnership before, during and/or after the curriculum review process. If you take part in the curriculum review process itself, you may be asked to take part in more than one interview and/or a focus group in order to gain an understanding of how your experiences affect your thoughts. Each interview or focus group will last for up to 50 minutes.

What are the possible benefits from taking part?
In the past, despite the very important impact the curriculum has on students' experience, students have not been involved in the discussion and decision making leading to curriculum change in this context. This is therefore an important change to process, involving student voices, which needs to be understood as fully as possible. Gaining understanding of the perspectives of all those involved will inform future policy and practice. Taking part in this study will allow you to share your thoughts about, and if relevant, experience of working in partnership. Your insights will contribute to making

adjustments to the process as it proceeds, and to understanding the ways that people think about partnership and how best to engage students in curriculum review in future.

Do I have to take part?
No. It's completely up to you to decide whether or not you take part. Your participation is voluntary.

What if I change my mind?
Your participation is entirely voluntary.

If you change your mind about taking part in an interview, you are free to withdraw at any time before or during the interview. You do not need to give a reason. If you do not wish to take part, then please let me know via email or in person. You can also withdraw up to two weeks after completion of the interview by letting me know. There is absolutely no obligation on you to continue nor penalty for withdrawing within this time. Your related data (emails, recordings, notes) can be destroyed and all reference to them removed. After this point the data cannot be removed and will remain in the study.

Focus group - You are welcome to withdraw from the study at any time before the focus group begins, but will not be able to withdraw your contribution to the discussion once recording has started. All participants will be reminded of this before recording begins.

If you change your mind and withdraw from all or any interviews or focus groups this will not have any effect on your ability to continue to take part in the curriculum review process.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?
It is unlikely that there will be any major disadvantages to taking part. Taking part will mean investing up to 50 minutes for each interview or focus group.

Will my data be identifiable?

After the interview/focus group only I, the researcher conducting this study and my supervisor will have access to the ideas you share with me. I will keep all personal information about you (e.g. your name and other information about you that can identify you) confidential, that is I will not share it with others. I will remove any personal information from the written record of your contribution. All reasonable steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in this project. Recordings will be transferred if necessary and stored on my institutional account (two factor authenticated and password protected) and deleted from any portable media. Identifiable data (including recordings) on my personal computer will be encrypted. A pseudonym will be given to protect your identity in the research report and identifying information about you will be removed from the report as far as possible. All pseudonyms will be securely stored and kept by me. Participants in the focus group will be asked not to disclose information outside of the focus group and with anyone not involved in the focus group without the relevant person's express permission.

How will I use the information you have shared with me and what will happen to the results of the research study?

I will use the information you have shared with me for research purposes only. This will include my PhD thesis and may include submission to other publications, for example in the form of journal articles. I may also present the results of my study at academic conferences.
When writing up the findings from this study, I would like to reproduce some of the views and ideas you share with me. I will only use anonymised quotes (e.g. from your interview), so that although I will use your exact words, all reasonable steps will be taken to protect your anonymity.

How my data will be stored
Your data will be stored in encrypted files (that is no-one other than me, the researcher will be able to access them) on my personal space within institutional cloud storage accessible using a password-protected computer. I will store hard copies of any data securely at my home address. I will keep data that can identify you separately from non-personal information (e.g. your views on a specific topic). In accordance with University guidelines, I will keep text data securely for a minimum of ten years. Any audio or video recordings will be destroyed on completion of my PhD.

What if I have a question or concern?
If you have any queries or if you are unhappy with anything that happens concerning your participation in the study, please contact myself or my supervisor.

Research Student: Fiona Boyle, Office SKG10, University of Cumbria, Fusehill St, Carlisle, Tel: 01228616234 Email: f.boyle@lancaster.ac.uk or Fiona.boyle@cumbria.ac.uk

Supervisor: Prof. P Trowler, Educational Research Department, County South, Lancaster University, LA1 4YD, UK, Tel: +44 (0)1524 510851 Email: p.trowler@lancaster.ac.uk

If you have any concerns or complaints that you wish to discuss with a person who is not directly involved in the research, you can also contact:

Professor Paul Ashwin – Head of Department
Tel: +44 (0)1524 594443Email: P.Ashwin@Lancaster.ac.uk
Room: County South, D32, Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YD, UK.

Sources of support
I do not anticipate that any sensitive or potentially distressing topics will be discussed as part of the research. If you do need support you can contact support via these links:
Staff -https://unicumbriaac.sharepoint.com/sites/HR/SitePages/Your%20Wellbeing%20Hub.aspx

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Lancaster Management School's Research Ethics Committee.

Thank you for considering your participation in this project.

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: Research on using partnership processes in the law school curriculum review process

Name of Researcher: F Boyle   Email: f.boyle@lancaster.ac.uk

Please tick each box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily	☐
2. Interviews I understand that my participation as an interviewee is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time before or during my participation in this interview and up to two weeks after the interview, without giving any reason. If I withdraw within two weeks my data will be removed. I understand that withdrawing from all or any interviews will not have any effect on my ability to continue to take part in the curriculum review process.	☐
3. Focus groups I understand that my participation is voluntary and I can withdraw at any point before the focus group begins. I understand that withdrawing from all or any focus group will not have any effect on my ability to continue to take part in the curriculum review process. If I am involved in focus groups and then withdraw my data will remain part of the study. I understand that as part the focus group I will take part in, my data is part of the ongoing conversation and cannot be destroyed. If I am participating in the focus group I understand that any information disclosed within the focus group remains confidential to the group, and I will not discuss the focus group with or in front of anyone who was not involved unless I have the relevant person's express permission.	☐
4. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, academic articles, publications or presentations by the researcher/s, but my personal information will not be included and all reasonable steps will be taken to protect the anonymity of the participants involved in this project.	☐
5. I understand that my name/my organisation's name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentation without my consent.	☐
6. I understand that any interviews or focus groups will be audio-recorded or if virtual, video recorded and transcribed and that data will be transferred to and stored on encrypted devices and kept secure.	☐
7. I understand that textual data will be kept according to University guidelines for a minimum of 10 years after the end of the study.	☐
8. I agree to take part in the above study.	☐

___________________________ _________________ __________________

Name of Participant Date Signature

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the study, and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent__________________________ Date ___________ Day/month/year

One copy of this form will be given to the participant and the original kept in the files of the researcher at Lancaster University

Appendix B: Interview outlines

Student interview outlines

Phase 2 - Students taking part in the curriculum review

Check PIS has been read and understood, give opportunity for questions, ensure consent has been understood and given.

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and how you came to be on the degree?

2. Can you tell me about your beliefs regarding the relationship between students and the university?

3. What were your motivations for volunteering? *(policy requirements, democratic decision making, student/consumer satisfaction, skills transfer, power redistribution, student apprentice)*

4. What has been your role so far?

5. Which aspects are working / not working? Is there anything you would like to change about it?

6. How is the process going?

    a. How are all staff and students working together?
    b. What are the main challenges?
    c. What differences if any do you think working in partnership brings?
    d. What do you feel students contribute?
    e. What do you think can be done in partnership that couldn't be done without students, if anything?
    f. What were your hopes in terms of how much influence you would have?
    g. How much influence do you think you have had so far?
    h. Are there any issues that have emerged that you did not anticipate?

7. How did you feel/what did you believe about including students in a partnership role in the review process before it began?

8. Have your feelings/beliefs changed?

9. Is there anything else important to note?

Phase 3 - Students taking part in the curriculum review

Check PIS has been read and understood, give opportunity for questions, ensure consent has been understood and given.

1. What was your role?

2. What are your reflections on the process?

    a. How effectively do you think all staff and students worked together?
    b. Were there things that made it harder?
    c. Were there things that made it easier?
    d. What differences if any do you think working in partnership made?
        i. To your thoughts about your studies / learning
        ii. To your thoughts about your identity
        iii. To your thoughts about the university
    e. What do you feel students contributed overall?
    f. What do you think was done in partnership that couldn't be done without students, if anything?
    g. What were your hopes in terms of how much influence you would have?
    h. How much influence do you think you had?

3. Have your feelings/beliefs about including students in a partnership role in the review process changed?

4. To what extent do you think students can / should be involved in other university processes? Can you explain why?

5. Is there anything else important to note?

Phase 3 - Students not taking part in the curriculum review

Check PIS has been read and understood, give opportunity for questions, ensure consent has been understood and given.

1. Can you tell me a bit about yourself and how you came to be on the degree?

2. Can you tell me about your beliefs regarding the relationship between students and the university?

3. To what extent do you think students can / should be involved and their views inform the process? Can you explain why?

4. What do you see as the benefits of doing so, if any?

5. Do you have any concerns about involving students in the process? What do you see as the risks of doing so if any?

6. What were the reasons that you decided not to volunteer?

6. To what extent do you think students can / should be involved in other university processes? Can you explain why?

7. Is there anything else important to note?

Non-academic staff and SU interview outlines

Phase 1 - SU, professional and senior staff

Check PIS has been read and understood, give opportunity for questions, ensure consent has been understood and given.

10. You and your role
    Can you explain your role and experience with particular reference to:
    - curriculum design and review and
    - student engagement in curriculum design and review

    What responsibilities do you have?
    What involvement do you have / tasks do you have to complete?
    What are the pressures on you?
    What are you own personal interests and priorities?
    What are your aims?
    What are your underpinning beliefs / values? (engagement, ESD, curriculum)

11. In relation to student engagement in curriculum design, what do you see as
    - The meaning of ‘engagement’
    - The meaning of ‘partnership’
    - How do the two relate to each other
    - the main reason[s] / rationale for involving students *(policy requirements, democratic decision making, student/consumer satisfaction, skills transfer, power redistribution)*
    - possible benefits of doing so / any positive outcomes
    - potential risks of doing so / any negative outcomes
    - what level of influence do you think students can / should have on curricula

12. In your experience has it been easy or difficult to involve students?
    Can you explain why?

13. Context:
    Do you have any thoughts about context specific advantages or disadvantages of student engagement in curriculum change for ESD in the law curriculum? (might this be different in other contexts)

14. Any final comments / concerns / additions?

Phase 2 - Professional staff

Check PIS has been read and understood, give opportunity for questions, ensure consent has been understood and given.

1. What has been your role so far?

2. Which aspects are working / not working? Is there anything you would like to change about it?

3. How is the process going?

    a. How are all staff and students working together?
    b. What are the main challenges?
    c. What differences if any do you think working in partnership brings?
    d. What do you feel students contribute?
    e. What do you think can be done in partnership that couldn't be done without students, if anything?
    f. What were your hopes in terms of how much influence students would have?
    g. How much influence do you think they have had so far?
    h. Are there any issues that have emerged that you did not anticipate?

4. Have your feelings/beliefs about including students in a partnership role in the review process changed?

5. Is there anything else important to note?

Phase 3 - SU and professional staff

Check PIS has been read and understood, give opportunity for questions, ensure consent has been understood and given.

8. What are your reflections on the process?

    a. How effectively do you think all staff and students worked together?
    b. Were there things that made it harder?
    c. Were there things that made it easier?
    d. What differences if any do you think working in partnership made?
    e. What do you feel students contributed overall?
    f. What do you think was done in partnership that couldn't be done without students, if anything?
    g. What were your hopes in terms of how much influence students would have?
    h. What were your fears in terms of how much influence students would have?
    i. How much influence do you think they had?

9. Have your feelings/beliefs about including students in a partnership role in the review process changed? Can you explain why?

10. To what extent do you think students can / should be involved in other university processes? Can you explain why?

11. Any other comments / suggestions?

Academic law staff

Phase 1
Check PIS has been read and understood, give opportunity for questions, ensure consent has been understood and given.

15. In relation to the LLB curriculum:
    What does the 'curriculum' mean for you? (structure and content / what students experience/ interactive process of TLA; knowing, acting, being)
    Why is it important? *(Prompt to explore any relevance at different levels – HE / legal education in the UK, significance for the university, the students and staff)*

16. In relation to the curriculum review process:
    What do you hope to achieve in the process and why?
    What are the pressures on you?
    What are you own personal interests and priorities?
    What are your aims?
    What are your underpinning beliefs / values?

17. In relation to ESD in the LLB
Do you think ESD should be part of the curriculum – if so how?
    Do you see ESD as 'activism'?
    What is 'valid' knowledge for the LLB / who decides?
    What are the pressures on you?
    What are you own personal interests and priorities?
    What are your aims?
    What are your underpinning beliefs / values?

18. What does student engagement mean for you?
    In relation to student engagement in curriculum design, what do you see as
    - The meaning of 'engagement'
    - The meaning of 'partnership'
    - How do the two relate to each other?

19. How do you feel about including students in a partnership role in the review process?
What are your beliefs about the reasons / rationale for including students?
(policy requirements, democratic decision making, student/consumer satisfaction, skills transfer, power redistribution, student apprentice)
To what extent do you think students can / should be involved and their views inform the process?
What are your priorities in terms of involving students in the process?
What do you see as the benefits of doing so / any positive outcomes?
Do you have any concerns about involving students in the process?
What do you see as the risks of doing so / any negative outcomes?

20. Any final comments?

Phase 2

Check PIS has been read and understood, give opportunity for questions, ensure consent has been understood and given.

6. What role have tutors played so far?

7. Which aspects are working / not working? Is there anything you would like to change about it?

8. How is the process going?

    a. How are all staff and students working together?
    b. What are the main challenges?
    c. What differences if any do you think working in partnership brings?
    d. What do you feel students contribute?
    e. What do you think can be done in partnership that couldn't be done without students, if anything?
    f. What were your hopes in terms of how much influence students would have?
    g. How much influence do you think they have had so far?
    h. Are there any issues that have emerged that you did not anticipate?

9. Have your feelings/beliefs about including students in a partnership role in the review process changed?

10. Is there anything else important to note?

Phase 3

Check PIS has been read and understood, give opportunity for questions, ensure consent has been understood and given.

12. What are your reflections on the process?

    a. How effectively do you think all staff and students worked together?
    b. Were there things that made it harder?
    c. Were there things that made it easier?
    d. What differences if any do you think working in partnership made?
        i. To your thinking about your teaching
        ii. To your thinking about your identity
        iii. To your thinking about students
    e. What do you feel students contributed overall?
    f. What do you think was done in partnership that couldn't be done without students, if anything?
    g. What were your hopes in terms of how much influence students would have?
    h. What were your fears in terms of how much influence students would have?
    i. How much influence do you think they did have?

13. Have your feelings/beliefs about including students in a partnership role in the review process changed? Can you explain why?

14. To what extent do you think students can / should be involved in other university processes? Can you explain why?

15. Is there anything else important to note?

Appendix C**: Survey Instrument**

Curriculum Review

Working in partnership with students to review the LLB curriculum

This is a survey to gauge student views. There are ten questions. It should take 10-15 minutes to complete. Thank you.

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Introductory information and consent

About this survey:

I am a studying for a PhD in Higher Education Research Evaluation and Enhancement at Lancaster University and I would like to invite you to take part in a research study about staff and students working in partnership in the curriculum review process. Please take time to read the following information carefully before you decide whether or not you wish to take part. I will use the survey data for research purposes only. This will include my PhD thesis and may include other publications within or outside the university.

What is the study about?

This study aims to research how university students and staff think and feel about working together to review the curriculum. The study will take place in the context of a review of the LLB taking place in semester 2 and due for completion in May.

Why have you been invited to complete the survey?

I am interested in understanding how law students think about working with staff in this context.

Your responses are anonymous and your name will not be possible to identify. Your participation is voluntary and you can stop at any point before completion. You can also choose not to answer any questions though this will impact the ability of the researcher to analyse any results. Once you have submitted your responses your data cannot be withdrawn. The data collected will be kept for a maximum of 10 years. In order to continue and take part in this survey please indicate your consent and confirmation that you have read the information above about this survey. ✱ *Required*

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Page 1

What is your year group?

Are you, or have you been in the past, a student representative for your year group?

- Yes - in the past
- Yes - currently
- No

Thinking about the LLB as a whole, please indicate the extent to which you agree that a review of the LLB curriculum should consider changes to the following:

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
Academic legal knowledge					
Skills development					
Methods of teaching (lectures, seminars, workshops)					
Delivery format (face to face, blended, online)					

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The order in which modules are studied	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Methods of assessment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Preparation for legal practice or other employment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Integration of a sustainable development perspective	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Integration of an equality, diversity and inclusion perspective	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Are there any other aspects of the LLB not referred to above that you consider important to include in a review of the curriculum?

The curriculum review process will take place between January and May, and may include a training event, online meetings including staff and students, reviewing draft documents and helping to make decisions. Thinking about this, please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements:

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	strongly agree	agree	neither agree nor disagree	disagree	strongly disagree

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Students should be involved in the curriculum review process	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Only the confident students would take part	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It would be a token gesture to comply with university policies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It would enable students to learn from staff	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It could give students too much power	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It would enable students to work with staff towards improving the curriculum	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It would enable students to contribute to decision making in the university	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It would improve student satisfaction	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The university may want to do it for marketing reasons	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It would be a more democratic process if students were involved	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

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Volunteers from year 1 and year 2 should also be included	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Students might use it as an excuse to make complaints	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It is important for student views to be taken into account in view of the fees they pay	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It would not make much difference to the outcome	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The views of participating students will not be representative of other students	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It would give students more power	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
It would result in a better curriculum	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

How much control do you think students ***currently*** have over the curriculum? Please indicate the level you think best fits your view.

- ○ Students are in control of the curriculum
- ○ Students have influence through negotiation with tutors
- ○ Students have influence over certain limited aspects
- ○ Tutors have control but are informed by student consultation or feedback
- ○ Tutors have control with limited student choices

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- Students are consulted but have no actual influence
- No consultation of students takes place
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

How much control do you think students ***should*** have over the curriculum? Please indicate the level you think best fits with your view.

- Students should be in control of the curriculum
- Students should have influence through negotiation with tutors
- Students should have influence over certain limited aspects
- Tutors should have control but be informed by student consultation or feedback
- Tutors should have control with limited student choices
- Students should be consulted but have no actual influence
- No consultation of students is needed
- Other

If you selected Other, please specify:

If your year group was represented in the review process meetings, how likely would you be to volunteer to take part in meetings and to review documents as part of the curriculum review?

- Very likely

- Likely
- Unsure
- Unlikely
- Very unlikely
- I have already volunteered

If you would like to explain your answer to this question please do so here.

If you were able to take part in the review, what would motivate you to volunteer? Please indicate all that apply and their importance to you.

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

	Very important	Quite important	Not important	Not at all relevant
To learn about the process				
To gain new skills				
To comply with university policies about including students				
To contribute to the discussion				
To influence the quality of the degree				
To put on my CV				
To benefit future students				
To help tutors see the student perspective				
To make the process more democratic				

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Are there any other reasons not listed above?

Are there any further comments or views you would like to add?

Final page

Thank you very much for taking the time to complete this survey.

Key for selection options

1 - Your responses are anonymous and your name will not be possible to identify. Your participation is voluntary and you can stop at any point before completion. You can also choose not to answer any questions though this will impact the ability of the researcher to analyse any results. Once you have submitted your responses your data cannot be withdrawn. The data collected will be kept for a maximum of 10 years. In order to continue and take part in this survey please indicate your consent and confirmation that you have read the information above about this survey.

Yes
No

2 - What is your year group?

Year 1
Year 2
Year 3

---

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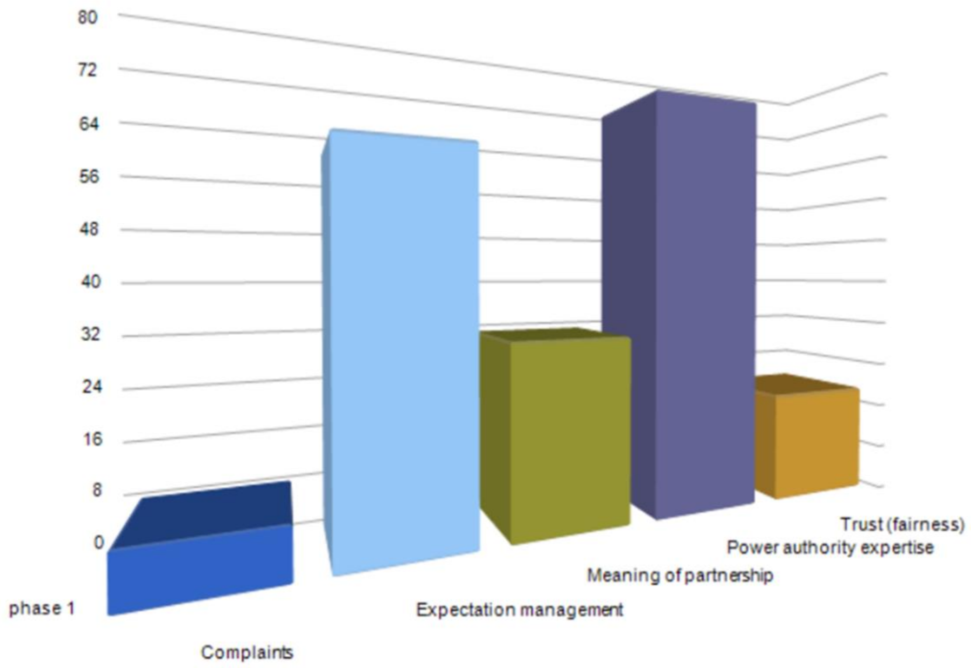
Appendix D**: Amplitude framework evaluating process adapted from Seale (2016)**

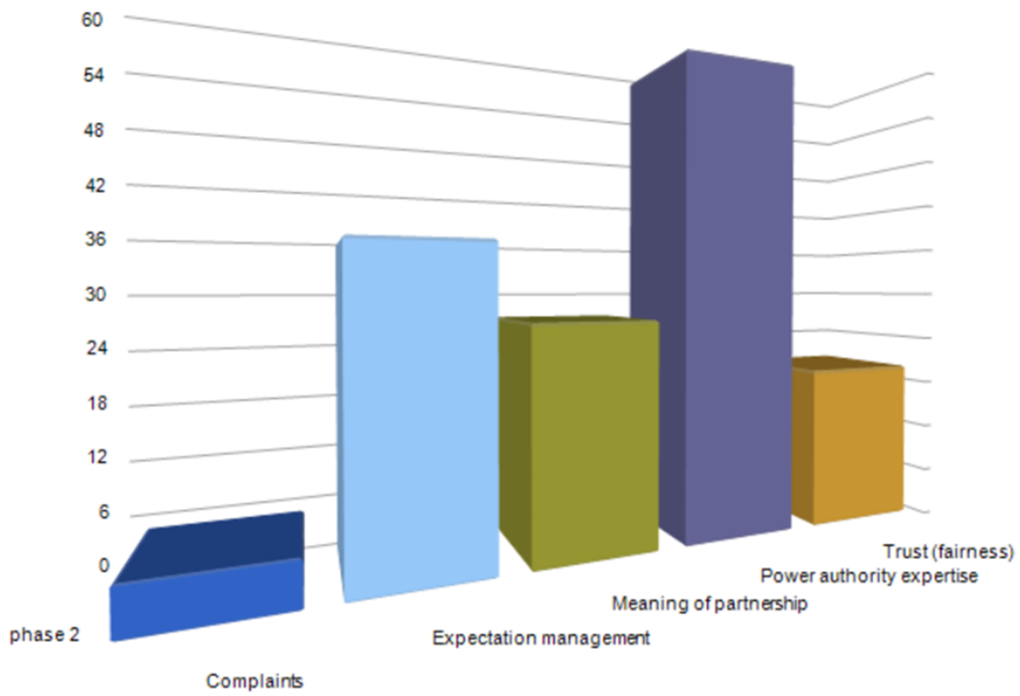
Green: criterion largely met. Amber: criterion partially met. Red: criterion not met.

FACTORS/ CRITERIA	REACH	FITNESS
AIMS AND ASSUMPTIONS	**Intersubjective validity** *Participants did 'buy-in' to the aims to a large extent but there was evidence that some staff had symbolically compliant attitudes to mechanisms capturing student views and some students were moderately cynical about the process.*	**Contextual validity** *Basic assumptions regarding student priorities for change were informed by national and local context survey data both of which provided only partial pictures*
PROCESS	**Participatory validity** *All participants had the chance to influence the discussion and have a voice though the final choices were made by staff.*	**Ethical validity** *Programme leaders had good levels of power in relation to change. The response was built into the process though it's extent was not possible to predict.*
OUTCOMES	**Catalytic validity** *The full extent to which any transformation has occurred for staff will only be clear when it comes to the next review.*	**Empathic validity** *This appeared to high due to better understandings based on hearing others' views.*

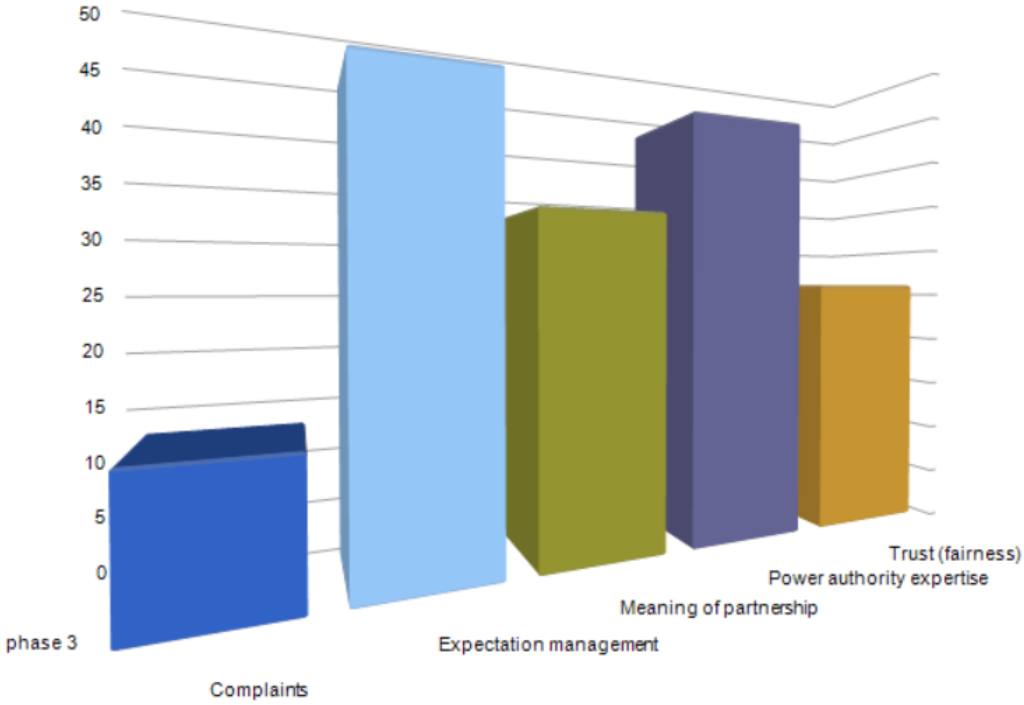
Appendix E**: Example NVivo charts of the Theme, *There is a Risk* showing multiple codes and using case attribute values for phases 1, 2 and 3 of data collection.**



Phase 1: X: codes, Y: number of coding references



Phase 2: X: codes, Y: number of coding references



Phase 3: X: codes, Y: number of coding references

Appendix F: Curriculum review process planning matrix

Curriculum review partnership process (negotiation, collaboration, co-inquiry, co-creation, partnership*) *Term to be agreed for next review					
Curriculum Review Stage	**Participants**	**Level of student engagement**	**Timing** (consider institutional timescales and participant workloads)	**Modality**	**Rationale** (policy, apprentice, democracy, consumer)
Choice of trigger (ESD incorporation)	Programme leaders	Inform	July 2021	-	Policy
Scoping	All students All staff	Inform & consult	Oct – Dec 2021	Student VLE Student Survey In person discussion of ESD & curriculum review process Online meetings	Democracy Policy
Process design (timing, location etc.)	Student volunteers (n.8) All staff	Consult	Feb 2022	Online and in person meetings	Apprentice Policy
Exploration: Information gathering	Student volunteers (n.5)	Partner / co-creator	March 2022	Online meeting VLE / Padlet Emails	Democracy Consumer Apprentice
Integration: Consideration of options / making choices	Student volunteers (n.5)	Partner / co-creator	April 2022	In person meeting x 1 Online meeting x 3	Democracy Consumer Apprentice
Application: Preparation of documents	All staff Student volunteers (n.8)	Inform	May 2022	Email	Policy
Formal review (sign-off)	Institutional and external staff Student volunteers (n.2)	Participate	May 2022	Online meeting x 1	Apprentice
Dissemination of results including confirmation of agreement	All students All staff	Inform	2023	Email	Policy Consumer
Reflection / evaluation	All participants	Partner / co-creator	June 2022 – June 2023	Evaluation framework	Democracy Consumer
Wider dissemination	3 staff, 4 students	Partner / co-creator	2022 2024	Conference presentation x2 Journal article	Apprentice Democracy

Appendix G: Academic Staff - Lessons Learned

Lesson Learned	Details
Getting Academic Staff Onboard Early	Early focus should be directed towards gaining the support and confidence of academic staff involved in taking an innovative approach to the review. An exploratory meeting creates the opportunity to explain the rationale, air views, and identify and discuss reservations. Practicalities including which cohort(s) of students to involve, and the nature and extent of their involvement can be decided in this planning stage, alongside the preparation of a timeline and project plan. Consideration could be given to including final-year students as a priority. This cohort have had the longest experience of the programme and may have developed an altruistic sense of wishing to share their insights and experience to benefit their programme and its future students.
Seeking Volunteers and Establishing Trust in the Process	The process of seeking volunteers requires careful planning. Potential participants need sufficient context for the procedure and what is being requested of them. Reassurance should be given regarding likely concerns, which may include doubts about the nature of the proposed partnership, the value of their contribution and their likely time commitment. It will be important to dispel the idea of collaboration as an administrative requirement of the process, and instead portray a more positive aim where diverse views are highly valued. Emphasis on positive benefits for students is helpful: they can gain useful professional and employability skills through liaison with professionals, discussion, negotiation, and teamwork; they will gain personal learning through insight into the process behind the scenes; and they may achieve great personal satisfaction from helping the next generation of students by being involved in the process of co-creation.
Encouraging Volunteers to Speak Freely	It can be anticipated that despite being willing to participate, some students may still feel unsure about expressing views openly in meetings which are subject to a different dynamic than that previously experienced in the lecture theatre or classroom. Once volunteers have come forward, it will be important to expand focus on the nature of the 'partnership'. It is suggested that at a first meeting with volunteers, the meaning and extent of the partnership should be discussed and explained fully. Students may be concerned that within the existing power relationship, their views could be disregarded,

	or even that opinions critical of the current programme might cause offence. The perceived power of academics should be reframed as their responsibility for the programme, which includes attaching significant respect and value to student contributions. Barriers to expression might also be present due to a sense of lack of expertise. Reassurance can be given that it is recognised that the student perspective is different and that while academics and students have different perceptions, responsibilities and areas of expertise, student participants have valuable observations to offer and a diversity of views within a discussion will create a firmer foundation for debate and change.
Being Open to Diverse Motivations and Unexpected Outcomes	Motivations did not completely aligned with all the stated proposes for using SaP from relevant literature. Despite this, the process was seen as valuable, and the outcome as having been enhanced. Overall, while academic staff's desire to incorporate ESD was more influenced by relevant HE guidance and broader policy, students' motivations appeared to be based on personal experience and related to the effect of change on their peers. Bringing these together created an unexpected but arguably better outcome in this case.
Seeing Power as a Tool to be Used Within a Community of Inquiry	Presenting collaboration as enabling the empowerment of a community of inquiry may be useful in motivating participation while emphasising joint action. This has the advantage of focusing on potential action rather than highlighting risks of complaints, inappropriate use of expertise or loss of power despite continuing responsibility.