

**PRACTICE IN A DISPERSED PROFESSIONAL COMMUNITY:
A CASE STUDY OF ASSOCIATE LECTURERS AT
THE OPEN UNIVERSITY**

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Declaration:

This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously
for any other degree or diploma

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Practice in a dispersed professional community: A case study of associate lecturers at the Open University

Abstract

This thesis examines in depth the work of four associate lecturers at the Open University. Given that they see colleagues infrequently, it explores how they resource their practice, in what has been termed a dispersed community that lacks the social interaction associated with more traditional lecturing. This research identifies what knowledge resources and professional practices are used, and what the relationships are between these and the process of occupational identity-building. It also identifies other important facets of the working environment, such as the institution, faculty and department.

The context of working as a part-time lecturer with the Open University is examined, and comparisons are made with other lecturing posts. Based on four in-depth case studies, the research considers the major components of a community of practice, such as participation and the negotiation of meaning. Given the dispersed nature of this community, the thesis further explores how routines and reifications of practice take on a more individualistic nature, not established within a social vacuum but in a social world where the organisation and students play a more important role than co-workers.

Using activity system theory, network theory and power relationships, the research comes to a deeper and more integrated picture of associate lecturers. It concludes with postulations on how individual agency is an important aspect of practice in such a dispersed community.

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction and background

1.1 Introduction to the research

This thesis researches in depth the work of four part-time associate lecturers at the Open University (OU). It identifies how they carry out their lecturing practice within a loosely connected, dispersed community. The research is comprised of four in-depth case studies, with the participants spread around the UK, from the Isle of Wight to the Lake District. It explores how these four associate lecturers resource their practice whilst only seeing colleagues infrequently; it also examines how they operate within an environment which lacks the social interaction associated with conventional lecturing in higher education, and with other communities of practice in the wider workplace.

1.2 Professional context of the research

Whilst in the post of Assistant Director (Staff Development) at the Open University, with responsibility for associate lecturer development, it became clear to me that despite efforts to make associate lecturer practice more explicit via programmes that encouraged practitioner reflection (see Section 1.13 on current trends in part-time lecturing), large areas of practice were not being revealed by such reflective frameworks and processes. If a more integrated and deeper understanding of associate lecturer practice were to be achieved, additional research was needed. It became apparent that associate lecturers had a particular set of relationships with the university and with their students. These relationships were of a dispersed nature, with associate lecturers often working remotely across the UK and Europe. Part of the integrated understanding that this research aims to achieve also requires a deeper understanding of this dispersal. How do associate lecturers build their own occupational self-identity as part-time professional academic lecturers, given this particular working environment?

The community is dispersed in the sense that:

- Associate lecturers are loosely connected to staff tutors and other information providers at Regional Centres and the university campus.
- They meet their peers only three or four times a year, therefore social rules, language and techniques used by the community and social artefacts are not subject to the intense mutual negotiation of peers.
- Students and the organisation operating at a distance have important influences in associate lecturer occupational identity-building.

This thesis takes a constructivist view of the nature of associate lecturer practice in a dispersed community, exploring their biography, knowledge resources, tacit and otherwise, and the way these are used to construct an occupational identity via a complex process of reflexivity where identities are created within their social world.

This chapter includes a discussion on trends in part-time lecturing; it identifies that part-time lecturers are increasingly becoming involved in complex agendas. These agendas may include the concentration on certain skills and the delivery, teaching and assessment of a non-traditional curriculum like work-based learning and Foundation degrees. They are additionally required to have their practice accredited via membership of a professional body in order to maintain their professional status to a wider variety of stakeholders. This may include the general public, students, employers, government or other professional bodies. In the future, they will further more be delivered against a backdrop of professional standards devised by the Higher Education Academy.

All these trends are based on assumptions about the nature of knowledge and practice, and how it is constructed and used by part-time lecturers in a dispersed community. It is crucial, therefore, if we are to understand the consequences of these and other trends in the future, that we develop a deeper understanding of the complex ways in which part-time lecturers use an array of different knowledge resources, theory and experience to construct practice and build an occupational identity within a dispersed community.

1.3 Research aims

This thesis aims to illuminate the nature of knowledge used by Open University associate lecturers by making more explicit tacit knowledge and examining other types of knowledge such as procedural rules and guidelines used in practice. The study will explore how associate lecturers construct their own knowledge resources for use in their practice and the relationships between these resources, practice, the institution, faculty, department, discipline and other influences on their ongoing occupational identity-building as professional academics.

The thematic analysis argues and regards practices, knowledge resources and construction of knowledge as important aspects of occupational identity-building, and examines how they are carried out within a dispersed community. This thesis explores the nature of this dispersal, its effects on the perspective that practice and knowledge are collective in nature and the impact this has on individuals resourcing their practice.

1.4 Research questions

The following research questions were developed after much discussion with my peers at residential schools and with my supervisor. They allowed for a deeper analysis of the processes and ways in which associate lecturers were making sense of their situation. They allowed for the richness of the data gathered to be explored in fine detail and to focus on the practice of four individuals in order to elucidate processes and interpretations and to dig below the surface of the taken-for-granted. They also allowed for the unit of analysis, individual associate lecturers, to be analysed as a whole and to be understood within a wider concept of occupational identity-building:

- What are the professional practices and knowledge resources used in a dispersed community of associate lecturers at the Open University?
- What are the relationships between knowledge resources, practice and the process of occupational identity-building?

- What is the relationship between associate lecturer practice and their working environments, e.g. sector, institutions, faculty, department?

1.5 Context of associate lecturer practice

Founded in 1969, the Open University (OU) has been a major contributor to the massification of higher education in the UK. The university has 20% of the UK's part-time higher education students. In 2002–2003, over 178 000 students registered for OU courses, of whom 24 000 were studying at postgraduate level; actual OU student-course registrations totalled around 240 000 (Quality Assurance Agency Institutional Audit 2004). The OU academic year historically runs from February to October, but the university has increased the number of alternative start dates for some popular courses.

1.6 Degree structure

'Open Entry' made enrolment to the Open University as a student open to everyone aged over 21 years (later reduced to 18 years). As a consequence of this open entry principle, the Advisory Committee to the OU advocated a counselling service for applicants to help them select suitable courses. In addition, it was agreed that the first-year courses would be 'Foundation courses'. The concept was that one such course in each 'line of study', multidisciplinary in scope, would serve the dual purpose of re-introducing adults to study in that 'line' and making it clear to students for each discipline covered what was required to proceed to second-level courses. Perry (1976 p. 56) called this a 'fundamental dilemma': the principle of open entry was a central pillar of the structure, yet many students who wished to start with the OU were ill-prepared and fell by the wayside, through inability to cope with the demands even of the Foundation courses.

In the beginning of the OU only a BA undergraduate degree was offered. 1992 saw the introduction of the BSc undergraduate degree after more than 20 years of awarding only the BA (Open University 1995 p.8). The March 1997 meeting of the OU Senate agreed that an initial range of named Bachelor degrees should be available from 2000. 1994 saw new opportunities for programme development at postgraduate level due to the Higher Education

Funding Council for England (HEFCE) decision to include postgraduate students within funded student numbers for the first time. In 1996, a total of 4399 new students registered for taught higher degrees, compared with 3262 in 1995.

1.7 Course creation

The basic elements of each course were described by the Open University Planning Committee (Perry 1976 p. 76). There were to be specially written correspondence texts sent to the student through the post, and these would be integrated with TV and radio broadcasts transmitted on open circuit. The specially constructed teaching materials would refer to set textbooks and to additional background reading lists. Students would be required to undertake written assignments that would be marked by a 'correspondence tutor', and this activity was seen as much a method of teaching as it was a method of assessment of performance. In addition, students would be required to attend residential summer schools and would be offered, optionally, the opportunity of meeting a counsellor and other students at one of a network of local study centres. Each course would end with a final examination to be held in local examination centres.

1.8 Course production

In the Open University system, the task of course creation consisted of four stages. First, the course needed to be created in terms of its objectives, its content and method of presentation. Secondly, it had to be created in terms of printed books, recorded videotapes and other materials that were required. Thirdly, the course had to be transmitted, which not only involved the use of postal services and open-circuit broadcasting, but also the organisation of the regional services, study centres, part-time counsellors, tutors and summer schools. Fourthly, it needed accrediting by assessing the students' work, both throughout their period of study and in an examination at the end of the course, so that credit could be awarded for the course at an approved and recognised standard.

Courses were to be produced and maintained by 'Course Teams' consisting of academic staff, radio and TV production staff and educational technologists.

The Faculties of Science and Technology devised home experiment kits to enable students to acquire necessary practical experience, and a Student Computing Service was established to allow students access to computers.

Associate lecturers are appointed and supported by regional staff. Staff tutors who are full-time academic Faculty staff but located in Regional Centres provide academic support to associate lecturers and take on many functions of a 'line manager' on a day-to-day basis; however, the employer of the associate lecturer is the Regional Director on behalf of the university. Associate lecturers are therefore managed and supported by a team consisting of staff tutors and other regional staff.

1.9 Historical perspective to associate lecturer role

Perry (1976 p. 112) explains that the recruitment of part-time staff began in 1971 and the university received 12 000 applications for 3380 vacancies. The main criteria for the appointment of part-time staff were academic qualifications, experience in teaching unqualified adult students and experience in teaching at university level. Over 60% of those appointed actually held full-time teaching appointments in institutions of higher education.

Ferguson (1975 p. 48), the first Dean and Director of Students in Arts, described the employment of part-time women lecturers 'as one of the best aspects of the Open University's openness, with its capacity to draw on a group of the population whose talents are greatly underused, the "academic housewives"'. He saw the OU as providing employment opportunities for those who, because of domestic reasons, could not contemplate full-time employment, or were not in an area close to a university, or whose husbands were teaching in a university that would not employ both husband and wife. 'They have made an enormous contribution to the OU, and the university has made its contribution to a healthier society in finding a channel for their ability as teachers'. Ferguson (1975 p. 49) reports that the numbers of part-time lecturers had risen to 4351 and, in 1973, to 4729, with about one-fifth of these being women.

The trend in appointing part-time associate lecturers is towards those who come from backgrounds other than higher education institutions. This is particularly true in new areas of the curriculum for the OU, such as Health and Social Welfare, Business Studies and Law. The number of associate lecturers has now grown to around 7500.

1.10 Role of the associate lecturer

Perry (1976 p. 112) describes how the availability of high-quality part-time tutors led to a policy change which was to 'have a profound effect on the university'. Originally, part-time tutors were appointed to provide 'correspondence tuition' by providing feedback and marks on student-written assignments (assignment mark and feedback forms were originally called CT2 for the assignment mark, later changed to PT2 and CT3 for the assignment feedback forms and yet later changed to PT3 forms). The policy change meant they would in future also provide face-to-face tutorials with their students.

This early policy change is important to this research, as it gives part-time lecturers a wider role than had been originally planned, and means that part of the duties of associate lecturers moves closer, in respect of tutorials, to that of lecturers in more-conventional universities. Perry (1976 p. 110) reveals that initially there was no provision at all for the establishment of a strong link between part-time lecturers and full-time academic staff.

In Tunstall (1974 p. 115), a new lecturer in Government, Francis Castle, wrote a chapter entitled 'Divide and teach: The new division of labour' (his Chapter 22). He describes how the Open University tried, from these early days in the establishment, to strike a balance between some minimum standardisation of the academic content of tutorials, whilst at the same time preserving some freedom in the choice of teaching methods to 'encourage the independent critical intelligence in students'. Castle (in Tunstall 1974 p. 116) comments that, in his view, it was inevitable that tutors, like the students they teach, are bound to experience in varying degrees a feeling of academic isolation because they were also caught up in their full-time occupations, and because they were at a distance from the information providers.

In view of this, the mechanism used by the OU to ensure that it could fulfil its academic objectives was the appointment of full-time staff tutors. Castle describes this new division of labour as the end of the medieval craftsman, producing everything on his premises and meeting customers face-to-face. Instead, it became a staff tutor acting as an ‘academic entrepreneur, a co-ordinator of other people’s skills, directing a vast army of part-time tutors. The tutors, whatever their personal academic qualifications (and some of them were very high), are, when working for the OU, very much an “academic proletariat”’. According to Michael Drake, the first Dean of Social Science (Tunstall 1974 p. 138), the role of the part-time tutor and the success of the system were dependent on part-time tutors sticking closely to the materials devised by the Course Team. ‘Novel ways of teaching the course, yes; but additions to the material, lectures on tangential themes, a fundamental questioning of the course structure, no’.

Rumble (1982 p. 38) continues the story of a changing role of the tutor at the OU. The distinction drawn in 1971 between class tutors (subject specialists employed to give face-to-face tutorials to groups of students in the local study centres) and correspondence tutors (who marked and commented on student assignments) was seen to be less clear than that between tutors and counsellors; in 1972, therefore, the two groups were amalgamated into one role called the course tutor.

A new system of tutor-counsellors was introduced in 1976. They were appointed with full tutorial and counselling responsibility for an annual group of students following a common Foundation course. They remained as counsellor for each group thereafter as the tutorial role of post-Foundation level passed to various part-time course tutors.

1.11 Dispersed community

This gap between part-time tutors and full-time academics was filled on the recommendation of the Director of Regional Tutorial Services, who proposed that part-time associate lecturers be linked to full-time academic staff via staff tutors, who would be full-time members of Faculty on secondment to a particular region. Staff tutors would be required to spend some

20% of their time on the main campus so they could become fully aware of the views of the central academic staff producing each course, and of the demands the course would make on students.

So, the dispersed nature of the associate lecturers' community could, in some respects, be seen as an historical accident. In response, the university recognised the need to make links with part-time staff, and trying to implement these links has created a loosely connected system between part-time lecturers, staff tutors, regional staff and other sections of the university.

Interestingly for this research, Perry (1976 p. 113) (the OU's first vice-chancellor), insisted that these 'class tutorials' were not regarded 'as an integral part of the teaching programme but as "remedial", available as an optional extra to those who could attend them and who were having difficulty in comprehension'.

This view did not prevail for long in the university, at least in some quarters, although the optional nature of OU tutorials remains. Thorpe (2004 p. 312), in an article in response to another by Mike Peters of Empire State College on the nature of teaching at the Open University, argues:

'As a member of the deans' group in the OU for the last nine years, I can assert that the university at the centre, as well as in the regions, sees teaching as a combination of resources and high quality local tuition and support. We are very conscious that students value and want their tutorial support and frequently say in our surveys that a good tutorial can 'make or break' a course for them.'

Ferguson (1975 p. 78) was concerned with a 'common delusion about the Open University that we give lectures on TV: we do not give lectures at all. We are trying to produce a dialogue between reader and writer, a kind of tutorial in print, not a take-it-or-leave-it textbook'. The role of tuition was also relatively clear to Ferguson (1975 p. 92) who saw it as an academic function related to a particular course. It could include correspondence tuition,

assessment, face-to-face tutorials, and communication and interaction with students in different ways.

Originally, the Arts Faculty appointed generalist tutors to cover the correspondence tuition and, for the occasional encounters with students at study centres, a succession of specialist tutors were also employed (Ferguson 1975 p. 91). Study centres were seen as an important ingredient of the system, and just under 300 of them were established. Ferguson reports that by 1975 about half of the student population used study centres for at least half an hour at least once a fortnight. They were seen as offering the opportunity for students to get together and act as a type of 'substitution for college life' (Ferguson 1975 p. 91) and many students did indeed establish self-help groups. They would also provide facilities for accessing TV and radio programmes, video and audiotapes and give opportunities for regular consultation with a counsellor and occasional encounters with a tutor.

Ferguson (1975 p. 92) argues that this split of duties between generalist tutors and specialist tutors did not work, partly because the visiting academic only met students occasionally, sometimes only once a year, and therefore did not sufficiently identify with the students or the university. Students also wished to have increased opportunities to meet their correspondence tutor who was marking and commenting on their work. Therefore the Arts Faculty and other Faculties increasingly vested both roles in the same person.

There was still concern in Arts and other areas of the university as to how a 'generalist' tutor would be able to guide the progress of students when it was unlikely that they would have the mastery of, say, a multidisciplinary Foundation course.

This problem was perceived and addressed by the Arts Faculty and gradually by all Faculties, through the provision of tutor notes provided by the Course Team to guide tutors outside their areas of greater expertise. These notes were seen as being 'to shackle the weaker tutor but provided they are treated as guidelines and not bands, they are a valuable, though time-consuming part of the system. At the second level, with its sterner intellectual

demands, we have compromised. Asking tutors to cover as much of the course as possible but we have, we think rightly, insisted such areas as Renaissance, Music or Kant must be taught by someone with specialist knowledge' (Ferguson 1975 p. 96). This compromise was also phased out, and all part-time associate lecturers now cover all former duties of the generalist and specialist tutor.

The skills required by associate lecturers had already been acknowledged in Ferguson (1975 p. 97). He points out the considerable skill required to make 'marginal running comments on student work and an overall general comment on a student feedback form [CT3, later to become PT3]'. He gives the following examples of the skills required as he perceived them at the time. 'In a mathematics exercise, an underlining shows that something is wrong, without showing what is wrong, but a concise verbal explanation in mathematics is not always easy. In an essay, the general comment, please try to improve your style and structure is not very helpful, the student needs to know exactly where their style and structure are defective. An A-grade student may require a stringent comment matched to their A-grade, those floundering need gentleness without flattery. The correlation with marginal comment, and the personal note, are particularly commendable'.

Ferguson (1975 p. 97) points to the importance placed on the assignment-monitoring system in these early days. 'In general the mentoring procedure has been invaluable alike in rising standards, in helping to achieve consistency, and in weeding out the sheep to be offered re-appointment from the goats'.

1.12 Counsellor role

The counselling role has similarly gone through a number of changes. These are relevant to this study as some of the duties that were 'traditionally' of the counsellor have, since 2000, been placed with the associate lecturer.

David Hawkrige, the first Director of the Institute of Educational Technology, is reported in Tunstall (1974 p. 71) as having carried out a survey in 1971 to discover more about how the tutorial system was operating. Hawkrige reported that the system was operating much as planned, except that counsellors were generally engaging in subject-matter instruction (at the request of students).

Ferguson (1975 p. 92) describes the early difficulties in defining the role of counsellor. 'Some people have analysed it into academic counselling, advising students about study methods in general, encouraging self-help groups, and encroaching in a strictly limited way upon the tutorial role'. Others, Ferguson reports, see it more as 'pastoral counselling, relating to personal student problems, and administrative counselling, interpreting the system to students' but he admits that there was no consensus on the role and many regarded this pastoral description as 'unrealistic and misleading'.

The lack of clarity of the counsellor role was of concern to Ferguson (1975 p. 92) who argued that 'there is no doubt that the success of the system depends upon a clear understanding by both tutor and counsellor of their distinct functions. There is no doubt that the functions are not always distinct and the offices of tutor and counsellor have tended to come together, despite efforts to keep them apart'. Ferguson (1975 p. 92) gives a description of the role from a counsellor: 'she described her role as to make coffee, listen to grievances, encourage the despairing, help those who have struck real trouble in their work, take part in discussions on Zola or Blake or Machiavelli. Above all, I have to try to draw my amazingly disparate students into a community of learning'.

In 1997, the role of counsellor came to an end and the duties of the role were split between a Regional Advisory Service, other regional staff and part-time associate lecturers. This required the revision of all contracts with tutorial and counselling staff. The new associate lecturer contracts, along with terms and conditions, were formally agreed with the Open University Association of University Teachers in 1996 and the new contract was implemented on 1 November 1996.

Counselling and educational guidance was to be available directly to all students from staff at the 13 Regional Centres. This, it was hoped, would allow the 'majority of our associate lecturers to concentrate on tutorial support on specific courses' (Open University 1997 p. 29).

The Open University since 2003 has encouraged associate lecturers to make contact with their students and the university by email using a website called 'TutorHome'; this website has an email facility built into it. Each tutor has a personal email account which is used by the university for communicating all administrative matters such as student group details, timetables, assignment cut-off dates and some course information. Under the new contractual arrangements, associate lecturers are required to have access to a personal computer.

Also under the new contractual arrangements, each course is required to publish a recommended group size. The recommended published group sizes for the associate lecturers in the four cases studies were 20, 16, 15 and 12 respectively. If the student group exceeds the published group size by more than 29% and the associate lecturer agrees to take the additional students beyond the published group size, an additional payment will be paid.

1.13 Current trends in part-time lecturing

The importance of having a deeper understanding of associate lecturer practice within a dispersed community can be illustrated by three current trends in part-time working. Such a deeper understanding of knowledge resources, practice and occupational identity-building, and their linkages, will give us a better appreciation of the consequences on a dispersed community of part-time OU lecturers.

The first two trends of professional development and accreditation, and a changing curriculum with a greater focus on work-based learning, were given a significant stimulus by the Dearing Report (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997). This report advocated that the curriculum should be further developed to support students in the key skills of communication, numeracy and information technology in preparation for work

in what was seen increasingly by Dearing as a 'knowledge economy'. Placing work-based learning in the context of teachers' own practice and knowledge, Dearing also advocated that each institution develop a teaching and learning strategy that would enhance both the teaching skills and the status of their teaching staff, and provide each lecturer with a teaching qualification from a recognised professional body.

So, from a policy context and by using financial incentives, government and employers have encouraged higher education to engage with work-based learning, and also to accredit its own teachers by promoting professional development programmes leading to membership of a professional teaching body (initially the Institute of Learning and Teaching (ILT), now partially replaced by the Higher Education Academy).

In both statements from Dearing, the nature of knowledge, practice and occupational identity-building has an important part to play in exploring the possible consequences of these trends to a dispersed community of associate lecturers at the OU. For example, the very narrow definition of knowledge below, i.e. definition one, compared to the much-broader concept of knowledge in definition two, could well result in very different understandings for these trends for the dispersed community and the university.

(1) Narrow definition, Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) website, 2004

'National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) are work-related competence based qualifications. They reflect the skills and knowledge needed to do a job effectively, and show that a candidate is competent in the area of work the NVQ represents.

NVQs are based on occupational standards. These standards are statements of performance that describe what competent people in a particular occupation are expected to be able to do. They cover all the main aspects of an occupation, including best practice, the ability to adapt to future requirements and the knowledge and understanding that underpin competent performance.

(2) Broader definition of knowledge

A personal knowledge base includes notes and memories of cases and problems which have been encountered, reflected upon and theorised to varying extents and with varying significance for current practice.

The public knowledge of which a professional worker has cognisance will be an individual selection from a much larger public knowledge base, influenced by public knowledge encountered during professional education and independent reading, by personal interest and experience, and by social interchange with fellow professionals. (Eraut 1994 p. 19)'

Definition one for example, suggests that a change in occupational standards would suffice to reflect a greater concentration on key skills in teaching practice by associate lecturers, who would reflect this policy change in their teaching practice and be supported in doing so by their university. Definition two, on the other hand, suggests that, if such a concentration on key skills were deemed desirable, it would require lecturers to construct this change into their daily practice via a highly complex process of interrelationships of practice, knowledge resources and occupational identity building. This concentration on key skills might thus eventually embed itself into their practice and, as such, become part of their occupational identity. Alternatively, constructs unimagined by Dearing might be delivered from this complicated mix of occupational identity-building by associate lecturers.

The third trend which provides the canvas for this research is the growing diversity of employment of associate lecturers at the Open University (Tait 2002). For example, the OU has a long tradition of employing part-time associate lecturers who teach the course materials produced by full-time academics. These associate lecturers have traditionally worked for other universities as well as the OU on a part-time basis. However, increasingly these associate lecturers come from diverse employment backgrounds and, in growing numbers, have several roles with a variety of institutions and companies. Figures from Tait (2002 p. 4)

showed that 24% of associate lecturers had various full-time work that was not regarded as teaching, 4% also had freelance work and 18% were engaged in other OU work. This leaves 20% with employment elsewhere in higher education and 16% in further education.

These trends in diverse employment backgrounds have been encouraged by a number of initiatives at national, institutional and departmental level. In the area of work-based learning, for example, a national network has been established called 'Foundation Degree Forward' (Fdf), with the espoused aims of supporting the development of large numbers of Foundation degrees and finding innovative ways of integrating work-based learning into traditional academic programmes (Fdf 2004).

The Fdf website (Oct. 2004) already shows that the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) lists over 1100 Foundation degrees as in validation and available to students. In the subject of Education alone, there are 199 such degrees covering areas such as Classroom Support, Early Childhood Studies, Special Needs, Classroom Assistants, Basic Skills Teaching, E-tutoring and Learning Support. This trend offers up the possibility of further increases in associate lecturers from non-traditional backgrounds. Tait (2002 p. 5) welcomes this and identifies many in health, social work and management who can bring relevant and practical expertise to courses with work-related curricula, as well as, perhaps, a certain empathy with students juggling full-time work and study. Regardless of whether this positive outcome materialises, the importance to this study is the diversity of backgrounds within the dispersed community of associate lecturers, and its possible effects on how they resource their practice and develop their identities as professional academics.

Following the Dearing Report, the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE) was established, and given the key aim of enhancing professional skills and fulfilling the Government's aim of seeing all teachers in higher education carry a professional qualification (DfEE 1998 pp. 19–23). The ILTHE was expected by Government to provide a system for professional qualifications in teaching, and also continuing professional development to keep its members in good standing (Para. 14.29).

This has seen a large number of higher education institutions develop professional development programmes for their teaching staff. The ILTHE website (Oct. 2004) showed that there were 176 higher educational institutions offering programmes of professional development that would lead to individuals gaining membership and, by summer of 2004, ILTHE had accredited 16 700 higher education teachers. These moves to establish recognition of full-time staff with a professional teaching qualification have also raised the question of what should be done for part-time teaching staff, especially within institutions such as the Open University, with large numbers of part-time staff. For example, the accreditation of part-time lecturers was specifically mentioned in the OU's Teaching and Learning Strategy (Open University 1998) and funds obtained from the university's Human Resources Strategic Change Fund were allocated to support accreditation of associate lecturers.

The Booth Report (1998) addressed the question of part-time lecturers by advocating that associate membership of a teaching professional body should be differentiated both by the scale of work for which teachers are responsible, and the degree of autonomy they have in their teaching; Membership and Fellowship categories might be reserved for those who further extend the range, scale and influence of their professional expertise in teaching. This recommendation was interpreted by the ILTHE as a two-tier system of membership: associate and full. Since its implementation, part-time lecturers, such as associate lecturers at the Open University, have gained full membership of the ILTHE based solely on their part-time lecturing.

Growing concerns in the higher educational sector over the status and development of part-time tutors are further highlighted by the development of programmes such as the Art and Design: Enabling Part-Time Tutors Project (ADEPTT). This initiative is led by the University of Hertfordshire in partnership with Surrey Institute of Art and Design, University College, the London College of Fashion and Loughborough University School of Art and Design, and supported by the Learning and Teaching Support Network Subject Centre and

Generic Centre. The opening statement to the programme expresses concerns about the increasing and changing demands of part-time lecturers and the need for them to be more knowledgeable, responsive, evaluative, flexible and reflective (Glasman 2003). A similar project to ADEPTT was started at the OU for its part-time associate lecturers called the Associate Lecturer Development and Accreditation Pathway (ALDAP). The main components are described by Baume *et al.* (2004) and the core of the programme can be seen in Appendix C.

It is interesting to make a comparison between this espoused description of the associate lecturer role at the OU and the narratives from associate lecturers used as part of the case studies to this research. Orr (1996) refers to these espoused official documents from organisations on practice as ‘canonical’ practice and notes in his research with service technicians that it is, in fact, ‘uncanonical’ practice which is relied on to carry out activities; this knowledge is constructed and communicated in the community of technicians via storytelling.

1.14 Overview

So the role of the associate lecturer has grown both intentionally and organically, as have the number of links between parts of the OU and part-time lecturers, in order to support and manage these growing roles.

The thesis in Chapter 2 justifies small-scale research based on four case studies both in terms of a methodology and also the limits of possible claims made on the basis of small-scale research of this kind. The chapter explores definitions of practice and the difficulties faced by researchers when trying to reveal tacit knowledge. The question of power and the position of the researcher within the research, as part of a personal journey, are discussed, as are serious issues of ethics and the effects of the research on participants. Chapter 3 analyses the theoretical drivers to understanding a dispersed community such as associate lecturers at the OU. It examines social practice theories, their role in coming to a more holistic understanding of associate lecturer practice but also their limitation in giving insufficient

analysis of agency, the role of the 'self' and occupational identity-building that becomes apparent in this study on a dispersed community of OU associate lectures.

Chapters 4 to 7 present the four case studies, one for each research participant, and the core of the research data. Chapter 8 uses the framework of occupational identity-building as a way of coming to a more-integrated understanding of associate lecturer practice. The chapter returns to the themes of the case studies, biography, identity, knowledge resources, discourse and the organisation both as a support and controller of practice. It provides an analysis of the emotive dimension of being an associate lecturer and the part played by tradition and uncertainty in identity-building. The chapter also examines how students are central figures and how practice is often negotiated between students, the organisation and associate lecturers rather than between peers, as is usually associated with Social Practice theory, and the larger part played by the 'self' in resourcing practice than is usually recognised by collective theories of practice. The concluding chapter returns to the research questions introduced in Chapter 1, looking in detail at concepts such as participation and negotiation of meaning and how they differ in the context of this study. It examines the individual nature of routines resulting from operating within a dispersed community and the influence of the organisation and students on such a dispersed group.

CHAPTER 2 Methodology and method

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach of this thesis, the epistemological and ontological position of the researcher and describes in detail the methods of data collection and outlines how the data are presented.

2.2 Using individuals as cases in research

Humans operate within systems that are often indeterminate and non-linear. It is possible to describe some aspects of human life in terms of probabilities, and to assume that the free wills of many people, over extended time, cancel each other out and leave stable patterns that are generalisable (Knight 2002 p. 146). However, this is not plausible when the unit of analysis is an associate lecturer and their individual practice, which can increasingly be understood as social practice that is distinctively marked by particular circumstances, people's beliefs and thoughts.

Knight (2002 pp. 41–42) identified advantages of case studies as a research method, offering a way of exploring the social practice of associate lecturers at the OU. This approach is appropriate as it offers a robust method for a small-scale research project. It is concerned with in-depth analysis and could offer an authenticated account of how associate lecturers perceived their practice and provide the richness of data this research was aiming for.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000 p. 181) describe a case study as a specific instance, a bounded system, for example a child, a clique, a class or a community or, in this case, an associate lecturer at the Open University. They argue it provides a unique example of real people in real situations, allowing the reader of a case study to understand ideas more clearly than simply presenting them with abstract theories or principles, to see how they fit together in a specific example and thus penetrate situations that are not open to other types of research methods. The purpose is to probe deeply and to analyse intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit.

The strength of case studies is that they observe human behaviour in context and allow systems based on individuals that have a wholeness or integrity to them, that require an in-depth and holistic investigation. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995 p. 319) argue case studies are set in geographical, organisational, institutional and other contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn around the case, and Geertz (1973 p. 6) sees case studies as striving to portray what it is like to be in a particular situation, to catch the close-up reality and 'thick description' of participants' lived experiences, their thoughts about and their feelings for a situation. It was just such a thick description that this study sought.

Case studies require the researcher to construct understandings and postulate how individuals give meaning to the rich descriptions given in the case study narratives of the social practices of associate lecturers. With four participants, the researcher is soon faced with the complexity and variability of the social world, the difficulties of being determinate in predicting what will happen and the difficulties of coming to any generalisations which can seem too simplistic for a very person-centred world.

However, case studies have been criticised as a weak research method (Smith 1991 p. 375) as there is a danger of them being bland and *passé* and Schratz and Walker (1995 p. 75) point to the danger of them being limited to copious atheoretical 'slabs' of description, lightly edited and organised into *ad hoc* categories, with little care taken to make it mean something, 'all ground and no theory'. McNeill and Chapman (2005 p. 121) however argue that case studies make no claim to representativeness because the essence of the technique is that each subject studied is treated as a unit on its own. For example Maguire and Bennett (1982) constructed a case study of a convicted career criminal, 'Peter Hudson'. They did not claim 'Peter Hudson' was a 'typical' burglar; however, what they maintained is that a vividly told story can be an important contribution to our knowledge and understanding of aspects of social life. It provides an individualised focus, can highlight critical events that might account for the direction which people's lives take and can tell us something very vivid

about the life of a type of person. We can see him or her as a person rather than as a stereotype.

Bryman (2001 p. 51) justifies the use of individuals as case studies because of the intensive analysis they offer. The aim is to generate an intensive examination of a single case, in relation to which we can engage in a theoretical analysis. The central issue of concern is the quality of the theoretical reasoning in which the case study researcher engages. How well do the data support the theoretical arguments that are generated? The crucial question is not whether the findings can be generalised to a wider universe, but how well the researcher generates understanding out of the findings. In order to address these concerns, theory has been used in a nested way (see Section 2.4) throughout the case studies to illuminate and make propositions about what is going on.

This thesis is about coming to an understanding of knowledge, including tacit knowledge, practice and occupational identity-building in a dispersed community. In this environment, the person-centred nature of practice might be stronger than is described in social practice theory. The strengths identified by Knight are very pertinent and strongly suggested that case studies were fit for purpose for this type of research. The research claims enabled by this approach will be addressed in Section 2.5.

Checkland and Scholes (1990 p. 55) explain that the boundaries you choose to place around the research problem already begin to conceptualise and define it and are therefore fundamental to the resultant research findings; change the boundaries of the case and you are likely to change the research findings. This study recognises that, by creating the practice clusters (see Section 4.1), and using individual associate lecturers as the unit of analysis, the focus of the investigation was being formulated. This boundary creation was already conceptualising the findings of the research.

Therefore, if the study had taken the OU or the 13 Regional Centres that provide local associate lecturer support as the unit of analysis, the research findings would have been

conceptualised and framed differently. The unit of analysis for this research was the individual associate lecturer, as the thesis was focused on gaining better understandings of how they resourced their practice within a dispersed community and not on the aspects of managing this from an organisational perspective.

As the thesis is concerned with explaining knowledge as used by associate lecturers within the institutional context of the OU, case studies offered a way of portraying what it was like to be an associate lecturer, and this places the research in the interpretative tradition, seeing the situation through the eyes of participants.

A candidate profile was devised after discussions with Lancaster University academic staff and with peers after the regular presentations of 'my work to date' at Residential Schools. The candidate profile was put together to maximise the variety of associate lecturers chosen; the objective was to include the widest possible spread of Faculties, specialisms, length of experience as an associate lecture and prior occupational backgrounds among the four participants. It was also important that we included both genders as it was possible the occupational identity-building would be significantly different according to gender. The four participants were chosen in full knowledge that they would not represent the wider population of associate lecturers. This meant the four participants fell into the category of sampling described by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000 p. 102) as 'non-probability convenience sampling'. The researcher simply chooses the sample from those to whom they have easy access, as it does not represent any group apart from itself.

2.3 Researching tacit knowledge

The use of individual associate lecturers as the unit of analysis in individual case studies would not in itself reveal indications of tacit knowledge. Eraut (2000 p. 15) identified two major areas of concern for researchers investigating tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge is difficult to detect and likely to require prolonged observation in order to be discovered. Research participants are unlikely to be accustomed to talking about their tacit knowledge. As Reber (1993 p. 13) recognised, much of the acquisition of tacit knowledge is gained

without conscious attempts by participants to learn, and therefore without any explicit knowledge about what had actually been learned. This research was asking associate lecturers to reveal tacit knowledge used in their practice, when they would not have engaged in any explicit process of gaining that knowledge and therefore might not know of its existence.

Given these difficulties with researching tacit knowledge, Eraut advocated two strategies for mitigation of the effects of these concerns. One strategy was to facilitate the telling of their individual stories by going beyond the structured interview-based approach. Eraut (2000 p. 17) suggested the story telling could be aided by introducing a 'mediating object' such as a picture or drawing which the participants would be familiar with discussing. The other was to try to establish a climate of mutual consultation, so encouraging participants to dig deeper into what they knew; this climate could also develop into a type of mentoring relationship which would allow a broader discussion on behaviour and culture, as well as the more technical side of the work being researched. This might be particularly useful around crucial times in practice, acting as a type of 'crisis review'. These relationships could develop out of hours when more 'provisional and riskier' comments might be more readily revealed. Care should be taken not to use these comments as being comprehensive or accurate, but offered as an alternative insight into what might be going on.

The part-time nature of this research, and the limited resources that participants had available to devote to it, meant the following modifications of the above strategy were implemented to make it fit for purpose for this research.

The spider diagrams acted as a mediating object and orientated future discussions. The descriptions of practice in the diagram are particularly important as they might offer the first indications of the type of reifications of practice at the level of discourse that the associate lecturers have constructed. We can use these reifications to see the level of mutual negotiated meaning that has been achieved in what might be seen as a more dispersed community than those identified by other researchers of social practice theory. An example practice cluster

spider diagram is presented overleaf as Figure 1. A climate of trust was established by sharing concerns about the research, the work of the researcher and the participant's practice, as part of the mutual consultation within each session.

Time was spent over lunch relaxing but carrying on the discussions to consolidate an informal and trusting relationship, and as a small reward for participants in the research. Sessions were organised as far as possible to coincide with critical moments in practice, such as the last tutorial or last batch of assignments to be marked.

2.4 Nested theory within the research

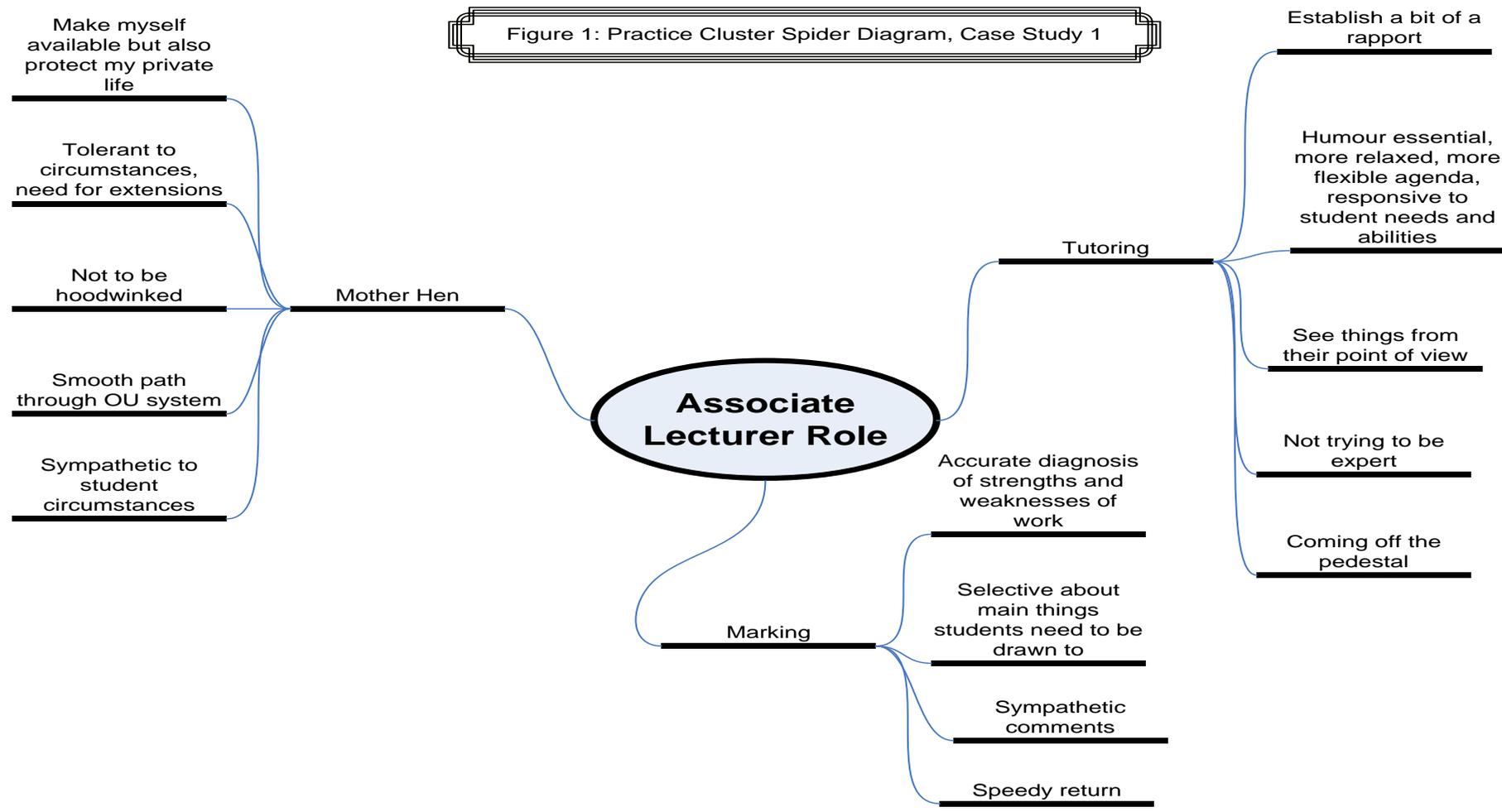
This section explains how theory is used to make sense of the rich data being collected.

Within the thesis, theory is used at three levels; as a set of statements telling us something new that is backed by research evidence, as tools for thinking, and as generalising theory to explain why a small-scale piece of research is still important and is nonetheless valid as a piece of claimmaking. For example, in Chapter 8, the four case studies are explored using Eraut's (1994) theory of routinisation, and the possibility of tacit knowledge in terms of people, contexts, implicit theories, inferred correlations and linkages with the university.

This was not using Eraut merely as a form of categorisation to help with the descriptions of associate lecturers' activities and knowledge. The theory of routinisation goes further than categorisation and description, by trying to offer a plausible explanation of how tacit knowledge is used.

The theory of routinisation starts by suggesting those new to practice follow other people, manuals, checklists, or even self-devised procedures. In this research, learning by these types of repetition might offer an explanation of how associate lecturers reach a stage in their practice where the use of a person or checklist is no longer required, and then progress to a future stage where an internalised explicit description of the procedure becomes redundant, eventually falling into disuse; at this point, practice has become routinised and is often tacit.

Figure 1: Practice Cluster Spider Diagram, Case Study 1



Another example of the use of theory in the research is Engestrom's (1987, 1991) socially-distributed activity system theory. Engestrom is useful in exploring the difference between a model and a theory. The Engestrom model can be described as a community of practice, pictured as a triangle. At each angle and along the axis of the triangle, the community is described in terms of implicit social rules, language and technologies used by the community, the division of labour within the community, people and the social artefacts they use in their practice (see Chapter 3 for a fuller discussion of activity theory and its relevance to this research).

The model turns to a theory when Engestrom gives explanation of how these parts of the community of practice, as modelled, engage, in order to produce some outcomes, in this case a practice within a community of practice.

In Chapter 8, the thesis begins to show that the model and theory offered by Engestrom does not fully explain the situation experienced by the four associate lecturers studied within this thesis. It is not the purpose of the study to stretch Engestrom's model to fit the situation, nor to claim that this disproves the theory. It is showing the difficulty of taking general theory and applying it to very specific situations. This is in itself beneficial in seeing the difficulties of applying policy, which may be based on general theory, to very situated circumstances, and thus creating results in application that were not expected.

2.5 So what can this small-scale research actually claim?

The previous section explained how theory is used in the research, but it is also necessary to explain what validity can be attached to the research claims. Knight (2002 p. xii) states that small-scale inquiry is still seen as the runt, a puny form of the real thing, probably harmless but hardly something to be taken seriously. Knight argues otherwise, stating that small-scale research is of value to the researcher and this is not a trivial matter; it may also turn out to be of value to the research participants and still be presented as a valuable contribution to the wider world of theory and practice.

For Knight, the problem with small-scale research is not its size but that method and routine displace sensemaking and claimsmaking; good research according to Knight (2002 p. xii) requires all four:

‘Social research is not like building a house, foundations, walls and roof. It is more like a nest of snakes with separate bodies looping back on themselves and tangled one around another. All moving and alive.’

One of the research aims was certainly to improve my own practice as a staff developer by having a better understanding of the knowledge used by associate lecturers in their practice, thus being able to devise improved programmes, frameworks and processes to support their development. In addition, the study aimed to offer better insights generally into the ways of supporting development of part-time lecturers within the higher educational sector.

This desire to improve practice has always been an important element but was brought to the foreground by feminist traditions in research that has used small-scale research extensively.

Knight (2002 p. 35) sees the importance of feminist research as:

‘Feminist researchers have done something far more important than developing “feminist research methods” by showing that it could be legitimate – even necessary – to take established methods of enquiry, such as interviews and observation, and use them subjectively for a higher moral purpose.’

Smith (1998 p. 318) argues that for postmodern feminists there is an emphasis on pluralism, complexity, difference and diversity and there is no one feminist account which can accommodate all the experiences of women. Any feminist pedagogy would need to take into account the complex interactions of a wide range of factors. These would include different subject positionings of students: students are not just passive recipients but active in constructing their own identities.

However, the primary aim of this thesis was not to give a voice to associate lecturers as a group. Those wishing to research more on giving associate lecturers a voice of their own

should refer to papers by Coates (1998) and Tait (2002, 2004). Although giving a voice was not a primary aim of this thesis, it may indirectly have the same result, as the case studies do contain large elements of the voices of the participants in their own words.

However, the thesis is more than ‘slabs’ of descriptions. In Chapter 9, it makes a number of propositions about the understandings that have been constructed from the evidence gathered and interpreted within the case studies. This is quite different from claiming that the research is making ‘truth’ claims or encouraging the reader to extrapolate that what has been discovered for four case studies is also true for the other 7500 associate lecturers; it is not.

The position the thesis takes on claimmaking is partly derived from Searle (2000 p. 10) who suggests that there is a real world existing independent of us and that we can gain access to this world. Words have reasonably clear meanings and can with care be taken to refer to real objects in the world; it is possible to identify causes that do produce effects in the world.

The thesis has adopted the position that there are ‘real’ activities taking place with associate lecturers’ practice, such as delivering tutorials, making and giving feedback on student assignments and providing student support. What is important for this study is making sense of these activities, coming to a better understanding of how they are carried out.

The study could have adopted the position that the associate lecturer activities were also constructed social artefacts, the product of mind and language themselves. This is not the position of this investigation; however it is accepted that the sensemaking and understandings reached by the research are social constructs; as pointed out earlier, they are not ‘truth’ claims but possible understandings based on the evidence gathered and interpreted, which is itself also a form of social construction.

This places the research within the constructivist and hermeneutic tradition, where meanings and interpretations are paramount. Habermas (1984 pp. 109–10) describes this tradition as:

‘Where people strive to interpret and operate in an already interpreted world.’

In addition to the hermeneutic tradition, and although not an anthropological study, this thesis has similar concerns about questions of power, domination and discrimination faced by practitioners. Critical theory has identified the importance of power in relation to knowledge, and is therefore an important facet for consideration by this research; it is argued that knowledge is not neutral. Indeed, Eagleton (1991 pp. 95–96) argues:

'In this enterprise, critical theory identifies the 'false' or fragmented consciousness that has brought an individual or social group to relative powerlessness or, indeed, power, and it questions the legitimacy of this. It holds up to the lights of legitimacy and equality issues of repression, voice, ideology, power, participation, representation, inclusion and interests. It argues that much behaviour (including research behaviour) is the outcome of particular illegitimate, dominator and repressive factors, illegitimate in the sense that they do not operate in the general interest – one person's or group's power is bought at the price of another's freedom and power.'

Habermas (1972 p. 196) has another important standpoint on power and its relationship to knowledge for this study:

'Knowledge and hence research knowledge serves different interests. Interests are socially constructed, and are 'knowledge-constitutive', because they shape what counts as the objects and types of knowledge.'

The aim of this thesis is not transformative in the sense of uncovering interests at work and advocating changing those power relationships. The study does have some of the characteristics of action research (Knight 2002 pp. 38–39) especially in the desire to make a difference to my own practice as a staff developer. However, as primarily a piece of case study research, it did not set out to give associate lecturers a voice in order to affect their practice: that would depend on what emerged from the particular cases. The thesis is

concerned with how power affects the understandings created by associate lecturers, and how that affects the conduct of their practice.

The reason why this thesis has to consider power relations is summed up by the explanation of power and knowledge given by Foucault (1975 p. 177):

'It functions like a piece of machinery, both absolutely indiscreet, since it is everywhere and always alert, since by its very principle it leaves no zone of shade and constantly supervises the very individuals who are entrusted with the task of supervising; and absolutely 'discreet' for it functions permanently and largely in silence.'

Given this definition, the thesis has to consider the effects of power on what associate lecturers think, the power relationships with the Open University and within their respective disciplines and courses, and how their understandings and practice have been conditioned by these power relationships.

As this study is about interpretation within interpretations, and these are all socially constructed with influence from different interest groups with different degrees of power, there is a danger that individuals and groups can be misinterpreted and even damaged by the research. Careful consideration has therefore been given to the ethical framework within which the research operated, and the position of the researcher within it.

2.6 Data collection

This section explains in detail how data were collected, analysed and despite certain constraints how the researcher was able to immerse himself in associate lecturer practice.

Documentary research

The new associate lecturer contract agreed in November 1996 was to be supported by a new staff development policy for associate lecturers and a new 10-point associate lecturer role statement, 'The Role of the Tutor' (Appendix B). These documents were important as they gave a canonical description of how the OU perceived associate lecturer practice. I was

fortunate enough to have belonged to the groups formulating these documents, so they were very familiar to me.

The new Staff Development Policy stated that staff development was the responsibility of the individual associate lecturer who was entitled to support in this endeavour from the university. It also placed the responsibility for associate lecturer pedagogical development with a partnership between Student Services and the Faculties.

The new associate lecturer role statement consisted of 10 role statements and for the first time gave a description of what was expected in terms of Information and Communication Technology. Each role statement had a corresponding column describing what resources and individuals were available to support them in their carrying out of this role. This document was sent to each associate lecturer from their Regional Centre together with their new contract, and they were given a six-month time period in which to either accept and sign the new contract/role or to resign.

Visits to respondents

The purpose of the unstructured nature of the interview sessions was to allow the maximum opportunity for a relationship to develop between the researcher and the research participants, and for a certain level of trust to be developed. This type of unstructured research interview allowed for multifaceted conversations to take place, conversations that had the aim of revealing as many types of knowledge used by associate lecturers as possible, within the time available. It allowed for a richer and deeper type of data to be captured, and kept to a minimum post-rationalisation and defensive justifications for practice.

In addition to the 24 hours of formal contact session time with each participant, there were also a number of opportunities for informal sessions; for example, before Senate meetings and the Quality Standards Board meetings with participant one, and before meetings in the Regional Centre with participant four. Although not ethnographic, these informal sessions did deepen the trust between the researcher and the participants. It also afforded the

participants the opportunity to discuss matters of concern in their daily practice, and thus increased the feelings of mutual engagement and interest in associate lecturer practice. The accumulation of formal and informal sessions, email contact and telephone calls was equivalent to approximately one hour per week per annum with each participant.

The visits for case studies 1, 3 and 4 took place during the day. The distances travelled for each of these sessions were long and sessions started between 10 and 10.30 a.m. and therefore required occasional overnight stays before the session.

The sessions would start with coffee and tea and a general discussion on how things were going both in their other activities and in their role as associate lecturers. The initial session also included my giving a biographical account of myself and the nature of the research. This was followed by the participant giving a biographical account and creating the beginnings of the spider diagram which covered the main areas of practice as they perceived them.

The sessions for case study 2 took place in the evening, starting at 4.30 p.m. and not finishing until after 11 p.m. Lunch was taken at home for case studies 1 and 3, and conversation would continue on the research over lunch. For case study 4 lunch, and for case study 1 dinner, was taken at the local pub and again conversations concerning the research would continue over the meal.

The long journeys home for case studies 1, 3 and 4 allowed for the immediate writing-up of comprehensive notes while conversations were very fresh in the researcher's mind. It also allowed for the notes to be shared with participants the very next day by email and for any clarifications to be sought while it was still topical.

Follow-up communication

Between the formal and informal sessions, contact with participants was maintained by email and telephone. Transcripts of the formal sessions were sent to participants by email which allowed for additional clarifications and comments via subsequent email exchanges. For example an email exchange with participant one on 13 March 2004 allowed for clarification

and further discussion on what he meant by finding the ‘OU marking criteria thin’ and how he brought ‘alive students’ with the assignment-marking process. This method of contact also allowed for the timely planning of the next formal sessions which were timetabled after but close to significant events in practice, such as the next batch of assignments to be marked or the next tutorial. The final case study was shared with each participant and offered a further opportunity for them to comment and to formally sign the Research Consent Form (Appendix A).

Analytical method

The initial combing of the data involved looking for categories of evidence based on the research of personal knowledge by Eraut (2000 pp. 15–30). It involved looking for indications of tacit knowledge of people and contexts, implicit theories, inferred correlations or causal linkages between attributes of a person or an organisation and routinisation. Action is described as routinised when actors no longer need to think about what they are doing because they have done it so many times before.

The development of the ‘practice cluster’ spider diagrams gave possible early indications of routinisation and reification of practice. It also pointed to ways of creating a common structure for the four case studies (see Section 4.1 for more detail).

Each paragraph from the narratives was coded and placed within an Eraut category. So for example the narrative ‘Aware of code of conduct, aware of expectations of how we conduct ourselves, responding to students’ needs, Health and Safety, maintenance of a professional relationship with students (S2/19)’ was coded as an implicit theory, inferred correlation or casual linkage attributed to a person or organisation. However, it could also have been an example of Eraut’s category concerning tacit knowledge in action or tacit knowledge of people and contexts. The paragraph could also have been an example of Blackler’s category of encultured knowledge with its emphasis on achieving shared understandings or embodied

knowledge with its emphasis on intimate knowledge of a situation, problem-solving and practical thinking. All of these were being demonstrated in the one paragraph (S2/19).

This analysis confirmed that despite breaking sentences within the narratives into very small phrases, they could be equally placed into more than one of the Eraut categories. This suggested that the linkages between the categories were strong and the phrases were demonstrating a multiplicity of skills, knowledge and theories that would require examining in the whole. This view was supported by Blackler (1995 p. 1040) who concluded that the relationships between categories of knowledge were so strong that they could not sensibly be conceived as separate categories. Despite using Blackler's (1995 pp. 1023–1025) categories of embrained, embodied, encultured, embedded and encoded knowledge, these initial findings supported using the individual associate lecturer as the unit of analysis which could be seen more in the whole by using case studies.

The use of social practice theory allowed the thesis to explore the linkages between different knowledge types and link them to concepts of the organisation, power and the importance of the student body by the application of activity theory. The thesis advocates the use of occupational identity-building as the framework to bring together all of these facets of being an associate lecturer (see Chapters 8 and 9).

2.7 The position of the researcher within the research

As discussed earlier in the chapter, this thesis does more than simply describe the nature of being an associate lecturer at the Open University from the basis of four case studies. It offers possible understandings from this data: it is therefore important for the reader to understand the position of the researcher, if she or he is to come to a decision of accepting, partially accepting or rejecting the research findings.

The purpose of this section is not to offer a type of self-confession, but to further assist the reader in evaluating the research. Haig (1999 p. 223) describes the need for such an account from the researcher as:

'Far from treating educational research as objective and value-free, feminists argue that this is merely a smokescreen that serves the existing, disempowering the status quo, and the subject and value laden nature of research must be surfaced, exposed and engaged. This entails taking seriously issues of reflexivity.'

I came to the research with a very traditional standpoint on research. This 'positivist' position led me to believe that the opportunity to undertake research would allow me to discover the 'truths' about associate lecturer practice at the OU; armed with this new knowledge, I would be able to improve my own practice as a staff developer and improve the programmes, structures and processes that I had helped put into place to support associate lecturer development.

This view of research was coupled with a traditional viewpoint on what constituted knowledge and practice. I held the view that knowledge was somehow 'out there' and available to be learnt, like a piece of text or a book. I believed furthermore that practice could be defined as a set of competencies with underpinning knowledge and values. I had demonstrated these beliefs by introducing the largest NVQ programme in higher education for non-academic staff. However, this approach was not acceptable to associate lecturers at the OU, triggering a rethinking of my own approach to professional staff development; this reconceptualising was supported and encouraged by my part-time PhD studies at Lancaster University.

In addition, during a long career engaged in implementing and managing change, I had experienced both fundamental change in practice and also 'espoused' changes that did little to change actual practice. This had led me (as an MBA graduate) to link the change management processes in management literature to the process of knowledge creation, and how the former may not lead to the latter, even when methods such as organisational theory and systems thinking were diligently employed.

These developments in my own understandings of the world around me can be clearly shown by reflecting on my annual self-appraisal of progress as part of my research studies:

'Student Report of 8 Jan 2001 – As with many employed in higher education I have spent large periods of my career involved in managing change. The last two years of the doctoral programme has developed my thinking on "change" and particularly the importance of knowledge and its reconstruction in the change process.

Student Report of 12 Aug 2003 – In many ways I feel I have been a 'stranger in a foreign country' (Schutz 1970) coming from a management background into an educational research context. However, I feel I can understand and challenge the discourse of both educational research and at the same time challenge my original ideas of management. This can leave one in an uncomfortable 'no-man's' land as one struggles with your own individual ideas and beliefs. However, if education is about transformation this is to be welcomed.'

This personal journey has not been undertaken in a vacuum but has been influenced by institutions, groups and individuals. The OU has been very supportive of the research in respect of meeting the tuition fees and granting six months' study leave to write up the thesis. Nonetheless, as discussed earlier in this chapter, knowledge is not neutral and the expression of new understandings related to associate lecturers was not always welcome.

It is likely that a new researcher who is coming to terms with new understandings will explore these with colleagues within their own institution. New researchers need to be aware that this exploration of ideas is not the same as the exploration undertaken as part of their studies. Exploration within their own institution may well change the perceptions and attitudes shown towards the researcher by colleagues and may even, as in this case, prove detrimental to their career.

A researcher who is struggling with complex concepts such as identity, culture, agency, values, beliefs and their effects on practice, may well appear as being less 'techno-rational'

and more ‘muddled’ in their approach than is desired by their department, especially, as in this case, when the unit (Student Services) has few members who are, or have been, research active.

These personal experiences heightened within me the sensitivity of ethical issues that needed to be considered by the research, and the desire not to cause damage or hurt to any of the research participants.

2.8 Ethical dimension to the research

This thesis is not only concerned with explaining to the reader how data were collected, analysed and the position of the researcher within these activities but also with undertaking the research in an ethical way that as far as possible protected the research participants. At the beginning of the first session with each participant, the research aims and objectives were carefully explained. Additionally, as the participants were giving up their time without payment, the amount of time they would be able to commit was explored. Committing over 20 hours of time to this research was not insignificant for lecturers working on a part-time basis.

It was important that the participants gave informed consent to participate in the research. This principle is explained by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000 p. 50), who see the principle of informed consent arising from the participants’ right to freedom and self-determination in a democracy; any limitations placed on that freedom must be justified and consented to by the research participants. It means they have the right to withdraw from the research but, at the same time, places some of the responsibility onto the participant if things should go wrong within the research.

In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, they were given the opportunity to change the name used in the case study and to request textual changes if they felt their privacy, anonymity or confidentiality had been betrayed (see Appendix A for Research

Consent Form). In addition, each participant was given a copy of their final case study and a further opportunity to comment.

The Open University has a sophisticated procedure for giving permission for research into its students; however, no such procedures were in place for associate lecturers. I therefore informed the Head of Student Services Planning, in whose area associate lecturers fell, of the nature of the research and provided a copy of the research plan.

In the research process, I was aware of holding a position of authority within the university as Assistant Director (Staff Development) and was likely to be perceived by participants as representing the 'official' face of the institution. I was therefore concerned that participants might take a more guarded approach to me as a researcher than I wished. I was not in the role of a 'neutral observer': by immersing myself with my participants, I would affect their practice and possibly in ways that I could not foresee. The difficulty of allowing the 'thick description' desired by the research to emerge can be demonstrated by my own reactions to case study 2 for example. Initially, my reaction to what was being said by the research participant was a feeling of disbelief. My own immersion with the organisation made such stark revelations about it quite unpalatable. These self-perceptions of case study 2 changed once again as my own difficulties with the organisation increased. This highlighted to me the difficulties of presenting the data and the paramount need to explain to readers of the thesis why certain postulations were being made and backed by which particular data. Despite all these efforts, the effects of my research on the participants and myself cannot fully be brought to the fore. Although the study was apparently well received by the research participants, given the evidence of their feedback from reading their own case studies, I may well have affected their practice just by being willing to engage with them, thus unintentionally becoming an influence on their practice and occupational identity-building. Nonetheless, I did not hold any direct line management responsibilities for associate lecturers and, over the sessions, a feeling of trust was generated, which I was careful to nurture throughout the research. It was additionally stressed that the research was not being

undertaken for the OU but for my own studies with Lancaster University. Ironically, my personal difficulties in undertaking research in Student Services (traditionally, a non-research unit) helped considerably in building and maintaining this level of trust with participants.

The overall impression gained from the participants to the research was very positive. They were genuinely interested in the subject matter and eager to be of maximum help. At times, they expressed positive enjoyment and satisfaction in being able to reflect on their careers and practice, finding the process rewarding for themselves. The evidence for this can be seen from feedback from the Research Case Studies Release Consent Forms (see Appendix A), with comments such as:

‘Most interesting reading – revealing some unsuspected insights.’

‘I enjoyed reading this, Graham, thank you. It has helped me to reflect further on my practice, especially useful as I undergo ALDAP!’

However, the research was dealing with personal information that was sensitive and potentially damaging to the individual. In recognition of this, the case studies not only maintain anonymity but also complete confidentiality of the sources. I was still in a position of trust, being accorded privileged access to information, acutely aware of not wishing to betray that trust but, at the same time, needing to retain the right to report the research findings. Fortunately, the level of trust was such that any ethical difficulties encountered were easily worked through.

For example, the participant in case study 4 had produced a computerised ‘generic-marking’ schema which was of particular interest to the research as a ‘cultural artefact’ of assignment feedback and marking practice. However, concern was expressed that the same anonymity and confidentiality be shown towards any student data as had been shown towards the participant, which I was able to assure the participant was the case.

Although the thesis is not evaluative in terms of associate lecturer performance, it was sensitive to the possibility that some aspects of practice described in the case studies would be more ‘professionally’ and institutionally acceptable than others. As these judgments may be made by the reader, it is important that there was ‘due process’ that made clear to the reader why certain postulations are made in the thesis, what evidence was used to support those postulations and that the reader can be satisfied that the same standards of due process were applied equally in all four case studies.

2.9 Overview

In this chapter, the thesis has discussed why case studies were an appropriate tool for meeting the research aims and answering the research questions in a complex, interrelated social world of practice, knowledge resources and occupational identity-building within a dispersed community.

This chapter explains how establishing ‘practice clusters’ and using individual associate lecturers as the unit of analysis established the focus of the research from a very early stage. Change the boundaries of the research and the perspectives could have been quite different. The study was within the interpretative tradition, trying to see situations through the eyes of the four associate lecturer participants.

The data collection methods included the use of a candidate profile to select the four participants but in the full knowledge that these four participants would not represent the wider population of associate lecturers.

The difficulty of researching tacit knowledge was discussed and the possible methods of partially overcoming these difficulties when exploring knowledge types that even the research participant may not know exist. These methods included using a spider diagram of ‘practice clusters’ that acted as mediating object. The building of a trusting relationship between the researcher and the participants which allowed for a more open environment for the research to take place and encourage deeper and richer revelations about practice. How

data were collected in deliberately unstructured informal sessions to allow for the maximum opportunity for tacit knowledge, practice and theories to be partially revealed or indications of such tacit conceptions to be analysed. This chapter explored the use of theory within the research and how it was used in a 'nested way', as a way of telling the reader something new backed by research evidence, as a tool for thinking and how a small-scale piece of research can still make appropriate research claims.

The chapter also recognises the importance of understanding the position of the researcher in making judgments about the validity of any claims and the care taken to be ethical in dealing with research participants. This leads to a wider discussion on the ethical dimensions of the study. The concern was to protect as far as possible the participants but with the recognition that such in-depth immersion with associate lecturers could have both negative as well as positive outcomes on the continuing process of occupational identity-building of the four participants.

CHAPTER 3 Theoretical considerations to understanding a dispersed community

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the theoretical frameworks used in the thesis and their relevance in making sense of the multifaceted and complex world of associate lecturer practice.

Giddens (1976) framework which sees practice as the construction of routines in work practices and the concept of the reification of these routines is used to establish the 'practice cluster spider diagrams' for each of the research participants. These practice clusters are then used to provide a common structure for the four case studies.

Social practice theory is used to explore how associate lecturers experience a different sense of community and activity theory by the rotation of the object and subject allows for the students and the organisation to become part of what might be regarded as a hybrid type of community of practice.

The concept of power develops the notion that practice can be seen as a constant struggle and how communities of practice can be influenced by power from outside of the community.

The typologies of Eraut (2000) and Blackler (1995) are used to identify possible indications of different types of tacit knowledge as part of the knowledge resources associate lecturers have available to them in their practice. In the discussion in Chapters 8 and 9, the case is made that the close relationship of each knowledge type, and the complex ways they are constructed and reconstructed in practice, suggests that a better understanding of associate lecturer practice can be made by means of the concept of occupational identity-building.

Occupational identity-building also allows for important episodes in biography to be a part of this process as well as the sense of community, organisation and knowledge resources.

3.2 *Definitions of practice*

As this thesis is concerned with exploring knowledge within the context of associate lecturer practice within a dispersed community at the Open University, we need to come to an understanding about the term 'practice'.

Giddens (1976 p. 78) sees practice as the routines that we construct for ourselves in order to carry out the normal activities, such as work, in our daily lives. Therefore, in this definition, practice is always about carrying out something. The way we carry out activities creates patterns in our lives that are reproduced in a social context and follow certain social conventions. So, for example, when we come to analyse the four case studies on which this thesis is based, it is possible to identify patterns within the meta-categories of marking assignments, tutorials and student support.

These patterns in associate lecturer practice could be an indication of 'routinisation', an idea that refers to the habitual taken-for-granted character of the vast bulk of the activities of day-to-day working life. Giddens (1991 p. 36) uses the notion of 'ontological security' to refer to the impulse we have to create and sustain 'routines' through practices in order for us to feel safe and secure in our day-to-day actions, i.e. we can predict with a degree of certainty what is likely to happen as a result of a particular event or act. Eraut (2000 p. 20) noted that these routines could be interrupted by 'short periods of problem-solving', in order to resolve difficulties or problem-solve as a result of changes to the external environment.

Wenger (1998) takes the concept of practice within a social context further, introducing the concept of communities of practice after researching the practice of medical claims processors. He describes a process by which these workers collectively learn – the practices are learned as result of both carrying out activities and the social relations involved. These practices are maintained by mutual participation and negotiation that maintains a shared community of practice. Wenger (1998 p. 141) contended that 'every practice is in some sense a form of knowledge, and knowing is participating in that practice'. This would

suggest knowledge is produced by practising. Stevenson (2000 p. 37) has stated that 'knowledge for work is essentially knowledge (for individuals) that works'.

This mutually developed understanding of practice also allows for a reification of practice to take place. The way we make something concrete, a 'thing' out of concepts that are not tangible.

Wenger (1998) is not looking for homogeneous actions within the community of practice, but the work is co-ordinated by a mutual understanding that is collectively gained. However, it is not just co-ordination that practice brings, but a common understanding of the interactions with the world and each other, it is via practice that we make sense of our working lives. As our working lives are an integral part of ourselves, it is also part of our identity-building and the way we understand the world. Eraut (2000 p. 16), from his research, argues that people can be socialised into the norms of practice without realising they are absorbing them. Wenger (1998 p. 47), therefore, argues that practice is always 'social practice which includes language, tools, documents, images, symbols and clearly defined roles as well as subtle cues, untold rules of thumb, recognisable intuitions and shared world-views'.

These definitions of practice do suggest that activities within practice provide a reasonable starting point for this study, but Wenger's (1998) concept of reification is an early warning that, even with the description of activities in the case studies, we might be dealing with reification of practice and not practice itself, and of the dangers of detaching these descriptions from the personal accounts of practice.

3.3 Social practice approaches to learning and knowledge

Social practice theory such as community of practice theory (Lave and Wenger 1991) offers the possibility of seeing the practice of associate lecturers in a more integrated way, by placing learning in the context of our lived experience of participation in the world. Practice is not only all the knowledge and theory we use in order to carry out an activity, but also has

an historical and social context: historical in the sense of how knowledge is developed and passes on to new members of the community, so regenerating itself; social in that communities of practice provide the structures and meaning for those activities to take place.

This avoids what Wenger regards as a false dualism between theories of social structure, which emphasise institutions, norms, rules, cultural systems, discourses and history; these are often pitched against theories that emphasise situated experience and stress the importance of individual agency, intentions, and focus on experiences and the local construction of understandings of activities at work.

Social practice theory does not claim to replace cognitive theories or structural theory but constitutes them within the social practice theory of learning. It claims that learning, thinking, knowing are relationships among people in activity, with and arising from the socially and culturally structured world (Wenger 1998 pp. 5–8).

Given this description of social practice theory, it would be possible to place the practice of associate lecturers, as described in the four case studies, firmly into this theory. However, when looking at the detail of what Lave and Wenger (1991) described as constituting a community of practice, the dispersed nature of associate lecturer practice and the concept of community of practice becomes more problematic. The thesis will now focus on these concepts in more detail.

3.4 Mutual engagement

One of the defining characteristics of a community of practice, as opposed to a group, team or network, is the concept of mutual engagement (Wenger 1998 p. 76). This describes participants in the community of practice engaged in sustained dense relations, organised around the activity they are carrying out.

Wenger does not limit concepts of communities of practice to a certain proximity and does allow, for example, the possibility of ‘virtual’ communities of practice. It is the possibility for engagement in a process of negotiated meaning that is important, and this could be

achieved by telephone, email and correspondence, as well as face-to-face contact in the more usual work situations, where workers meet together physically in order to carry out activities.

Wenger (1998 p. 18) describes within his research a group of medical claims processors, who hold a variety of beliefs, have very different biographies, are young and old and have different aspirations and problems. Work, i.e. medical claims processing, takes on a different significance in their individual lives. By meeting every working day, they talk, exchange information and opinions and, as a result, influence each other's understanding of what is going on in the community. All have different status, authority and relations within the organisation but each finds a unique place and identity by this process of mutual engagement.

3.5 Reification

This process within communities of practice gives form to our experience by congealing experience into 'thingness', so reference points are created in which to negotiate meaning.

The practice cluster diagrams are a useful resource for the initial identification of 'thingness', with terms such as 'correspondence tuition' and 'face-to-face tutorials'. These all have unique meaning for all four of the research participants but, with limited opportunities for shared experience and interactive negotiation, these reifications may not have the same co-ordinated and generative meaning that Wenger had experienced with his medical claims processors.

This may leave a dispersed community of practice, such as associate lecturers, with shared reference points like assignment marking, face-to-face tutorials and student support, but with no shared negotiated understanding of what they mean. Such a lack of negotiated meaning in the Wenger example would have led to claims not being verified, a loss of collective confidence about what could and could not be claimed for under medical insurance, an increase in claims being rejected, processing time and time taken for customers to receive their money.

In order to explore the historical perspective more closely, this thesis introduces activity theory (Engestrom 2000) as a tool for exploration. This theory is appropriate for this stage of the discussion as it places individual agency within a social construction of knowledge framework.

3.6 Associate lecturers within an activity system

Engestrom (2000) explains activity theory by using the metaphor of a Finnish baseball game. The game of baseball is the activity system, which consists of a community of players, coaches, umpire and audience, rules (in this case the rules of baseball), a division of labour, pitcher, hitter, fielders and umpire and certain instruments such as the bat and ball.

The metaphor is a useful one for this study as it is possible to replace the baseball game and its components, with associate lecturer practice. There is a community – associate lecturers, students, staff tutors, regional and central university staff; there are rules, such as assignment submission dates and examination rules, academic norms and conventions. There is furthermore a division of labour between the associate lecturer, student, staff tutor and other university staff, and there are instruments of practice, such as a generic marking guide, PT3 assignment-marking feedback sheet etc.

The metaphor is also a useful one as it allows for the subject, object and outcome of the activity to change. So, for example, the subject is the pitcher, the object is the pitching plate, the hitter and the state of the field, and the outcome is the ball being pitched. Then, for a moment, the subject becomes the umpire who may call the pitch foul, the object becomes the flight of the ball and the outcome will be a foul or good ball, then the subject becomes the hitter with the object being the pitched ball and the outcome a hit, and so on.

Such a metaphor is useful for this study as it allows the student body into the activity system and allows the centre of the activity to change. For example, the student can be seen taking the position as subject, the object being the submission of an assignment; this is done within certain rules of submission dates and the need for it to be one's own work. The outcome is

hopefully a 'good' assignment, then the associate lecturer becomes the subject, with the object being to mark and give feedback on the assignment; and the outcome is a marked assignment using instruments such as a generic marking guide and not using a red pen. The staff tutor may then become the subject if plagiarism is suspected and the outcome might become an assignment that is marked zero.

The activity system allows for individual agency, with instruments and rules being negotiated at an individual level without the mutual negotiated meaning between practitioners observed in the Wenger research, as well as for collective rules and instruments such as the use of PT3 assignment-feedback forms and assignment-monitoring systems. Thus, the individual agency is seen as being practised within a socially constructed activity system.

Engestrom asks whether this makes individuals prisoners of the configuration of the activity system: individuals' possibilities of constructing their own knowledge are reduced to ahistorical situations where, for a passing moment, they are centre stage as the subject of the activity system, 'societally impotent thrill seekers' (Engestrom 2000 p. 304).

Engestrom answers this question by pointing to the internal and external contradictions and disturbances of the activity system. In Engestrom's example of the baseball game, the umpire notices disquiet in the crowd at the ease with which foul balls are being dispatched at critical moments in the game. On investigation, the umpire finds the matches have been fixed for betting purposes. Engestrom sees the umpire crossing the boundaries of the usual role, and beginning to get involved in the historical reorganisation of the entire game of baseball in Finland. Engestrom sees the umpire getting involved in contradictions in the object and rules of the system, i.e. the system being based on competitive sport or as business. Engestrom termed this as the umpires revising their zone of proximal development, constructing new kinds of knowledge, a new instrumentality, a new developmental knowledge.

It would be possible to postulate such a process happening in the example of associate lecturers. Students, having experienced a didactic and directive approach to tutorials, pass their examinations; they then become frustrated at experiencing other tutorial teaching in the following years, and express dissatisfaction, worried they might not be so successful in their exams with more-interactive approaches. One can envisage an associate lecturer investigating this, finding a large number of associate lecturers taking a more-directive approach and trying to come to terms with this by advocating changes to the rules of the activity system in order to make directive approaches less favoured, and to support their more 'student-centred' approaches. This would involve associate lecturers possibly revising their own zones of proximal development and making historical changes to the activity system.

Applying activity system theory to this study would explain the three major trends identified in Chapter 1, namely initiatives in work-based learning, professional development and accreditation, and the growth in part-time portfolio working in terms of contradictions internally or externally to the associate lecturer activity system.

3.7 Associate lecturers within an actor network

This section introduces actor network theory and power relations (Fox p. 863) to illuminate the internal relationships within a community of practice. This is not meant to replace community of practice theory, but rather offers a different way to understand the interactions between communities of practice, how they might influence other communities of practice and how they, in turn, may be influenced from outside the community.

Before exploring actor network theory and power relationships, it is necessary to explain the particular way Foucault uses the concept of power, and how Fox understands this in terms of actor network theory.

3.8 *Power and actor networks*

Fox (2000 p. 860) suggests that, traditionally, 'social' in community of practice theory means the relationships between individual practitioners within the community. Instead of this view, Fox advocates that we think of them as 'force relationships', by which he means the interplay of technology, the objects it handles and changes in knowledge and action, i.e. learning. Learning in this sense is an outcome of a process of local struggle, a struggle that is multifaceted, involving the self acting upon itself, as well as upon others and upon the material world, learning becoming an agonistic struggle.

Power is used to mean a set of power relations that are unequal, local and *in situ*. Power comes from everywhere but it is not a possession, it only manifests itself when used. Foucault (1975 pp. 26–29) points out that the self which acts forcefully upon itself, either by conforming to instructions or resisting them. Force is the way power acts; it is integral to action. Force is tangible, material and active in its operation, not to be confused with an idea of power as will or intent. Fox (2000 p. 859) gives the example of naval novice quartermasters who are subject to both the power and knowledge of their more-experienced colleagues and how additionally the self acts forcefully upon itself, either conforming to instruction or resisting that instruction. The novices must force their memories to remember drill and calculations, and force their eyes to see through telescopes and fathometers. In the case studies, there is evidence of the self acting upon itself within associate lecturer practice. The relationship between novice quartermasters and their more-experienced colleagues is one of close supervision. The novices build up a repertoire of discrete competencies. Once their more-experienced colleagues are satisfied they have mastered the specifics, they are allowed to move on. This is not the type of relationship that we will find and explore in the case studies: the relationships within associate lecturer practice are not predominantly with experienced peers but are built more around students and the organisation.

Seen in this way, networked learning is not automatic, as the network does not exist outside the actions of its independent nodes or actants (actants is used in actor network theory to

allow for inanimate objects, such as the assignment-monitoring system, as well as human actors).

3.9 Power relationships outside of the network

This analysis is useful for this thesis, as it allows us to explore how influences outside of a community, such as accreditation, work-based learning and portfolio working, might be working and how communities or activity systems might be connected via these chains that consist of force relationships, which are momentarily created when an action takes place. This avoids seeing power as being static and in the possession of a certain group, tribe or regime. The make-up of the force relationships will depend on the local and situated nature of the action. This may add to our understanding of why individuals, groups, communities and organisations all react to a certain action (say accreditation) in a unique way, depending on the make-up of the local force relationships.

3.10 Consequential transitions by associate lecturers

Beach (1999 p. 39) sees knowledge-building as a process of consequential transition which, at its core, involves change in the relationships between the individual and one or more social activities across time. All forms of transition involve the construction of knowledge and skills understood as transformative, rather than the application or use of something that has been acquired elsewhere.

Taking the perspective of Beach, one would also expect students and the university to play important part in consequential transition. Beach defines a transition as consequential when it is consciously reflected on, struggled with, and when it shifts the individual's sense of self or social position. That definition is particularly important for this research, as it makes the link between knowledge and identity.

Beach (1999 p. 43) reminds us that these consequential transitions are not changes in the individual or in the social activity *per se*, but rather are changes in their relationship. There are always multiple ways in which that recursive relationship can change.

3.11 Propagation of knowledge

Transitions involve the propagation of knowledge across social space and time, can be embodied through the construction of artefacts and constituted by continuities, discontinuities and contradictions. The implications of Beach's work for this study are that it further illuminates the '*bricoleur*' nature of some associate lecturer practice. For example, the changing nature of the student body means that associate lecturers are faced with ever-changing situations with their students. These situations are sometimes responded to in a consistent way in a practice that can be traced to their espoused beliefs of teaching.

However, they can also resort to practice that seems inconsistent with their espoused beliefs of teaching and carry out practice in a completely contradictory way, which may also shed light on why practice is not merely the implementation of theory, even good theory.

Beach (1999 p. 42) identified four types of consequential transition, and this typology is helpful in building our understanding of associate lecturer practice.

Lateral transitions are the ones that we are most commonly aware of; these occur when individuals move from one activity system to another in a single direction and are generally associated with the notion of some type of progress, for example moving from school to work. The concept of lateral transitions might be useful in understanding the changing relationships that associate lecturers experience as they move into higher education from positions in other sectors or other forms of teaching.

Mediational transitions are seen as educational activities that move individuals from their current position to where they want to be, and are often regarded as being equivalent to Vygotsky's (1978) concept of a zone of proximal development. The major difference is that mediational transitions are accomplished via the use of cultural artefacts. Mediational transitions may give us a clearer understanding of the transition associate lecturers undergo when cultural artefacts are changed. For example, the move to marking scripts via an electronic marking system.

Beach sees collateral transition as individuals relatively simultaneously participating in two or more activities. What is important about 'participating' is that they are building identity in two or more communities and constructing knowledge in many situations. This has important consequences for associate lecturers, and for the growth in portfolio working generally as a trend identified in Chapter 1.

Perceiving knowledge and its construction in terms of consequential transitions changes the nature of the challenge facing associate lecturers and portfolio workers, as demands for their expertise become a matter of being able to operate across various forms of social organisation and involve multiple, interrelated processes rather than a single generalisation, model or theory of practice. The nature of this challenge is quite different from that which would have existed if we had seen knowledge in the positivist sense as being somehow a product that was out there, ready to be consumed.

Beach (1999 p. 45) identifies encompassing transitions as those when individuals are operating within a changing activity system. As we have seen in the broadest sense, all activity systems are changing, even in their maintenance. In this slightly narrower sense, encompassing is experienced by individuals who feel they have to change their practice in order to carry on within the broader structures or social conventions of their activity system.

A possible example of this encompassing transition would be the trend (identified in the introductory chapter) of associate lecturers, and portfolio workers more generally, being required to undergo a form of validation of their professionalism by encouragement to become members of the Higher Educational Academy. Whilst not directly mentioned in the narratives, it would be possible to postulate that associate lecturers would see this accreditation as a necessary change to their social world that would allow them to continue to practise.

3.12 Associate lecturers' occupational identity-building

Wenger (1998 p. 214) argues that communities of practice can become ideal places for learning to take place. The process of mutual engagement, discussed earlier in this chapter, allows for an 'intricate process of constant fine tuning between experience and competence which not only allows learning by newcomers into the community but allows the community to transform insights into knowledge'. Wenger suggests that this strong bond of communal competence and the deep respect for the particularity of experience are ideal conditions for the creation of knowledge. He is in broad agreement with Giddens that learning is not just about the accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming, as learning transforms who we are and what we can do; it is an experience of identity.

This thesis uses the concept of occupational identity-building as a framework to explain the nature of being an associate lecturer at the Open University. Via a two-way reflective process, it offers a way of developing an understanding of how experiences, values, beliefs, discourse and knowledge resources can be moulded together by the occupational identity-building process, and begin to build a more holistic picture of our four research participants.

The case studies explore how the process of occupational identity-building is a continual struggle between the needs of ontological security (helped by tradition and a resulting sense of authenticity) and the need to cope with the pace, scope and profoundness of change in the modern world, with all the resulting uncertainties about what can be regarded as 'truth' and consequent anxieties.

Giddens (1991 p. 75) sees the self as a reflexive project, for which the individual is responsible. 'We are, not what we are, but what we make of ourselves'. Giddens does not see the self as entirely empty of content, for he recognises that there are psychological needs which provide for the parameters for the reorganisation of the self. 'Otherwise, however, what the individual becomes is dependent on the reconstruction endeavours in which she or he engages'. Giddens sees this reconstruction endeavours as bringing about a 'practical

consciousness' in our daily activities, and the building of individual 'cocoons' from which associate lecturers are able to carry on and maintain their practice.

3.13 Overview

Social practice theory allows an integrated approach to be taken to the analysis of professional academic associate lecturer practice at the Open University by placing practice within a social and historical context. Activity, actor network theory and power relationships all move this thesis to a deeper understanding of that practice. Power is seen as a set of local relationships, and learning becomes a struggle over and with these power relationships. It also allows for the consideration of how changes might be brought about by influences outside of the community and how one community might relate to other communities (discussed later in Chapter 9).

This thesis postulates, by a process of mutual engagement, that associate lecturers are able to produce a unique place for themselves in their community, but the dispersed nature of this community is not one of peers but a community which must also involve the organisation of the OU and, importantly, its students in the analysis, as we will see in the following four chapters. The findings in the case studies and the consequences for considering associate lecturers as a dispersed community are analysed in Chapter 8.

This thesis in the following case studies point to evidence of a process of reification, but again this practice is not congealed around practice moulded by mutual negotiation with fellow associate lecturers, but rather moulded under a social context that again includes the organisation and the current student cohort, which is more dependent on the occupational identity-building process and agency of the individual than might be recognised by general social practice theory.

CHAPTER 4 Case Study 1

4.1 Structure of the case studies

In order to structure the analysis of the four case studies and provide continuity for the reader, a common structure was formulated for the studies. Each case study starts with a section on the participant's biography that explores the history of each individual; this is important because, if we regard learning as a process of identity-building, then identity has both a history and a future, and is in a constant state of construction.

The second section on identity allowed for the exploration of the elements that built the narrative of possible self-identities being portrayed by associate lecturers in their practice and possible epistemological positions that underpinned their daily practice. It also afforded an opportunity to see the associate lecturer in the whole, rather than as fragments of practice or personality.

Each participant was asked to create a 'practice cluster' diagram, which is presented in this research at the end of each case study. These practice clusters were developed during the first session with each participant and were revisited during each subsequent session. The participant was asked to describe their major practice activities as an associate lecturer, these descriptions being written up on the spot as spider diagrams. They were then asked to place the activities into clusters and give each activity cluster a name.

The spider diagrams aided reorientation at the beginning of each session; additionally, during the session, if a category of practice had been exhausted for the present and a new spark was required for a new part of practice to come under discussion, the cluster diagrams provided the impetus for starting a new strand of discussion (each spider diagram is printed at the end of each chapter).

These categories, having been defined by the research participants, were subsequently categorised by the researcher into three meta-categories that covered all the activities identified by the participants. These meta-categories are 'Tutorial Teaching', 'Assignments'

and ‘Student Support’; the original participant categories were, however, retained within these meta-categories in order for the reader to have a comprehensive picture of how the categories were arrived at.

After the sections on biography, identity and practice, each case study has a section on knowledge resources, where knowledge is identified in terms of knowledge of people, procedures, systems and policies and knowledge of organisational life and issues. This section allows for the exploration of the impact that the institution of the Open University has on individual associate lecturer practice.

Throughout all of these sections and within each case study, the discourse used by associate lecturers to describe their practice was also analysed.

4.2 Introduction

‘Bill’, having over 40 years of experience in teaching, both as a schoolteacher and as a teacher-trainer lecturer, highlights the dispersed nature of the OU compared with his roles and careers at other institutions.

Bill proved to be an interesting case study, showing how the organisation is still relevant to associate lecturer practice despite the limited nature of human contact with the university. It is very evident that students are the ‘large’ figures in Bill’s practice, and episodes concerning pupils and students are used by Bill, both to build his narrative of occupational self-identity and to give possible indications of implicit teaching theories and embedded routines, partly self-created and partly given by the organisation.

4.3 Biography

Bill was brought up in a working-class area of Wigan, his parents ran the local grocery store and, additionally, his father also worked shifts on the railway. Education was very important to his parents and, with their encouragement, Bill went to the local grammar school where he took ‘O’ and ‘A’ level examinations. Bill did not attend university as he failed his French examination.

Instead, he did two years' National Service with the RAF which, Bill feels, taught him a great deal about mixing with other people. After leaving the RAF, he went to training college and, after two years, gained his teaching certificate. Bill returned to Wigan to teach in the local secondary school, opposite his old primary school, and married a local girl.

In order to advance his career, Bill undertook a part-time BSc degree in Economics. After his degree was finished, he studied full-time at Liverpool Polytechnic, taking a DipEd. This introduced Bill to Educational Sociology, Curriculum Studies and Educational Philosophy.

He taught at a school in Derby for three years and became Head of Department, switching from teaching History to English. He successfully applied to the Irene Marsh College of Physical Education in South Liverpool in 1968, where he stayed for over 20 years.

He applied to teach the Open University Social Science Foundation course in 1970. He was promoted at the Irene Marsh College after two years to Senior Lecturer, and became involved in teaching practice and theory. He was promoted again in 1978, becoming Head of Professional Studies and Principal Lecturer, and developing a new BEd degree; he was subsequently made Course Leader responsible for the college's degree programme and its validation with the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). The Irene Marsh College merged with Liverpool Polytechnic during this period. Bill also undertook a part-time MEd with Liverpool University, his thesis being on the 'Ideology of Partnership between Schools and their Trainee Teachers'.

After retirement, Bill continued to teach on two Open University courses, the Social Science Foundation course and the second-level Environmental Studies course. In 1992/3, he became involved in the associate lecturer panel with the OU, representing associate lecturers at university level.

4.4 Identity

Bill has had a long career in education and it was a strong motivation for him in joining the OU to have access to materials, but particularly important for him was that it was regarded as

higher education. This illustrates that working in the higher educational sector was an important element to the positive self-identity that Bill has constructed of himself; this is certainly the case if we compare it to his somewhat negative views of teaching pupils preparing for examinations:

'By teaching with the OU, I could also get a grip with the materials, good for me, and HE feather in my cap. Yes, the teaching at the OU appealed with social conscience angle but it was as much for me as it was for them.

The joy of learning was missing. I got that with the emotion of seeing real toughies crying at having a story read to them, goes back to being a rebel at school. I can do this but why should I? It was all instrumental to get 'O' and 'A' levels, not for enjoyment. I see students as wells to be sprung rather than buckets to be filled.'

Bill also makes links between his belief of what good teaching is and his own experiences at school which indicates that Bill at least hoped that the 'joy' of learning would be more likely to be found in the higher education sector.

The underpinning theories of teaching matter to Bill, as does the opportunity to put these into teaching practice. Research has identified the importance of teacher's beliefs in influencing current practice; this research supports that view from the evidence of these four case studies, as will be demonstrated in the thematic analysis in Chapter 8. The following narrative suggests that this influence can also come from the wider social and political environments:

'Ken Clarke [then Conservative Education Minister] (rubbished theory). All about how to teach teachers to use presentations and teach properly 'back to basics'. Heart no longer in it, teacher education had taken a nosedive.

Opportunity, at the tutorials at least, to say stop, let's kick some ideas about, a chance to get off the treadmill.'

The need for Bill to maintain control of his tutorials is a possible indication of an implicit theory in action. He returns to this style even though he has a real desire to be more relaxed and experimental with his teaching, a possible conflict between an espoused theory and theory in practice. It is also worth noting how long it has taken for Bill to accept a more-relaxed approach; he needed to experiment and become comfortable with that style himself but the need for control has not gone away – the change had to become authentic for him.

Standards are also important to Bill; getting the job done well and in good time still drives him, and he would be unhappy if he felt that he let himself down by not maintaining these standards: These concerns over standards could be linked to the desire to have a professional higher educational status, which any perceived slippage in standards might damage. The feeling of actually running the course on behalf of the OU could be an indication of the considerable agency and independence Bill has over his practice.

'Like to turn them round as feels important, try to meet day's turnaround. The longer they have to mull over my comments the better, before the next one. If I put myself into a learner's position, they need my comments.'

When the job is done, I can relax; it's the work ethic, I would feel uneasy otherwise.

Feels like I am running the course, things done always in advance, has to go like clockwork, set high standards for others therefore set high standards for myself. If you don't keep up with it, you will lose it. Anna [Bill's second wife] thinks I am controlling.'

These narratives show that, in addition to being part of higher education, having a professional status and, as such, meeting certain standards and being part of a professional set-up, is important to Bill's positive narrative of himself. The OU, in part, provides this professional environment and thus, in subtle ways, may also influence practice, in what is increasingly looking like a dispersed community.

4.5 Practice

During the first session with Bill, we discussed the tangible things that he did as an associate lecturer, as a starting point to establishing 'Practice Clusters'; these would be the focus for future discussion sessions based around practice.

The categories identified by Bill accords well with Giddens' (1976) definition of behaviour which is recurrent or routine, i.e. which happens on a day-to-day basis and is embedded in the habits of normal life, discussed in Chapter 2.

Tutorial teaching

When describing giving a tutorial, Bill explained how the planning had changed over his career; these narratives indicate that Bill does not hold one teaching belief or one conception of what constitutes 'good' teaching, but has a range of strategies within his repertoire:

'At the start of my career, tutorials were rigidly planned, lack of confidence, as time went on, more confident and the flexibility increased. I can now customise and play things up or down depending on the audience, being responsive to individuals. Much more prepared to deviate and take on their agenda. Previously, because I was not confident, I left it to the pre-devised plan.

Never did much presentations, don't give mini-lecture. Break them into small groups. Students were travelling enormous distances around the Lake District. So I felt I had to make it really good, study centre was a new venue so opportunity to do something fresh. So began asking them to produce flipcharts as a response to questions. More satisfying for them and having to produce a chart makes them more task-orientated and gives them a learning prompt.'

Bill is illustrating his ability to move along the continuum of what might be seen as a more 'teacher-focused' conception to more 'student-focused' conception by asking them to produce work on flipcharts in response to questions. Bill puts the reasons for this ability down to increased experience and confidence.

Bill also described a sensitivity to his students' needs, both at individual and group level, which further develops the concepts of studentship being constructed by Bill, and demonstrates the importance of historical episodes involving students in creating Bill's world view:

'I usually know my group; I can usually tell if a group is working well. They don't seem dead in their faces, glazed over, but chatting and on-task and discussing subject with enthusiasm; they are not putting on an act for me. If not, I gently ask what the problem is and try to offer justification for the task. Sometimes, I get the feeling that they are not really understanding and sudden deflation when it becomes obvious they have not learnt and you are not connected. Sensitive when I feel I am not making connections. Use 'little strategies' in my repertoire, learning from experience, having empathy with individuals, you set different scales of achievement for each. Make connections between those attending tutorials and assignments.'

This shows that the tutorial is an emotional experience for Bill, with highs and lows. It shows that he is trying to be constantly in tune with his tutorial group, and individuals within that group, looking for evidence that learning is taking place, that his students are engaged with the material and with the tasks he has set them. This indicates that any intense sustained mutual engagement as referred to in community of practice theory, in this dispersed community, also includes engagements between Bill and his students. The activities undertaken by Bill do not seem to have a tight, interconnected nature referred to in community practice theory and the different understandings of what might constitute a tutorial have not gone through a process of peer mutual negotiation of meaning.

There seems to be a tension between wishing to have some control over what is happening and the desire to 'let go' and see what happens, to be more spontaneous. This could be a further indication of the reflexive process referred to by Giddens (1991), which is the process by which continuous narrative of oneself is developed. It could also illustrate the space that

has been negotiated between Bill and the organisation, which allows him this flexibility in his teaching.

When describing his early teaching career, Bill is able, after more than 30 years, to recall vividly experiences that still influence his teaching today; research has shown that these episodes are important both as the raw material for establishing your own continuous narrative of self-identity and in validating what is regarded as 'good' teaching theory that can be authenticated in everyday practice.

'Became Head of Department in Derby in 1965. Next Headmaster was a little Hitler. Switched from History to teaching English, as teaching 'O' level history was boring. Wanted to teach non-examinable pupils which suited English Department as Headmaster and Deputy took examinable English pupils. Felt it was hardest: if you could cope with non-examinable kids, you could really teach – I had got my hands dirty. New Headmaster did not like how English was being taught, for example improvised drama sessions. "Never trust children" from little Hitler, ruined a good school in two years. Summed up with quote "Never smile until Christmas". Appalled by one incident when found teacher in next classroom crouched in the cupboard fearful of his class. Promised myself this would never happen to me.'

Experiences, beliefs and motivations can be seen as creating contradictions within practice, but they may also bring about balance. In this particular case study, a balance between the desire to control and manage situations and the desire to experiment and be spontaneous, can be demonstrated with these two contrasting accounts of teaching style:

'Anxious to establish control, authoritarian teacher for 8–10 years, then eased off and then became easier in your style as you became confident.

You start with what they know and take them from there. Present them with ideas, but give them tasks, problem-solving so they become more independent. I became hooked on this. Social Science courses at the Open University did the same thing, teaching

through subjects they are interested in, such as vandalism or street crime.

Opportunity, at the tutorials at least, to say stop, let's kick some ideas about, a chance to get off the treadmill.'

There is a possible implicit theory about the nature of teaching; teaching for examinations is too instrumental and, if one really wanted to prove oneself as a teacher, one needed to do so in the context of non-examinable students.

Bill sees part of his role as to demystify and make connections between what his students are interested in and the academic content of the courses, acting as a type of motivator to keep them studying and enjoying their course. The discourse therefore tries to be authentic by remaining connected, but is also democratic, in the sense of trying to make the academic content accessible to all his students; this prevents his language becoming too erudite.

This illustrates how Bill is constructing for himself a sense of 'studentship'; there is a sense in which he is trying to build on the concepts already held by his students. There is a possible implicit theory that 'understanding' is something a person does in their head; it involves mental representations created by individuals. It is essentially a cognitive theory with a practical outcome of trying to relate course concepts to a context where his students will hopefully be able to make connections with what they already know.

Assignments

Bill saw marking assignments as a major component of the associate lecturer role. One spell of marking lasts between two and two-and-a-half hours, which would complete three or four assignments, and Bill's maximum ration for the day is around six, so it takes about three days to mark the whole group.

Bill has Student Notes about the assignment and Tutor Notes provided by the OU Course Team; these give some guidance on what material should be included in the assignment and what, in the Course Team's view, constitutes a good, average or poor mark. These could be regarded as cultural artefacts, but there is no evidence that these artefacts are used as part of

a negotiated enterprise; there is no interconnection or sense that these artefacts are used as part of a joint enterprise. It is not that these artefacts are used differently by each associate lecturer that is so surprising but that their use is, to a large degree, left to the agency of the individual with some negotiated influence from the organisation.

If marking assignments is more than a mechanistic process of applying the Tutor and Student Notes, the following dialogue with Bill shows some of the additional facets of assignment marking that may be involved. Bill creates routines, both in preparing himself for assignment marking and feedback and in the actual process. This routinisation does not make the process unskilled – it allows space for unplanned, conscious and intensive thought and action:

‘With the scripts I have just marked, the good ones argue from different viewpoints and perspectives and use different tools to probe more deeply than the layman opinion. Environmental Studies can encourage you to regurgitate from newspapers or repeat what they have heard in the pub, with no evidence offered, all piffle.

Looking for real understanding and position taken, either from the course or some other authoritative source; others do this but don’t link to the general arguments they have used. That to me is applying and reasoning it through, to come to some conclusion.’

Bill is able to construct for himself a broad idea of what he is looking for in each student assignment. This is important as, again, it shows how he is constructing his own concept of studentship, an internal struggle for him. He wishes to offer a fresh start for his students but is conscious of preconceptions of what a particular student might be capable of producing; in a sense, it is a struggle against an image of a student created by past exam results and the standard of previous work. He describes this as:

‘I get a mental picture about this particular topic, what material they should be using, making myself mental notes. When I come to mark, then I use these mental notes. Broad view of what that question is expecting in terms of student understanding.

Sometimes you have to revise these mental notes because a student comes from a completely different angle, which I may feel is valid. I don't have a mental picture of the student beforehand and, sometimes, I think I should have.'

This is not a description of some mechanistic unskilled process, rather a routine that allows for the unsuspected, and a state of mind that is free to concentrate on the student's work, free from the burdens of concerns about the actual function.

Bill describes the impressions he has of his students before starting the marking process; this is of interest as it holds the possibility that preparation for particular tasks can also go through a process of routinisation:

'Impressions of students is fuzzy at the start: I usually look at prior course history, looking for courses in the same discipline area. Some students reply to introductory letter. Usually find a high correlation between previous history and their performance on this course. You hope you will be pleasantly surprised but usually stays at a level. I do however guard against the 'halo effect'. Only too glad to give a good mark if they do a good piece of work. Preconditions as you approach their work but open-minded about this piece of work. For example, a repeat student who was getting 40 regularly, I was able to give 65 to this year.'

During this conversation with Bill, there were considerable indications that the routinisation of tacit knowledge in the process of marking had gone even deeper into his practice:

'Choose one from the batch, for example someone at the tutorial who seemed to be talking good sense. It gives you confidence that you have perceived it in the same way as the students. I gave 90 to this student and that was my model. I want a gentle start to the process and marking a good essay is a gentle way in. I can't face bad ones at the onset; one good one at the start helps you to get going and fix things in your mind. When you have the courage, you go for what you may feel is a bad one. Reassured though that my preconceptions may have to be rethought. Then I have to re-read it

and you start to get self-doubt. I have been really pleased when someone with dismal work suddenly gets good.

Then just keep ploughing on. Mark three or four in one spell (2 to 2½ hours), then I feel I need a rest from it. Ration for the day is about six, so three days to get through the group.

Irksome bit is those who have [assignment submission date] extensions, having to go back, it's messy and hangs on a bit.

Take the PT3 and give an overall impression, using the OU sandwich, something positive, then pick out the things that let it down; might be generic about referencing, arguments or structure, usually three or four things to work on for the next Tutor Marked Assignment (TMA). I often say 'even so a good piece of work', with these strengths and try to explain the grade. More often than not, I use multiples of five for my marking, lower 80s is not a First but is very good for a first assignment to mark, everything you are looking for, everything that could be reasonably included.'

Reading this description of marking student assignments, a rhythm to the process can be inferred; there is routine, but also a desire to use all available experience to allow the student's work to shine and gain the maximum marks possible. There is a willingness to be pleasantly surprised, but also a frustration at those who disturb the rhythm and routine by submitting late.

The description of assignment marking indicates some tacit rules that Bill has constructed for himself, followed as part of the routinisation of assignment marking. These give a type of structure to the routine, the amount of time set aside for each assignment, the number to mark in each session, using marks in multiples of five, starting with a good one and building yourself up for a bad one in order to construct some benchmarks and keeping control of late assignments, which acts as a way of not having the routine disturbed too much and creating a sense of anxiety about losing control.

Although the marking of student assignments is in some ways a very individualistic and personal activity, as with tutorials it is an emotional event for the tutor, with highs and lows and feelings of self-doubt. It also has features of being an institutional and collective activity. As can be seen below, Bill is influenced by the institution, a type of remote surveillance by the organisation and by the ways he perceives that some of his peers might be undertaking the marking task:

‘Over the year, you give one or two pieces of work 100 and no-one has ever disputed this, the Course Team or Monitor. I do look at the standardisation reports for my consistency in my marking and it shows that I do use the full range of marks.’

The OU provides a number of artefacts associated with the assignment-marking process, including the PT2 form for recording assignment marks and PT3 form for giving feedback to the student on the assignment. Additionally, the Course Team provides notes on the assignment for students, and tutor notes for associate lecturers.

However, the use of these tutor notes is adapted by Bill in his practice. He does not ignore the advice provided by the Course Team in the use of the artefact; however, there does not appear to be any mutual engagement between associate lecturers to come to a mutual understanding of how to use the artefact. This tends to suggest a joint enterprise between the university and individual associate lecturers, rather than a joint enterprise engaged in by a number of associate lecturers collectively.

‘Tutor notes have an indicative structure, with arguments and concepts that might be included. I may have to look at this if I feel unsure. Between 40–54 band, 55–70 and 85–100 usually OK; 40–54 and 55–70 that may need this referral to tutor notes.’

This illustrates how artefacts, even those provided by the organisation, become adapted by the individual associate lecturer; it seems that the artefact is made part of practice, in a more individual sense, rather than in a communal sense as part of a community of practice, as suggested by Lave and Wenger (1991).

Student support

The language Bill uses to describe his practice is very balanced, and delivered in a very thoughtful and calm way. His emphasis on certain things that are important to him is achieved by careful elaboration and examples, rather than raising the pitch of his voice or becoming forceful.

Bill is looking for his students to be able to argue from different standpoints but also to weigh up those standpoints and to take a position of their own from the evidence from each perspective. This 'liberal tradition' of education also characterises the discourse used. He often discusses issues in a way that is searching for balance and from a sense of both rights and responsibilities.

For example, when explaining the 'Mother Hen' practice cluster:

'Wary of being too proactive, not wishing to be a pain; grown-up mature students, if you have a problem don't hesitate to contact me (all explained in introductory letter).

Don't want to do a lot of chasing, being too school ma'amish.

Timing of assignments is a big issue with associate lecturers, as it upsets AL schedules; they are juggling a lot of demands, tend to be weaker than would like, would like to take a harder line.

I have even contacted previous associate lecturer to point out how leniency makes it difficult for future associate lecturers.'

The evidence that Bill has contacted other associate lecturers may show that a community of practice is working, but in a different way to the 'intense mutual negotiation' witnessed by Wenger (1998) and his medical claim processors.

Bill is constructing for himself his own sense of pastoral support. He is keen to make sure that his students understand his availability, but is equally keen to create a space between himself and his students. The space prevents the relationships between tutor and students

from becoming overwhelming, and is maintained by implicit rules on the level and content of the contact. The rules are justified by a belief that he is dealing with mature students who have the ability to avail themselves of support when and if they need it, without his proactive intervention, which is, in itself, a possible indication of an implicit theory of what constitutes pastoral care of students.

There is still a need for control that comes out in the discourse and a fear that, by bending rules, things will get out of control and standards slip. He is concerned that students need a certain amount of rigour and discipline in order to achieve, and he would not be helping them by doing otherwise.

‘Once put a “L” in the assignment box because student had been very late for every TMA without asking and felt I would be lying if allowed last assignment which was double-weighted, so chances for student very slim. Felt disturbed for a long time but felt there was a limit. Instructions urged you not to let other associate lecturers down by not playing by the rules but left a bad taste.’

It is possible to describe Bill as experiencing the ‘post-modern’ condition in his practice, even though he did not articulate it in this way. His early background and experience of teaching gave him a traditional epistemological standpoint, with the wish to be in control. However, there has also always been a tension within him to be more relaxed and radical in his teaching. This is a reminder that often beliefs, values and practice do not always run in parallel, but form a complex mix that generates tensions within the individual and their practice.

The complexities of the ‘post-modern’ condition are shown with Bill’s revelation that traditional ideas of knowledge do not provide all the insights we need to have a better understanding of the world.

'There aren't any certainties. Used to think Psychology was the bee's knees, it would tell me how people tick, but it does not, it only gives inkling. We have to be pretty humble about this, there are no magic wands.'

In the language Bill uses, there is a degree of functionalism, a stress on the practical application and the tasks that need to be completed. Things like late assignments, therefore, become a considerable irritant, as they stop completion of a task.

The term 'Mother Hen' as a metaphor creates a picture of Bill having to chase up students, 'clucking' around them in order to get tasks completed. Although 'Mother Hen' may seem like a male-prejudiced metaphor, there are no chauvinistic tendencies in Bill's discourse. Although sometimes an irritant, he is prepared to take on these more pastoral duties which have traditionally been associated with the female gender.

Bill's discourse displays concern for not divorcing the academic content of the course from ordinary or familiar conversation. So, whilst expecting his students (and himself) to understand and use theory to explain issues, he is willing to use colloquial words to make sure he stays connected to his audience, for example, 'little Hitler', 'school ma'amish', 'bee's knees' and 'I have got my hands dirty'.

4.6 Knowledge resources

Knowledge of people

Contact with other colleagues in the OU is very limited, with the exception of the activities Bill undertakes as representing associate lecturers on the university panel, which would support the notion that associate lecturers are operating in a dispersed community:

'Very little togetherness as associate lecturers, very isolated; it's about doing the job from your home, with support, and with the tools to do the job.'

Speak to staff tutor at the beginning of the course about number of students to be allocated and tutorial venues.

Different at Liverpool, as bigger student numbers, so about four associate lecturers teaching the same course, so we knew each other and even done some joint teaching sessions.

Community is an illusion. I don't think the OU has to strive in this direction, community was not part of the motivation for joining the OU.

Even with the panel work, the panel feels remote from the rest of associate lecturers.

Summer Schools were a point of contact for meeting other associate lecturers and central academics, attended these for 10 years, so really felt part of what was going on.

Now contact is via associate lecturers' panel, national conference, Senate, Quality Standards Board and work on student feedback system.

Mentored a few associate lecturers and occasionally still meet if tutorials are at the same time and place. Social Science weekend in Carlisle and cross-faculty residential in Collingwood.

When we meet we usually start conversation with:

Have you heard about this?

How long have you been with the OU?

Have you got a decent group size?

Discuss new contract;

Discuss late assignments or electronic assignment marking.'

There is evidence here of a type of community of practice with the contacts Bill makes through the national conference and Quality Standards Board. However the nature of these contacts with others illustrates their dispersed and limited nature in terms of intensity and frequency. There is some evidence that there was more opportunity for peer interaction when

Bill was at Liverpool. This might suggest social interaction may be increased when employed in areas that can support larger student groups or number of groups in one location, such as a city. The level of participation is at its most intensive when dealing with students. Bill laments the loss of Residential Schools, where he felt a closer sense of community. It is not a necessary condition for a community of practice for participants to meet physically: they can engage by email, telephone or correspondence. However, what is necessary is for this to allow for an intense mutual engagement and negotiation of meanings about the joint enterprise. The descriptions of Bill's tutorial, assignment and student support practice give an impression of more individualistic activities, negotiated with the organisation and the wider social world.

Knowledge of procedures, systems and policies

From the evidence above, it is clear that Bill has knowledge of his contractual position with the OU, and provides evidence of knowledge of procedures required to maintain that position as the course comes to an end to be replaced by a new one.

The conversations with Bill demonstrate a richness of opinions and beliefs about Bill's ontological view of the world and his epistemological standpoints. For example, he clearly sees the comments he makes on assignments as a large and very important part of his teaching. Furthermore, he is setting himself expectations, and expectations for his students, laying out for them when best to contact him and the schedule he will operate for assignments. There is an important autonomy for Bill about the dates of tutorials being set to suit him, but also fundamental educational aspects, such as them not being scheduled too close to assignment deadlines, in the hope this will stop the tutorials being dominated by the next piece of assessment.

'Wait until I have marked five and send them off, it is a nice sense of closure and it's good for the students to get them back smartish. TigerPotts (assignment turnaround report) rate is very rapid five to six days, when average is 14 days.'

This illustrates how he believes a quick assignment turnaround is important for the student and helps them benefit from his remarks, but equally this was said with a sense of pride.

As well as this overview of the course and his role in it, Bill also revealed detailed knowledge of procedures and the consequences of his practice for students, such as the incident described in the early stages of placing an 'L' [late submission without prior permission] in the assignment mark. He was aware that this was likely to fail the student as it was the last assignment, which was double-weighted, and the student needed a good grade to pass the continuous assessment associated with the course.

It is possible that the importance of a quick turnaround has come from the espoused documentation of the organisation, or at least that these beliefs have been reinforced in this way, or perhaps that all this has come together as part of the reflexive process.

However, despite some feelings of isolation and of running the course for the OU, the university does have a presence within Bill's practice. He is aware of and engages with the standardisation reports of the assignment-marking process; not so much anxious about the reports as a type of associate lecturer policing exercise, but pleased that the standardisation confirms his marking practice, confirms that his marks have not been challenged and that he uses the full range of marks.

This makes an interesting contrast to the view of standardisation expressed later in case study 2, where practice in marking was not confirmed by the standardisation process. This is interesting not only in how influences from the organisation can be received both positively and negatively, but as an example of how an organisation can still operate a type of control via surveillance across a widely dispersed community of associate lecturers.

Bill has a deep knowledge of the espoused rules of the OU and is able to weave these into his practice; however, as illustrated in the section on assignments, many of the rules that provide a structure to his practice are created by Bill, and are often carried out implicitly, which

demonstrates the highly situated nature of much of this knowledge, ie situated in the doing of the activity (Lave and Wenger 1991).

Knowledge of organisational life and issues

Bill is aware of organisational issues within the OU, but able to make links between this organisational context and his own individual practice. The following narratives show how an organisation such as the OU is still able to influence a dispersed community of associate lecturers. The organisation is certainly still influential in the sense offered by Giddens (1991) in Chapter 3, and is powerful in the Foucault (1975) sense (see Section 3.8), but the way this influence and power manifest themselves is often unique to the dispersed nature of the organisation:

'Retention, worried about it, at what cost? You have to have some standards. Goes back to Polytechnic days, when a student was pushed through by senior staff. I had a similar student and therefore did the same thing. Principal angry, saying it had made them look foolish. I said, well you should not do foolish things.'

This demonstrates a worry that retention rates will be improved at the cost of educational standards, and a worry that the OU will not be in a situation to preserve these standards. Again, this may relate to the self-identity narrative constructed by Bill, with the importance he places on being part of a well-respected professional organisation in the higher educational sector.

There is a sense of anxiety over the increasing use of information technology in associate lecture practice, another possible area for negotiation between associate lecturers and the organisation. It is of interest, as this is one area in which some mutual negotiation has happened between associate lecturers, at least in terms of an initial reluctance of them to operate on a totally electronic basis. However, even in this example, considerable individual agency is being shown with the way in which associate lecturers are incorporating email and

the TutorHome website into their practice; this is a continuous ongoing process of negotiation with the organisation:

'Accepted students use the internet but have I changed my practice?'

At this point, Bill pointed to the personal computer sitting in the corner of the study and explained:

'What I need is help with that thing sitting in the corner!'

This revealed anxiety, both about not being to use the technology, and the need to put it to better use within his practice. This may also indicate a rejection of the organisation as being over-influential in an area of practice that Bill felt was his to organise and control. For example, the possibility of round-the-clock email student contact would require considerable adjustment to his implicit rules and procedures. It may also demonstrate how the sense of marginality can be used to engender a type of 'Dunkirk' spirit against what is seen as the wishes of the organisation.

Although contact and conversations with academic colleagues are infrequent, the academic context still has an influence on Bill's practice. He expects his students to follow academic norms in their written assignments by using the language and theories of the course and of the discipline, and to offer a breadth of several perspectives and interpretations showing a degree of open-mindedness. It is also plausible, in this dispersed community of associate lecturers, that such academic norms have come from a wider community rather than from a community of associate lecturer practitioners.

Bill is aware that his marking is being monitored by the OU and the confirmation that his marking meets institutional standards is important to him. It does act as a type of validation of his assignment-marking practice. This is possibly a further example of organisation surveillance in the Giddens (1991) sense but is postulated in a much more positive way in this example, as a confirmation of current practice.

4.7 Summary

Bill has created a continuous narrative of himself in the Giddens (1991) sense, one of a professional higher educational lecturer, who is keen to be associated with an organisation that is regarded as maintaining educational standards.

In many ways, the OU provides the ‘social propositions’ (Lave and Wenger 1991) and the cultural model for Bill to be able to create this professional higher educational lecturer identity. It provides the social standing and legitimacy to call himself both a professional and a lecturer and, in return, sets certain social norms. A way of demonstrating this is to imagine Bill setting himself up as an independent environmental teacher, with the considerable barriers of legitimacy he would have to overcome in order to be successful.

The case study illustrates a high degree of agency available to Bill both in the use of artefacts of his practice and in the establishment of routines and procedures. The organisation is still able to influence practice despite the dispersed nature of associate lecturers and there is evidence of a type of continuous negotiation between Bill and the organisation on the nature of his practice; there is little evidence, however, of the type of intense mutual engagement associated with communities of practice.

Studentship

Bill constructs a view of OU students as being mature adults with whom he can engage in order to make learning ‘fun’, an enjoyable experience both for tutor and students. He maintains a space between himself and his students by creating implicit rules for his practice and by maintaining a sense of control.

There is an internal struggle within this narrative between the need for control and a desire to be more relaxed; this struggle manifests itself in late submissions of assignments and in the desire to give each a student a ‘blank canvas’ to prove themselves against the previous experience and education of his students.

Rules and procedures are important to Bill, as they provide that sense of control of his practice and allow him to maintain a space between his associate lecturer role and the rest of his being. However, this is not a stable state and is part of the continuous negotiation between individual and organisation. For example, as this research was being written, all associate lecturers on a Level 2 Science course were contacted and strongly requested that they tighten up the acceptance of late assignments; this may result in associate lecturers changing their practice or instead rejecting this recommendation.

Bill demonstrates a cognitive view of knowledge, with an important role for himself of making new knowledge accessible to his students, by a type of 'scaffolding', building on the previous knowledge of his students. This view is consistent with the interpretation of Vygotsky's work that knowledge is best seen as the distance between understood knowledge (as provided by instruction), active knowledge (as owned by individuals), and the argument that mature concepts are achieved when everyday and scientific versions have merged. Certainly, Bill is aware of his subject, Environmental Studies, being discussed by some students in the vernacular and not being subjected to academic rigour, which he is keen for his students to introduce to their studies.

Pastoral care

Bill has constructed a view of pastoral care of his students that sees them as mature adults, with the ability to make use of him when they need to. He is anxious not to be seen as being too proactive and interfering too much with his students. This relates to a belief in an overall goal of creating independent learners, a view he gains support for from the organisation.

In our conversations, student support did not feature as strongly as tutorials or assignment handling; this may have been a manifestation of the above beliefs and it is interesting that electronic communication was a possible cause of concern, being seen as possibly upsetting the balance and narrative Bill had constructed.

Community

Bourdieu (1979) creates a vision of a community of practice as a conductorless orchestra, and regulation without rules, embodied practices and cultural dispositions concerted in class habits. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue for theorising in terms of practice, or *praxis*, that requires a broad view of human agency, emphasising the integration in practice of agent, world and activity (Bourdieu 1979; Ortner 1984; Bauman 1973). Therefore, given these definitions of community and practice, it is not sufficient to argue that associate lecturers do not belong to a community of practice because of the limited nature of communications between themselves and other academic communities. We have seen indications of embodied practices and even class habits, but evidence in this research would suggest they have been created in an environment where agency has played a more dominant role, rather than the more cultural embodied rules and procedures produced by a more closely knit community of practice as described by Lave and Wenger (1991).

Lave and Wenger (1991) emphasise the inherently socially negotiated character of meaning, the interested, concerned character of the thought and action of persons-in-activity, and that learning, thinking and knowing are relations among people in activity in, with, and arising from the socially and cultured structured world. Applying this definition to this case study would suggest that major negotiations and activities are between the associate lecturer and his/her students, and not associate lecturer to associate lecturer. This may be a facet generally of the occupation of teaching. However, Tait (2002 p. 10) has suggested the lack of peer socially negotiated meaning might be more pronounced at the Open University, as a result of the 'divided worlds' of course production and course presentation. By using Engestrom's activity theory, Tait suggests that the object of the associate lecturer activity system is student learning, whereas the object of 'central academic teams as they design courses is a course for student learning'.

Another important concept in community of practice theory is participation. Given this relational understanding of person, world and activity, knowledge can neither be fully

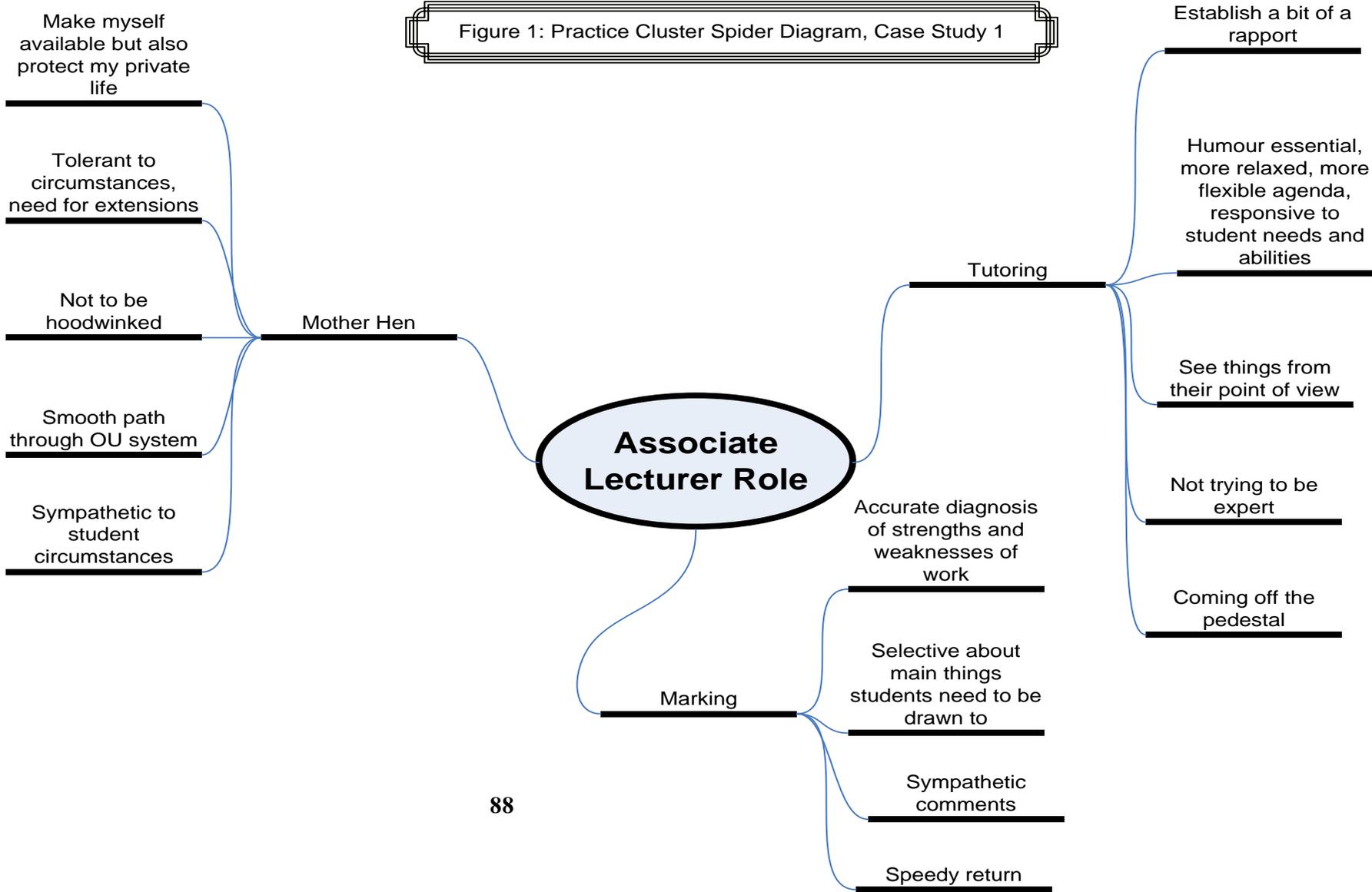
internalised as structures nor fully externalised as instrumental artefacts or overarching activity structures. Participation is seen as situated negotiation and renegotiations of meaning in the world, and understanding and experience are in constant interaction, mutually constitutive. We have evidence of this type of interaction between understandings and experience, and the struggles for understanding that these interactions bring about within Bill. However, the evidence for participation would again be between students and Bill, and major negotiation or renegotiations happen primarily between these two.

As we have seen, Bill does create a space between himself and his students; in terms of pedagogy, he possibly sees his students as 'cognitive entities' and, to some extent, promotes a non-personal view of knowledge, skills, tasks, activities and learning. However, in other ways he does take a personal view of his practice, with the images of his students he creates when assignment marking and the general views of students he holds as mature adults who are able to access both him as a resource, when required, and other resources.

Community of practice theory also sees the community as creating the curriculum for members to engage with, which manifests itself in opportunities for engagement in practice; a space is generated for the learner of 'benign community neglect' in which the learner has to individually organise their own learning 'curriculum' and recruit teaching or guidance for themselves. There is evidence in this case study that would support this analysis.

Just as associate lecturers see their students as whole people, it is also necessary to see associate lecturers themselves in the whole, their biography, identity, beliefs and knowledge resources. This results in having a better understanding that their practice, activities, tasks, functions and understandings do not exist in isolation, but are part of systems of relationships. The question remains whether this is a community of practice when discussing the dispersed nature of ALs. Is a different type of community being created or are there more revealing ways of describing these particular dispersed relationships, such as networks?

Figure 1: Practice Cluster Spider Diagram, Case Study 1



CHAPTER 5 Case Study 2

5.1 Introduction

The following case study of 'Norman' is intriguing because, in many respects, it is very different from the other three case studies. The narrative of self-identity is grounded in the business world, and it is the world of business consultancy that he wishes to be associated with. The organisation figures larger in this case study than in the other three; in some respects, Norman treats the Open University as one of his client organisations, the difference being, in Norman's view, that they are not listening and, therefore, failing as a competitive organisation. The dispersed nature of the OU is strongly emphasised, with Norman painting a self-portrait of an autonomous lecturer, having to stand on his own two feet and relying on his own inner resources. He admits to being didactic in his teaching, and justifies this in organisational terms; he has well-developed embedded routines which, he believes, help him through the chaos caused by a badly managed organisation.

5.2 Biography

Norman went to grammar school in Leeds, was successful with his examinations, achieving 12 'O' levels and 3 'A' levels in History, French and English. He was required to take an entrance exam for Cambridge, which meant doing a year at work at Steel Forge offices. He subsequently graduated from Cambridge in 1973 and married. After obtaining an MA from Warwick, he started a PhD, but was distracted from studies by undergraduate teaching. After 18 months, he went to Manchester Polytechnic to teach Politics, Public Administration and Organisational Theory, and became more and more involved in management.

'1973 graduated, got married, Warwick for MA, living in a listed building. Started PhD but got distracted with undergraduate teaching; after 18 months, buzzed off to Manchester Polytechnic, teaching Politics, Public Administration, Organisational Theory and more and more into management. IPM awarded, no promotional prospects, 1982 escaped to BT as management trainer in London.'

In 1982, he joined BT in London as a management trainer, to improve promotional prospects. BT had just been privatised but he still had to sign up to the Official Secrets Act:

'Everything was re-organised: was promoted twice. Head of Division with a budget of £6m with salaries of £43m. It was a mess, turned it around, everyone thought I was 'dog's bollocks' but reorganised again and forgot.'

Norman took on several internal consultancy projects with BT, such as quality management and the leadership programme. BT then decided to downsize the Human Resources Division, and Norman switched into Global Communications, working subsequently in Singapore and Tanzania. He then moved to Greenwich and De Montfort Universities to teach Industrial Relations and Personnel Management. In this narrative, there is a sense in which Norman believes that the organisation, in this instance BT, did not adequately recognise his contribution to its development, and one can sense the same feeling towards the OU. This might be a response to the growing importance of organisations in modernity, as referred to by Giddens (1976).

In 1998, Norman joined a consultancy based in Surrey as a Senior Consultant; he has been with them ever since and is now Principal Consultant. Norman enjoys the work, does not have to commute to Surrey and has good clients.

He is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, a Principal Member of the Association of Business Psychologists and a Registered Occupational and Personality Test Administrator and Counsellor. Norman has had books published as well as academic articles, and has presented at a number of conferences. This is important as it gives him a sense of legitimacy outside of the OU, and reinforces the narrative of self-identity which comes from the consultancy business world.

Norman became an associate lecturer at the same time as joining the consultancy in 1998. He had already studied with the OU, finishing his Management Diploma in 1988 and his MBA

in 1996; this is important as the self-confidence and self-esteem to enter the academic world has come from being a member of the business consultancy community:

'I am a lecturer: I can do this job. I know the OU from the receiver end; back in the business world I can bring into teaching what is happening in the world. Unique combination, being an OU student, lecturer and in business.'

Norman taught the MBA Foundation course B800, and teaches and examines the Human Resources course for the OU; he believes he is adding an authenticity to the academic world by still being a member of the business consultancy community.

5.3 Identity

Norman makes a clear distinction between what happens as part of his associate lecturer role with the OU, and what he regards as the 'real' world.

He sees himself as part of the real world of consultants who are actively engaged in making change happen; he views his associate lecturer role as bringing this world of business into the studies of his students and it is the membership of the business consultancy world that adds to his positive narrative of self-identity, rather than his being an associate lecturer:

'Examples of 'real world' parts are numerous – what actual competency frameworks look like, actual problems with appraisal, why training and development policy and evaluation do not work, what real OD is like when you go through it and run it etc.

The learning is going, not by making them play discussion and presentation games, but by the clarification of the course materials and the actual subject matter. They have no-one to explain and apply them as they would in tutorials and lectures if they were full-time.'

Norman explains this very succinctly by describing the OU world as an inner circle that benefits from his activity and experience of operating in a much wider circle of the business world; again, this reinforces his narrative of self-identity by seeing this 'bigger circle' adding value to the OU process and providing legitimacy to his role:

'I am looking at a circle of knowledge. I know the course units but that's only a small part of the subject. It's the bigger circle of the subject that I am operating in. It's this bigger circle of the subject that allows me to tend to the smaller circle of the course. I can make the smaller circle work because I know the bigger circle.

This is what a lot of associate lecturers are withdrawing from: they are no longer practitioners, so they no longer understand the bigger circle.

Students recognise this, I am offering consultancy on the cheap. Instead of relying on OU case studies, I can say I have been working with Unilever and they dealt with it like this. Do you want to see it, here it is. Students then know that I know what I am talking about.

I really felt in tune with the wider circle when working with consultants in Russia. These are really switched-on people, they had battled against the OU system, but these are the minority of those the OU use. They have also ruled them out of the OU world because of the pay and the original enjoyment had gone. Attrition because of so much drudge. This is going to be a problem down the track because there is no cadre of quality academics for the future: who are we going to be with exactly?'

Norman gains legitimacy and aligns himself with the business world and is annoyed that this business acumen is not appreciated by the OU's Business School. He sees those with this acumen being forced out by a faceless bureaucratic system, and the whole operation being left to those who only want to operate in what Norman sees as a small circle of the OU course units. In terms of community of practice theory, there seems to be a struggle going on as to which community Norman feels he is serving. This is important in relation to portfolio workers and their ability, or inability, to belong to a number of communities of practice; it could be possible they have an intensity of belonging that is different to each.

'Dealing with real bastards, you really have to fight for your own credibility; most academics would not stand a chance. Consultants I worked with in Russia had been an operational manager, senior manager in Marks and Spencer and another an expert in local government: they know their stuff, they have been around, one now running MBA programme in Coventry. Total contempt for OU procedures, rejected by the OU because he tried to put the associate lecturer case in recent associate lecturer contract negotiations. Associate lecturers minority in OUBS, so associate lecturers will not get anywhere. So the OU will continue to fail, as it tolerates mediocrity, tolerates poor monitoring, poor leadership etc.'

Norman has a perception of OU Business School students that conjures up a picture of hard-pressed students whose motivation is to get a qualification as quickly as possible in order to advance their own careers. There is no place in this picture for concepts such as 'deep' learning, and he believes that, given how the OU system has been set up, there is little point in trying to introduce them.

Norman sees the fact of the OU not treating its students as customers as a weakness, removing some of their rights of redress for poor service that they would have had in the marketplace.

There is also a sense of Norman fighting the OU system in order to try to preserve standards that he sees as being under threat, fighting against an organisation that is only interested in its own survival. Norman feels that only a limited number of associate lecturers are engaged in this fight, the others having already given up.

5.4 Practice

During the first session with Norman, we discussed the tangible things that he did as an associate lecturer as a starting point to establishing some 'practice clusters'; these would be the focus for the future discussion sessions based around his practice.

These category descriptors were somewhat problematic as they did not accord well with Giddens' definition of behaviour which is recurrent or routine, i.e. which happens on a day-to-day basis and is embedded in the habits of normal life. His descriptions were more a mixture of aims and objectives of his practice, and justifications for how he went about it.

It is not just that Norman has described his practice in such different terms; if these are initial indications of reifications of practice, it demonstrates how he has come to quite different understandings of what these facets of practice mean. The strength of individual agency is highlighted in this case study, and there is little evidence that these understandings have been subject to intense mutual negotiation with other associate lecturers; indeed, this case study shows strong influences from elsewhere.

Tutorial teaching

Norman has a well-defined formula for his tutorials, which he described to me in a list of clear and sharp statements; it is very formulaic, underpinned by a belief that this is a successful formula that has not only worked for himself, as a former MBA student, but has been proven over many years of 'getting his students through':

Look at OU notes.

You know where they should be in the course.

Which assignment is up next.

You read assignment-marking notes.

Get extra handouts ready.

If you need to, go back to units, but after five years I rarely have to look.

Hit those units with discussion and questions.

Kit: handouts; own slides (guidance on TMA on PowerPoint).

Conference: sometimes have good stuff from other associate lecturers, print them off and give them to students, legitimate as it comes from OU system.

Often walk through units, tests, see if they understand by firing questions, brings them up short.

Then tell them how exactly they should bloody well answer it.

Norman has a very instrumental approach to his tutorials; he is very clear in seeing his role as being to get his students through the next assignment and, ultimately, the final examination. He does not try to justify this approach on educational grounds, but explains his position like this:

'Pragmatic and satisfying: they tell me from the outset they just want their ticket punched, all they want is an MBA after their name.

I regard this as the way it's been set. It's not ideal, it would be good to see students read all the stuff, take it all on board and then pull them apart. Students can make a fist of trying to apply these models. Sometimes, I believe the learning has sunk in, but many are instrumental. 'This is my last one and I am knackered, I just want to get it over', they declare.

The OU writes its materials and guidance notes as if all the students are seeking that high-level learning, which is just not the case. Turn up on a Saturday morning saying, "Christ, I am eight units behind and assignment is due in two days' time, just get me out of this".'

This approach to his teaching is supplemented by a deeply-held view that he also has a role as an evaluator and protector of standards:

'In the middle of marking 200 exam scripts. In the role of 'controller of standards', doesn't happen adequately in the TMA system. OU holds the gate, some quality control which is not true for assignments. As an examiner, I can contribute to the standards. They seem to accept low standards just to keep things going. A different game to the rest of the associate lecturer role, completely different, quality control

position. It's what I do as a full-time job, assessing people for jobs, so it comes naturally to me, I am more of an evaluator than a developer but I can do both roles. '

Assignments

Norman described how he marked assignments; these narratives illustrate how he has constructed embedded routines into his practice, how he makes use of some artefacts provided by the university and, again, how their use in practice might have differed from the original intentions of the authors of the artefacts.

'Marking Guide, just as a reminder, after five years you don't need it.

Look at past results for a pattern (Green Form). What am I dealing with? I might be pleasantly surprised, but I need to know where I am coming in from.

Black and blue pen, don't use red, like a bloody schoolteacher.

Usually mark assignment then fill in PT3 but sometimes build PT3 as I mark: less dangerous, in case they do something later in the assignment. Sometimes, go for chunks of on-script marking and then go back to PT3.

Mark mainly at home at weekends or evenings. Sometimes, gaps in work programmes when I can knock them off. ETMA (electronic marking system) makes this increasingly the case.'

Norman goes on to describe his thinking when deciding on the quality of the assignment he is marking, and some indications of beliefs about his practice; he is looking for students to demonstrate they understand the models in the course, can apply them and critique them. This is seen as basically a cognitive exercise, something analogous to a type of problem-solving using specified methods and models.

'You can easily see if somebody understands the basics; tutor notes generally of little use, about as much use as bog roll, read them out to students to make them laugh.

If people take the trouble to understand the models, next step, to start to use models, to explain the situation they find themselves in, breadth of sources they use, more sophisticated stuff by the way they use these other perspectives, levels of understanding which are easy to track.

Questions: always ask for recommendations for their organisation. This is where the real world comes in. You know what will work, as I have had to introduce OD change, so when they say, I will talk to everybody, you can say, who are you going to speak to first? Where are you going to start? Look for feasibility, practicality, cost, where is all this time and money going to come from? Will you survive? '

Student support

Norman is comfortable with using the language of the marketplace and the business world in his teaching. He sees this as an important and legitimate use of his own experience, and as being beneficial to his students; it is another example of associate lecturers bringing wider experiences into their teaching practice, and into their construction of their own continuous narrative of self-identity:

'This is not mainstream, and not OU mainstream: comes from business terminology/analysis. In other words, when you strip away the customer relationship (CRM label), customer care, salesmanship, when people are away from this in the business community, this is what is left. I don't get into the discourse of pedagogy. I don't get into the OU jargon and terminology. Stacks of ways of talking about things, academic, customer-facing, realistic analysis and reality (I refuse to call it cynical, it's reality, it eventually comes through). In the OU, you have to be realistic about what you can deliver and just as consultants have to know what will work at what price.

This is why a lot of what I say may jar because I am coming from outside this culture. This leads you in the danger of becoming a champion, which you know is futile.

However, they cannot use you as a white knight as they have no route to change, its all in the hands of the non-accountable. This is often why many chuck it all in.'

There is a facet to Norman's teaching that is about getting his students to use the academic models in a critical way, and to show up their strengths and weaknesses by applying them to the situations in which they currently find themselves. It is part of the way he sees his role of preserving standards, having to make it clear to students that knowing the models is not enough, they must be able to apply them critically.

However, for Norman this is not an 'academic' exercise that can be achieved by using artefacts such as OU case studies, but rather a very 'real' process of trying to prepare his students for the 'real' business world. This has also led to his rejection of the academic world, which he sees as not being interested in this type of applied business studies.

This manifests itself in the colloquialisms and the vernacular that Norman uses to make a point. This type of language places Norman, he believes, outside of the academic world which is politically correct and is the 'unreal' world of the OU (which he does not wish to be associated with), one where being sensitive to others' agendas is more important than being able to make a direct statement on a particular subject. In so doing, he subconsciously creates a bond with his students, tacitly placing himself in their camp and not in that of the 'bureaucracy'.

Within Norman's discourse, there is a type of positioning going on, making it clear to his audience where he stands in relation to the OU as an organisation and to others working in it. He is positioning himself in the consultancy and business world, which is a world he respects, and wishes to make it clear he is not part of the OU world, which he does not respect.

Norman uses idiom rather than metaphor which defines his position in unequivocal and absolute terms; for example, 'it's all in the hands of the non-accountables' and the 'learning is going on when they don't want to play discussion and presentational games, it is in the

clarification of the course materials and the actual subject matter’, ‘I am offering consultancy on the cheap’ and ‘they play their own bureaucratic games but we keep the bastards in a job’.

There is no attempt to use OU terminology, and no attempt to identify or be empathic to the OU – quite the opposite.

He talks about his practice in the same unequivocal and absolute way: his practice is expressed as tangible and explicit. This has an endearing effect on his students, the OU being positioned as the incompetent organisation which, together, they need to defeat. However, there is a ‘reality’: the business world is the thing that really matters and which is worth trying to understand. This powerful use of idiom is only replaced by a ‘softer’ use of metaphor when explaining his practice in terms of the ‘small OU circle’ and the ‘wider circle of the business world’.

5.5 Knowledge resources

Knowledge of people

As with case study 1, the contact with other university colleagues seems limited but the contact that does happen in this case study is expressed more negatively. This is a reminder that the term ‘community’ does not have to mean peaceful coexistence, happiness and harmony; communities often generate tensions, conflicts, jealousies, gossips and cliques:

‘Regional manager in Cambridge. Usually send him all the feedback stuff, don’t know if anybody else does. Contact him about likelihood of getting a new course vacancy. Nothing on Learning and Teaching or subject-matter. Never exchange a word about subject, organisational problems, me moaning about all the crap.

Never talk to other associate lecturers. Assumed we are autonomous in our knowledge, totally self-contained. Bland and flat comments on TMA marking, so just ignore and file.

Idea of mentoring: “you don’t need anything do you?” It’s a joke.’

Norman articulates these negative relationships he has at the organisational level as well:

'Most respect for consultants working in Russia, convinced there is a pro-women and anti-man policy in the OU. Associate lecturers have no influence in the Business School and the Business School has no influence in the greater OU, so we are all wasting our breath.'

'You can see the waste all around you: we haven't got enough academics to write the new stuff, you can see what is happening the credibility and market share, losing goodwill everywhere, students and associate lecturers who are really your clients and customers.'

'There are some crap associate lecturers out there: students never been shown models. What do you actually do at the tutorial? We don't go anymore, they are no good, they reply. Where do you do your teaching, so I can come up, you have to chase a good teacher, what a bloody joke. Then told by Cambridge you are being made redundant but they keep the useless gits. They don't tell you stuff, it's all smoke and mirrors, dirty little politicking among full-time staff.'

Given these very powerful statements that suggest deep misgivings about the organisation and its teaching, what motivates Norman to continue?

'No-one does it for the money. £1700 a day plus VAT plus expenses as a consultant, paid £300 for a week's Residential School. We do it because we like doing it, the organisation is shit. All cross-subsidised, using my consultancy to support OU, e.g. photocopying, git of a bureaucrat then questions mileage.'

'Nearly quit several times, kicked them into touch. Intrinsic job interest, nothing to do with the OU, because the students really appreciate you, saying you really set me up for the exam.'

Again, this sense of marginality he expresses may, in an obtuse way, be a form of community maintenance, something to rally around and fight against. Also, he is positive

about some of the material posted on the shared website by other associate lecturers, which again might be evidence of a community of practice but one that is working in a different way to the Wenger (1998) concepts.

Knowledge of procedures, systems and policies

When describing his practice, Norman highlighted as part of creating his practice clusters the importance of his knowledge of having been through the MBA programme himself, and his ability therefore to help students gain their own qualification through this first-hand knowledge.

He saw explaining how to use OU systems (in terms of extensions, assignments, exam technique) as being a key part of his practice; this again is an example of how the university is able to influence practice over a dispersed community, even in a case study where individual agency would seem to be dominant:

'OU is still leeching off a few niches such as the armed forces but does not understand the people it is dealing with. For example, I had two students shipped off to Iraq, one in Parachute Regiment and one in Medical Corps, one did not want to go at all. Student said whatever it takes I will keep up with the course. I agreed I would give all the assignments extensions and support I could but told him he had better deal with his French tutor as he was a real stickler. I will mark anything at anytime, and he did and caught up. The other one dropped out. All this invisible to the Region, they don't give a toss, It's all numbers to them, just stack up the numbers, self-fulfilling bureaucracy keeping itself viable.

Shedloads of extensions, always give them as long as they like. One student in Iraq conflict caught up three assignments, because I have been there, struggling with redundancy, having to apply for one's own jobs, invalid relative, all sorts of shit, brother of one of my students got killed.'

In contrast to case study 1, Norman does not find the presence of the OU systems reassuring in terms of confirming good practice. Quite the contrary: the surveillance abilities of the organisation are brought into sharp relief, as Norman believes the methods are inaccurate and unjustifiably question his assignment-marking practice:

'I keep everything concerning students, addresses, I keep everything, monitoring, insist on copies of feedback, got all these back to 1998, tear up Tiger reports, always flagged as a low marker. Looked at average mark and compared with exam marks and subtracted the two and the difference I was giving was 2.4 marks from what they achieved in the exam. So Tiger is a piece of rubbish.

They say exam marking is drudge but the best people are not doing it; this is a worry. (Moderation meeting, sample of scriptmarking to mark yourselves, you then get together to try and standardise, marks were about 30% to 40% apart).'

Knowledge of organisational life and issues

He is convinced that the OU is losing market share; he sees the institution as a self-satisfying bureaucracy, concerned with preserving jobs rather than maintaining standards and the quality of its academic output. It is possible that Norman has built the OU into his own continuous narrative of self-identity as one of his client organisations that need his consultancy, rather than an organisation of which he is part:

'Residential School with some real angry students and at last some associate lecturers who are not willing to work under the system.

Students have ripped into the course, poorly written and structured and associate lecturers are willing to say so. Even more confirmation from customers that this is not good enough and confirmation from some OU members of staff who are willing to support this view.

At least you know you are not going off your head and what the customer says has some validity.

The OU still too concerned about keeping jobs; this undermines my MBA and Diploma and what I am trying to do with scriptmarking and quality assurance. Some real vicious stuff from a High Wycombe group and I have fed this into the system. However, it's really patchy to find someone who really cares, someone whose credibility is on the line: makes you wonder how much accountability of this kind is really about.'

Norman's concern about standards is demonstrated in many areas of OU organisational activity, quality of staff, staff development, assignments and examinations; he uses the discourse of consultant to client, rather than discourse from someone who is part of the system being described:

'The OU doesn't seem to worry, they probably think they can always find someone who will be good enough. They play their own bureaucratic games but we keep the bastards in a job; but they are gambling that they will always find someone to do the job. Can you replace the quality of those who leave? I would not trust anyone from the OU who said the quality is being maintained. If you are not holding standards at assignments or exams, will they get away with it? Some students want their ticket punched, so will they care? But is this sustainable? They will get rumbled as that 'ticket' will no longer be seen as valuable anymore in market/career terms. They are treated as 'students' so they have no means of redress. They have to put up with it to get their ticket punched.

10% for presentation, 15% for context, you can clock up 40 marks without considering any bloody concepts. Don't rock the boat, but the boat is sinking. Losing market share, losing competitive advantage, competition can do all the distance-learning tricks, OU carrying fat bureaucracy on top.'

5.6 Summary

Norman's sense of identity is strongly linked to and influenced by the business world in which he operates as a consultant; it is that world he wishes to be associated with, it is that world that provides the consultants he admires and it is that world that provides Norman with a sharp contrast to the OU, which he sees as bureaucratic and only interested in preserving jobs for a protected few.

This case study provides evidence for how important agency can be in constructing practice. The customs, rules, procedures and cultural artefacts associated with communities of practice are still discernible. However, they have been considerably adjusted to suit a self-identity; partially built around a type of 'managerialism', with an emphasis on seeing students as customers, on the need for greater efficiency and market share, and on discourse that uses terms from the marketplace.

Studentship

Norman constructs a view of OU students as hard-pressed individuals who need their 'ticket punched' with an MBA qualification, in order for them to succeed in their chosen careers. He sees rules and procedures as so much bureaucracy that has to be waded through; academic 'games' have to be played by students if they are to achieve their qualification.

He does not regard this pedagogical standpoint as being cynical. It is just 'how things have been set up'. Also, he has concern for standards as he does not wish to see his own MBA devalued. He sees part of his role as a type of 'gatekeeper', especially when exam scriptmarking, as he feels this process allows him greater influence over standards.

These teaching beliefs and approaches also help justify a didactic approach to his tutorials. Norman feels he knows what is required from students and he is prepared to tell them, not engaging to the extent prescribed in more-interactive processes, such as group work, which he sees as waste of time, given the way the system is structured.

Pastoral care

Norman is very sympathetic to students who struggle with events that interfere with their part-time studies. This sympathy is couched in terms of 'real'-life issues that happen to us all, and an important part of the role, he perceives, is to help students continue with their studies despite these setbacks.

Norman's reflexive identity-building process with his students has been constructed as a positive narrative, as the relationships are seen as between students and a successful business consultant, who has also been through the OU system as a student; thus, he sets a scene where his advice can be seen as coming from the authentic voice of someone who has been there.

Norman gives indications that he takes a vocational epistemological view of knowledge: the MBA is a type of rite of passage that is a necessary step along a business career path. Given this view, learning is about the process required in order to achieve the qualification by students demonstrating an understanding and application of a well-defined set of models.

This view could have been influenced by the close affiliation he feels for the business world, by a trend in society that increasingly sees knowledge not as contemplation but as knowing as an operation (Barnett 1994). The emphasis is on being able to put knowledge and expertise to use in unfamiliar circumstances, demands for flexibility, communication skills and teamwork. This view looks to individuals to be able to operate on their knowledge and to deploy those operational capacities in the world of work, and so become more effective.

Barnett suggests in such circumstances the discourse of skill, competence, outcome, information, technique and flexibility are used in favour of terms like understanding, wisdom and critique. Norman's discourse does seem closer to the former than the latter.

Community

There is some evidence of a type of community being created with Norman's willingness to use other associate lecturers' materials that have been posted onto their electronic

conference. However, once again, this case study provides evidence that the intense mutual participation and negotiation of meaning referred to in social practice theory is between Norman and his students, rather than between a group of associate lecturer practitioners.

Therefore, there is evidence once more of reification of practice, with terms such as 'tutorials' and 'assignment feedback' being used; these reifications have not been exposed to the intense negotiated meaning that Lave and Wenger (1991) observed in their research into other types of work organisations that they termed communities of practice. This lack of negotiated meaning could be an explanation for the different meanings associated with reifications of practices in the four case studies.

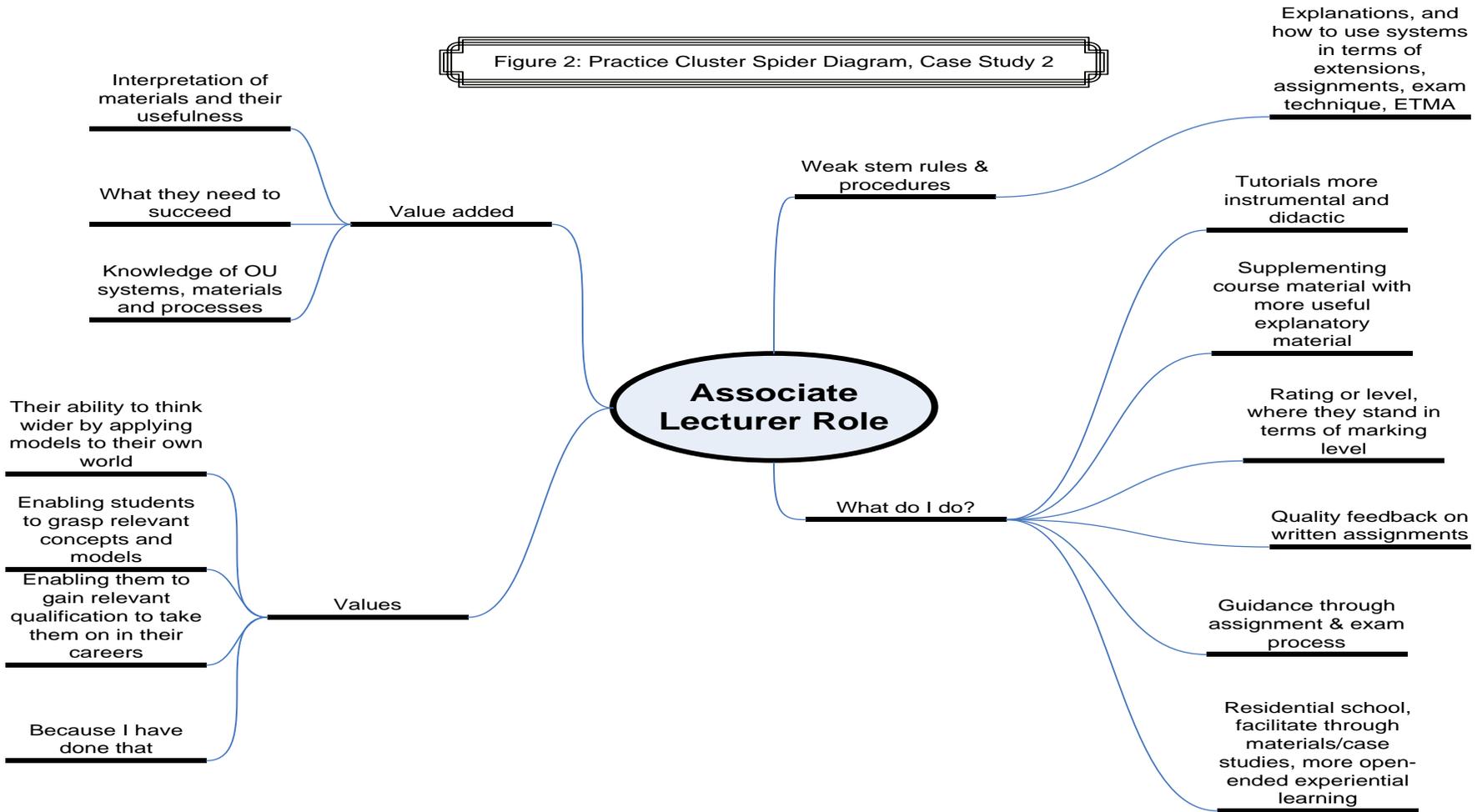
Despite the strong sense of agency in this case study, the influence of the organisation is still apparent, as are the relationships with the wider social world. In some senses in this case study, the continuous narrative of self-identity is one constructed with the university, seen largely negatively; despite this negativity, it can be incorporated into a positive narrative of self by the reflexive process.

The OU does create opportunities for associate lecturers to meet, such as the opportunity to get together and compare and contrast assignment marking in a staff development session. However, possibly due to lack of time, these opportunities seem to raise concerns and start the negotiated meaning process; it is often then left to the individual associate lecturer to finish the process, without the benefit of peer interaction.

It is also possible to postulate from the evidence in this case study that the concept of 'benign community neglect' has manifested itself in Norman taking the 'curriculum' from his consultancy community, rather than from his associate lecturer community.

It is possible Norman is operating within a different community of practice, i.e. business consultancy, and this overlaps sufficiently with his associate lecturer practice to allow him to operate in both domains.

Figure 2: Practice Cluster Spider Diagram, Case Study 2



CHAPTER 6 Case Study 3

6.1 Introduction

‘Joe’ is a relatively new associate lecturer, which is interesting in terms of how a non-teacher becomes, in Wenger’s terms, a full member of the associate lecturer community. It also illustrates how associate lecturers are able to draw on embedded knowledge learned in other communities, and adapt it to meet the requirements of the new community. The self-confidence and strong positive narrative of his own identity comes across and this has allowed Joe to move into an unfamiliar teaching environment. The organisational aspects of the organisation do not come through strongly, but a sense of the organisation being present in practice is still identifiable. Again, it is the students who figure ‘large’ in Joe’s practice and are the source of much of the pleasure, as he explores with them their world views. Joe gives indications of the possibilities of embedded routines as part of his practice and implicit theories of practice; they seem to have embedded themselves within practice in a relatively short period of induction, or what Wenger would consider a time of legitimate peripheral participation.

6.2 Biography

Joe comes from a working-class background and was brought up in Luton. His father was a toolmaker and work was very important, as was sport; his mother was Irish Catholic and had high aspirations for her family. Politics was part of family life, current affairs was part of what the family talked about; they were not activists but Labour Party posters would be put up in their window at election time.

Joe went to grammar school and found out he was 129th out of 131 who passed the 11+ examination. He started in Form 1D then 2B, never making the ‘A’ stream, but this did not bother him. He never felt like a ‘bright spark’ but was comfortable with himself and generally enjoyed school; these are early indications of the importance to Joe of learning being fun, and also the positive narrative as part of his self-identity that it was OK to be outside the top bracket academically, nothing wrong in being a ‘B’ stream lad:

'Never shone or came top of the class. Did OK, top half of things, felt confident, functioned as an individual, never bullied, socially did well, bit of me wanted to do the right things, positioned myself to do the right things, became Head Prefect.

Mum was always there, parents' evenings etc., and would feed back what teachers said. Would enter things like poem-reading. I won it, maybe I was pretty good at this, still got the prize book.

Fourth year of grammar school, did not know what university was; lists in school but were the exception that proved the rule. Usual route was apprenticeship or professions such as accountancy.'

After his 'O' levels, Joe went to America on a programme set up by the American Field Service which was based on international friendship. This experience had a profound effect on him, as can be seen by the lively, detailed and vivid way in which he was able to recount it after all these years. In the Giddens (1976) sense of self-identity, Joe makes strong linkages between these early childhood experiences and his ability to cope with the tutorial and teaching situation:

'Went to Southampton, got a tender boat, joined a ship from Rotterdam, the Seven Seas ship, 1000 students sailed to New York. Sheer excitement. States again was a kind of wonderland, did not know much about States, really excited. Didn't speak to parents for over a year, wrote occasional letters.

I had a status as a foreign student; people wished you to go around, warm and friendly, a bit rudderless and I was just taken along.

Class of only 13/14 in States, no adult perspective on this, the work a gear up from anything I had done before, they were a year older. It all felt different, treated as sixth formers, treated as adults and individuals.

Not cocky but felt OK about myself; you got invited to talk about England. Never felt nervous, publicly I was OK, smart enough to know they liked to listen to me. I

structured my talks and people would ask questions and I flew by the seat of my pants, people were generous and warm.

Drove down to the deep south, ate in restaurants which had whites-only signs. Very vivid for me, very conservative and republican and I was aware of this. This confirmed where I was coming from and my left-wing views. Got to know about American colleges, the excitement of watching basketball with 2000 people.'

Joe demonstrated his social mobility further on his return home, and his ability to fit smoothly into different kinds of social settings: he had already built, in the Giddens (1991) sense, a very positive narrative of himself. This creates a very strong practical consciousness, the 'cocoon' that allows Joe to move with confidence into unfamiliar social and work environments. This was also demonstrated after leaving University by marrying a Danish wife and spending long periods in warm but unfamiliar Danish family settings in Copenhagen.

'Back to school at Luton which was OK. Back to soccer, went into 'A' levels trying to do them in a year. Was not sad, but missed things, just slotted back. Back with mates but they were more focused, going to university had become part of the anthem, ended up with 5 'A' levels, B stream lad really.'

Joe eventually went to Durham University to study for a joint Politics and Sociology degree, and was finally inspired in his third year. The importance of relationships to Joe is again demonstrated; only in the third year, when these relationships were stronger, did he consider university having a positive and enjoyable impact on his life. The positive narrative of himself again manifests itself with his willingness to appear on television and debate, people having been part of his knowledge resource from an early stage:

'Peter Hain era there was a real buzz. Really got to know lecturers, Third year was what I wanted but we had only just got going. 2.2 was good solid stuff but I felt I was worth more, but I was a 'B' grade lad.

Going to disrupt Springbok tour at Newcastle, I went on Tyne–Tees television, two of us against and two in favour of tour, two minutes debate, I just loved it, back to the States thing again. ’

Joe qualified as a probation officer in Exeter and joined the Southampton Probation Service in 1970. The type of organisation mattered; it needed to be in an area that was important to him and would add to the positive image he holds of his own identity. Also the importance of relationships is demonstrated with the establishment of a strong friendship with his immediate line manager ‘Old Denis’. This is significant, as it will influence what Joe regards as being important, and what will be available as a knowledge resource in the future as part of his practical consciousness:

‘Began to start training in the late 70s with NACRO, organised training courses and moved into residential courses and conferences, organised but did not deliver the training but had to talk to organisations; back to America, performing. ’

Joe joined the Open University in 2000 as an associate lecturer on the Social Science Foundation course: the interview experience even chimed with the type of organisation he was looking for, relaxed but stretching; it is also of note that the organisation was prepared to make an appointment from a distance, a real ‘dispersed community’:

‘Open University re-advertised for DD100, quick look at syllabus and thought I could crack this. Offered a telephone interview. Sat on the sofa with a cup of coffee and feet up and did interview. Lovely in some senses but quite taxing in some other ways.

Feedback was learning and teaching was OK but the pure academic side showed I was a bit dated. Two days later offered the post. Then offered seminar work on an MA course at Southampton University, all suddenly seemed to be happening. ’

6.3 Identity

Joe is interested in individuals and the worlds they occupy. In none of the descriptions of his practice, and of the experiences that influenced that practice, did he offer any ‘big picture’

explanations of why things might have been so. This despite being interested in and exposed to politics from an early age, and being an associate lecturer on a Social Science Foundation course.

Joe's interests lay in gaining insights and knowledge by having conversations with people, by being allowed into their worlds; finding opportunities with the stay in America, marrying into a Danish family, going out of his way to meet political figures and a willingness to perform on a public stage from a very early age.

This allowed him to be very comfortable with giving tutorials, an experience that some associate lecturers find very daunting, especially when entering the Open University from a non-educational background. He feels a sense of the importance of greeting students at tutorials and making them feel comfortable; the sensitivity to how easily some students might be put off the tutorial situation by quite small things is a reflection of his interest in the individual.

Joe is able to offer a continuous narrative of himself and has sufficient self-regard to keep this narrative going; this, in turn, creates a self-identity that appears to the researcher as someone who is very comfortable with himself and able to function in a very capable and relaxed way.

The narrative is maintained by Joe by his ability to make linkages between major experiences in his life. For example, he links the ability to undertake public speaking as a teenager with the ease with which he adapted to tutorial teaching. Although totally inexperienced at academic assignment marking and feedback, Joe was able to draw on experiences in the Probation Service, making linkages between some aspects of that work and what was required for academic marking.

6.4 Practice

During the first session with Joe, we discussed the tangible things that he did as an associate lecturer; as a starting point to establishing some 'practice clusters', these would be the focus for the future discussion sessions based around his practice.

These descriptions of practice again accorded well with Giddens' (1976) definition of practice as recurrent and routinised behaviour.

Tutorial teaching

Joe was able to recall his first experiences in delivering an OU tutorial; as with case study 1, it shows what an emotional experience this is and how, with experience, it becomes embedded into practice; and again it is people, in this instance students, that Joe looks to in order to alleviate any anxiety over a new situation:

'No conceptions of what I would be facing with the students: what I struggled with was the spread of abilities in the group. My way of coping was to keep control of the tutorials, felt I could not let go, as I needed the assurance. However, ability of students allowed me to relax and let go, needed to be in the experience and go through it, even though I had read the theory.'

Aware of code of conduct, aware of expectations of how we conduct ourselves, responding to students' needs, health and safety, maintenance of a professional relationship with students. Made assumptions about all this without knowing the Open University detail.

What you do when students arrive, you welcome them, this tutorial starts as soon as they arrive, coming to a tutorial is a big thing, they are investing in it. Small things can knock people off, making people feel important. I get a buzz from the tutorial, I have created that situation, it does not always happen, last night it was like wading through spaghetti.'

He attributes his 'letting go' in tutorials to the ability of his students, not to his ability as a teacher; also the need to have experienced this for himself, to be in there at a very individual level.

Assignments

As a relatively new member of associate lecturer staff, Joe was able to recall his early thoughts of marking assignments, the associations he was able to make with his other occupation and how his marking practice has developed over time:

I had never marked anything academically, yes looked at reports as part of the Probation Service. In terms of making a judgment, I had no conception of the time it would take and kept thinking at some point I will have to give a mark.

Felt very individual and felt like a dialogue with students and the angst about giving a mark began to recede.

Read through whole TMA without scribbling. A lot in two parts, I do it student by student, I give handwritten feedback. Need to see the whole thing, where are we at, beginning to position myself, not so much with the mark but general big impressions. I get a general position on it. Coming out of the first read with what are the main things coming out here, what are the major things I want to say.

Then very focused on content, the argument, consistency, will pick up on poor phrasing and spelling, e.g. 'this is not what the question asked for'.

Find the PT3 physically constraining. Feedback, I ask myself, what sort of order am I going to put thing in, not throwing loads at students, but trying to make key points. If loads, I would say "we need a conversation. give me a ring".

PT3 used for the rationale for the mark.

I do need to find a level so I don't award a mark on the PT3 on first five or six. Then I've got my yardstick. A bit permissive, feeling of accountability but also academic

independence. Sometimes, I feel I need more guidance as it can come across as being a bit vague.

I will get some student contact before the TMA along the lines: 'I don't just understand this' before every TMA. Not a lot of feedback from students on the feedback I have given on the TMAs.

The process also brings alive students I have met at the first tutorial. The person very much in mind as I comment and feedback. Influences how I write the feedback.

At this point, I prepare a general comments sheet to go to each student. For first time this year, I will do this for all TMAs; started to do so last year.'

The values and beliefs that Joe reveals are deeply rooted in this concern for individuals. The 'angst' he feels about giving a mark, the use of the PT3 feedback form to justify that mark to the student and the disappointment that more have not come back to him about their feedback.

There is little evidence in this case study of a vocational pedagogical view of education; it is inclined to be a more 'liberal' view with the role seen as providing a broad education and personal development, through an interactive process deemed valuable in itself (Barnett 1994). In Joe's view, knowledge is something that can be picked up, especially from other learners.

Student support

Joe sees part of his practice as making OU materials accessible and relevant to his students; this might indicate a type of 'scaffolding' in the Vygotsky sense, believing students will find it easier to assimilate new knowledge if they can make links to it from what they already know:

'Come in from a different angle and try to take a position on, say, structuralism and agency. Try to find examples they might find more accessible and more flexible, and

then bring it back to the concept. Actively working through it. Recognition of learning styles and the different ways people process information. Contextualising it for people, bringing different learning strategies into play; may be driven by the TMA but always trying to broaden it out.'

Joe makes a distinction in his practice between the type of academic consultation he describes above and what he sees as individual consultation. The personal development angle again comes through his student support approach, trying to help the individual overcome barriers to their engaging and enjoying the learning process:

'Dealt with four email enquiries, students needing information in relation to the course, not course content but organisation of course and their attendance at tutorials. Directing them to reading etc. for the TMAs, difficulties in travelling, is anyone available to pick them up, TMA stuff had not arrived, straightening out an admission date.'

Two students can't make tutorials, offered telephone tutorial, fortnightly telephone contact. Velvet glove on deadlines: I will contact those who are late, tell them I need to contact Oxford in order to accept them even though it's not true. It's putting a mark in the sand and being fair to other students.'

Making sense of the Open University for the students, orientating them, having to unpick a lot of stuff for them, students end first year feeling more comfortable with the organisation.'

6.5 Knowledge resources

Knowledge of people

The level of contact with colleagues seems higher in this case study than in the previous two; certainly, in the early years of Joe being an associate lecturer, this could be a further indication of the importance to him of people in becoming part of a new community and evidence of a type of community of practice. Seeing these narratives in terms of the concept

of benign community neglect, we can see how Joe took the ‘curriculum’ in the Wenger sense, and organised it himself and sought appropriate guidance as required:

‘First year, a number of staff development opportunities and we met in Basingstoke and Oxford. First year felt good, six or seven things to go to in the first year. Petered off, marking exercise in Basingstoke, regional development days.

I have not spoken to staff tutor or TMA monitor; had a tutorial visit down in Poole, good helpful critical feedback. New staff tutor arrived and made a point of saying we want you to make use of us. Picked up I was marking low on TMAs and made me think more of my OU role, and I have checked out a couple of things with her since.

Principally reactive contact with staff tutors, can’t think of a proactive approach.

Mentor in the first year was good and I rang him a couple of times in the first year, over a particular bloke on DD100. No other contact with other tutors. Did form an informal relationship with one associate lecturer, who I occasionally met at the tutorial venue. Looking after one another is part of the Probation Service but is not translated into the Open University.

Relationship with students, I try to give message please contact, but students give message back we don’t want to bother you. A significant amount of proactive contact has not happened. A small group of four or five last year did make telephone contact who were struggling. Three students came back using email once a month.

Talk to friends and family about OU life balance: something you enjoy and get satisfaction from, flexibility of it, you have control over it, a positive conversation, the nature of that type of work not the OU as an organisation. Also talk about the guts of the course such as the concept of identity; people are interested and it’s surprising how many have been involved. I get asked questions about it.’

As can be seen from the care Joe takes in assignment marking, tutorial preparation and implementation, high professional standards are important to him. However, unlike in case

study 1 or 2, these are not expressed at a corporate level. There is no mention in the interviews of concerns about overall pass grades or general concerns about standards not being maintained by the OU as in case study 2. Equally, there are no concerns expressed about the OU's position in terms of attracting students or its long-term viability.

As can be seen in the section on knowledge of people, the contacts with the OU are expressed in the positive; the support provided has been welcomed and found useful, especially in the early years of practice. However, one is left with the overall impression that Joe is loosely connected to OU corporate life and, as we have seen, that the students are the larger influence on practice.

Knowledge of procedures, systems and policies

As can be inferred from the description of Joe supporting individual students through the OU system, he has a good knowledge of procedures, systems and policies. However, unlike case study 2, this was not learnt from going through the OU system as a student himself. Also, although publications provided some help in developing his practice, they seem to have limited use for him:

'The teaching tutorial situation I never felt uncomfortable with. Material provided some ideas such as Supported Open Learners and Toolkits, not a good read but helped the transition, working with groups in tutorials etc. No theoretical side on teaching adults, no big picture. Not until the third year was the link between my confidence with the material translated into the teaching arena.'

Joe gained knowledge of the course through time and effort reading and re-reading the course units provided by the OU, but knowledge of procedures, systems and policies was slowly accumulated by discussions with other associate lecturers and with full-time employees at the university. All this formal and tacit knowledge seems to have been accumulated within a three-year timeframe.

If we make a comparison of this narrative with the theory of legitimate peripheral participation by which Lave and Wenger (1991) describe how new members join communities of practice, we can see it is legitimate, in the sense that Joe has available to him the resources to become an associate lecturer. However, from the evidence of this case study, this legitimacy would appear to come from the organisation and his students, rather than from other associate lecturers. It is not peripheral in the sense that he is only allowed to master certain aspects of the practice at a time; it is peripheral in the sense that he is given two years as a probationary associate lecturer by the organisation but is still expected to carry out all the facets of associate lecturer practice. There was participation with other associate lecturers in the early days, especially with his peer mentor, but also with other members of the organisation, his staff tutor and regional colleagues. As with other case studies, contact with other associate lecturers diminished with the passing of probation.

In his biography, Joe describes situations at a very young age where he relished being put into unfamiliar social arrangements, demonstrating abilities to adapt and flourish in these new surroundings. This is further highlighted by the ease with which Joe returned to life in Luton after his American trip.

Knowledge of organisational life and issues

The way Joe describes his experiences and practice reflects his interest in the individual. Figures, and their effect on him, dominate in his descriptions. Process and structures are far less prevalent in his discourse, and the issues and concerns of OU corporate life are not a major concern. This suggests that the intense mutual participation associated with communities of practice is with his students and not with other associate lecturers: the organisation is still present but in dimmer relief than are his students:

'Not anticipating any contact with the OU, I get on with it. It's not a problem but I do read information in Snowball [associate lecturer newsletter] etc., get messages about

things being stretched financially, newsletters from Regions not wasted, they matter to me.'

The students are at the centre of his world; for example, he visualises the individual concerned when marking their assignment. He remembers personal attributes about individuals in order to help him make them come alive to him when marking, in the sense of having a practical consciousness by which to operate; it is the student experience that plays a major role in its construction:

'Students are the big thing through the year, they are the big figures in your life, people struggling to learn, there is a satisfaction in that for me. Come and enjoy what I am doing and learning.'

There is a lack of metaphor and idiom in Joe's descriptions and he is most animated when talking about experiences of the United States and Denmark. The discourse is philosophical in the sense of being logical, reasoned and argued. It is level-headed, thoughtful and contemplative. The challenges he faces within his practice are dealt with in a cool-headed and unperturbed way. There seems to be a balance: students and their issues are important to him but not all-consuming. There is an emotional involvement but he is able to control and box this into a well-bounded and manageable world.

6.6 Summary

Joe has constructed a very positive continuous narrative of himself, in the Giddens (1991) sense, from a very early age and has used unfamiliar opportunities in life, such as a lengthy stay in America as a boy, to construct a robust 'cocoon' which allows him to move between different job domains and 'fit in', with considerable ease. In the sense of seeing this as part of a communities of practice theory, one could claim from the evidence that Joe has assimilated aspects of communities in America, and later in Denmark, and used this extensively in the construction of his own narrative. For example the 'go get' attitude in his

American experience and the emphasis of family values and 'liberal' traditions of the Denmark family he married into.

However, once again, the major figure in his associate lecturer practice is his students' group. It is with his students that we see aspects of mutual negotiation happening. Joe tries to create a 'community' ethos by inviting students to enjoy the learning experience alongside himself. Joe is careful and considered in fostering this ethos, for example with the care taken over the atmosphere created at tutorials and the desire to 'pass on' his students at the end of their first year feeling more comfortable and at ease with the learning situation, their own abilities and the organisation.

Studentship

Joe takes a personal and holistic view of his students, seeing knowledge as reiterative and organic. He sees himself as entering the 'world views' of students, and regards this both as a pleasure and a privilege. There is a sense in which he is aware of his own reflexive process; he is aware of both influencing and being influenced by students, but also that these relationships are developing against and with a social world that is influencing him and his students, at the same time being influenced itself.

Pastoral care

As with case study 1, the concept of space between Joe and his students is relevant to practice. Individual student issues are important to him but they are managed. There is a need for boundaries, however ill-defined, between him, his students and the university. There is an unconscious struggle to maintain these boundaries, and not allow university or student issues to encroach on other domains of life.

There is a more pedagogical view in this case study (compared to case study 2) of the concept of the learning process as being enjoyable and something we all have the abilities to engage with. This is mixed with a sense of 'realism' that certain academic conventions and norms have to be adhered to, but that this still leaves considerable space to enjoy.

Community

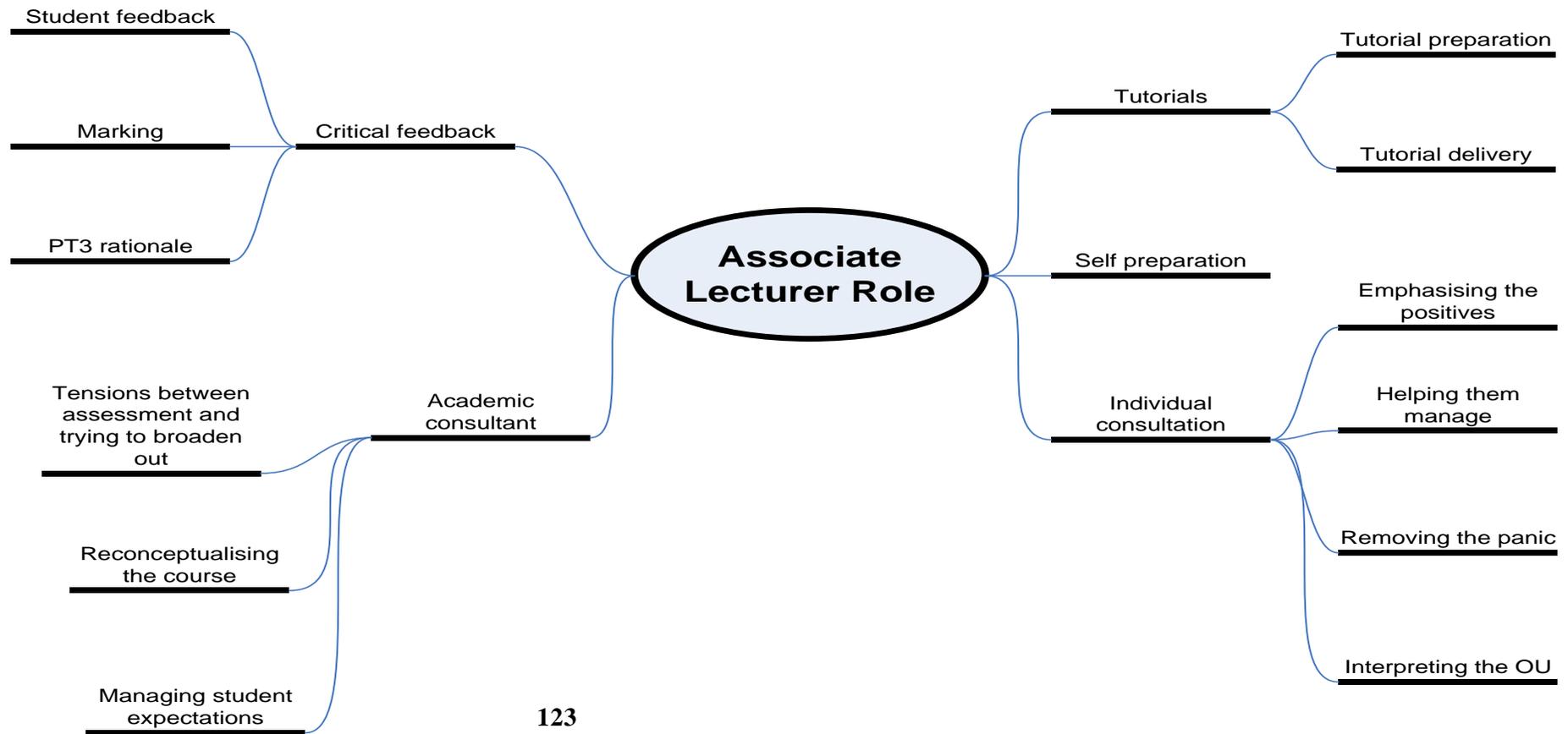
People are important to Joe and he sees them as an important source of learning. However, the figures Joe refers to in his narratives create a complex social milieu of influences, rather than a close knit community of practitioners. Examples of this are the influence of 'old Denis', and his relationships with trainers and other networks in the Probation Service which he still makes use of in his associate lecturer practice.

Therefore, this evidence might point to other metaphors that may more closely describe the relationships and knowledge Joe is using in his practice as an associate lecturer.

The use of these types of metaphor allows us to understand categories of knowledge as described by, say, Eraut or Blackler in a more overlapping and connected way; it also allows us to see these connections between Joe, his students and the organisation in a much looser way, whilst retaining the sense of the whole. One can conceptualise practices that allow for greater agency and contemplate practices that have been reified, but have not undergone processes of creating negotiated meanings for those reifications.

There is some evidence of cultural artefacts of practice, division of labour and rules and procedures identified by Engestrom and his social-activity theory, but they are looser in nature than the binding forces of participation and negotiated meaning witnessed by Lave and Wenger (1991). Becher and Trowler (2001) refer to part-time Faculty members as 'gypsy scholars'. This goes too far in an analogy with OU associate lecturers. They are still very much connected to the organisation and to their students: maybe to stretch the metaphor further, they are gypsy scholars with a regular pattern of life, knowing whom to see, what to do and where to go.

Figure 3: Practice Cluster Spider Diagram, Case Study 3



CHAPTER 7 Case Study 4

7.1 Introduction

Self-identity as a mother and professional academic is very important to 'Imogen', together with the fact that she is able to combine both roles. Imogen has developed a very positive narrative of herself and is sufficiently self-aware to know when this is under threat. For example, she refers to a plagiarism case (when a student submitted an assignment that was almost identical to another student in her group) which Imogen felt undermined all that she was trying to achieve in education. There is a satisfaction and contentment in her knowing that she wants to teach OU students from her home base. The idea that students should experience some form of 'transformation' in their learning is an important part of this self-identity narrative, and could result from her own studies when feminism allowed her to make sense of the world as a woman, not through the lens of a masculine world. Imogen is highly supportive and flexible in supporting her students, which comes across in a very facilitative discourse when talking about her practice.

7.2 Biography

Imogen describes herself as coming from a working-class background; she had a varied education, did not attend university but her intense love of literature led her to take up her studies again with the Open University, gaining a doctorate at Sheffield Hallam University with a thesis on modern feminism, and then taking up teaching with the OU:

'My parents were both from a working-class background. Grandparents were a factory worker, full-time housewife and widower shopkeeper bringing up seven children, pre-welfare state, but a lot of ambition. Mum and dad became shopkeepers, ambitious in the material sense but Jane (sister) and I did well at school, not to enjoy the Arts but to smooth my path into work.

Passed 11+, went to local girls' school, mixture of girls on free places and others from prep-school that fed into the school. Socially mixed but dominated by wealthy

elements (due to their confidence and numeric number). 1974, went to secondary school and went all the way up to 'A' levels.

School was not easy, had to work hard, primary school had not prepared me for an academic school. It's now a full fee-paying school and one of the top in the league tables. In many ways, school rooted in the past, very much part of the establishment but radical in the gender sense but we all had to do domestic science. Catholic girls allowed separate service, but marked out for it, clear ideas about what was 'normal' and being catholic was not seen as "normal".

Relatively small school, 600 girls between the ages of 11 and 16. Academically, I did well, won prizes, 'O' and 'A' levels at good grades, under a lot of pressure to go to university. I didn't want to go, as I was tired, lot of responsibility as head girl in the last year. In hindsight, because I had poor study skills, I felt exhausted and also university was not what people in my family did – they went to work.

Job working in the Civil Service, starting locally and moving to London. Always read furiously, five or six books a week, always read a lot. Gained a job talking to people who were retired and telling them how to claim benefits. I loved it, not the subject matter but talking to people. I wanted to talk about literature and realised I would have to go to university to be qualified to do this in more of a teaching role.

Decision coincided (took several months to solidify) with getting married for the first time and having a baby. Decided therefore the best route would be an Open University degree. I found I got good grades but again had to work hard. Important as I look back, I had a range of teachers who almost expected students to pick things up by osmosis. It took me a while to work out what was required (I did have one bad teacher, who had not prepared for tutorials, just talked about poems, no clear way of knowing what we were going to get out of the tutorial). Therefore, I really try hard to spell out what I hope to get out of my tutorials. 1987, Open University degree and in

1990 second son was born, I mostly did 60 points a year. Introduction to the Humanities because it had literature in it and you had to start at Level 1. I am glad I did two more Arts interdisciplinary courses, brings a much more interesting aspect towards text than just literature courses.'

7.3 Identity

Imogen has a well-developed sense of self-identity which contains important strands in terms of professional academic identity; being a mother and having strong political and feminist views influences her associate lecturer practice:

'Creating a "professional sense" of myself is highly important to me. The plagiarism case, someone willing to cheat, really undermined what I was about and trying to achieve. Important to me alongside the sense of being a mother and it's important that I was both. Friendships are also important to me, having jettisoned some of the family, so I have to some extent reconstructed who I regard as family. Political identity important: education has a material impact on their lives, being able to live more comfortable lives. Left and feminist sensibilities important, always opposed private education, but recently had to send own children to private education: decision was incredibly important to me and has shaken me.

Women's Studies draws on a lot of Social Science theory: suddenly found a way of making sense of the world or at least parts of it. It allowed me to express my feelings and emotions that previously I could not explain, e.g. how the public/private debate has been gendered. Some took a Marxist perspective, a liberal perspective and I could use them as a tool to get at what I was interested in.'

She is aware of her own discourse and what effect it can have on her students' understandings:

'For example, I wrote a series of articles with a good friend but there was enough difference in our perspectives for us to have a good productive relationship. We

realised we had been debating for hours on experience and we were getting frustrated as we could not reach a negotiated position. We realised we meant something different by “experience”. Once we realised this, we could agree. So, when students say I am using a “discourse” approach, I cannot say yes or no as I need to understand what they mean by a “discourse” approach. I can question their approach and it can prove to be much quicker by phone.’

As part of her self-identity, Imogen has established a well-defined epistemological position and this provides a strong underpinning to her daily practice:

‘Locate myself as an “enlightenment girl”. The academic structure makes sure the students locate themselves in the text: it forces them into an intellectual response.

What I mean by ‘enlightenment girl’ is that the course is about the shift from the enlightenment to the romantic, states there was a way of seeing the Arts, firstly the enlightenment, categorised as allowing us to understand the world by using skills of observation and using our intelligence. It argues that in order to be an artist, it can be learnt, so based on the crafts, looking back to Roman and Greeks and looking at the natural world to produce a reasoned piece of work. With romanticism an, increasing emphasis on feelings, and engaging with art emotionally, the notion of craftsman disappears and you have the idea of an artist being born as genius. Very uncomfortable with this idea for two reasons:

- *no evidence for people being born with these attributes, denial of the material circumstances, e.g. Mozart had access to excellent music and teachers;*
- *fundamentally undemocratic: some of us are elect and some are not and is a way of denying others opportunities.*

Enlightenment girl aligns you with those who think things can be learnt, including intellectual skills. However, I have recently experienced two people who behaved very extremely that cannot be explained by the rational and reasoned but only by the emotional.’

7.4 Practice

During the first session with Imogen, we discussed the tangible things that she did as an associate lecturer as a starting point to establishing ‘practice clusters’ (fewer descriptors than the other three case study diagrams but succinct); these would be the focus for future discussion sessions based on practice. These category descriptives accorded well with Giddens’ (1976) definition of behaviour which is recurrent or routine, i.e. happens on a day-to-day basis and is embedded in the habits of normal life; as discussed in Chapter 2.

Tutorial teaching

Imogen has developed a well-defined structure to the planning and delivery of her tutorial teaching; it is not prescriptive or mechanistic, but rather allows for sufficient flexibility to respond to the varying demands of her students:

I design the tutorial to meet the aims and objectives laid out by the Course Team in the units and blocks. I deviate from this when I perceive a need. So, maybe the same year by year but emphasis will be different, depending on the capabilities of the group.

For example, one group last year, great group to be with but completely lacked confidence, so did more large group work, so I was able to hold their hands through the process. With a more confident group, I would allow them to get on with it themselves in small groups. They can hide in the large group while they think to themselves: “have I really understood this?” In small groups, there’s no place to hide. I have a really clear structure, tied back to aims and objectives, so give them tasks A, B, C, and that should give them aims and objectives. For example, if I was teaching democracy, I would look at, say, three theoretical models and compare with three practical models, and then compare and contrast the theoretical and practical models.

I think my style is effective as I can assess it. If, for example, I have students who don’t understand concepts, I can see by the end that they have understood and that they can

articulate the concepts. I can keep an eye on who is speaking and who is not, and I make sure there are a variety of spaces for students to express themselves.'

There is considerable planning and preparation for tutorials: this is not just for one tutorial but builds into a coherent presentation of tutorials. Imogen feels this preparation is less structured than the actual tutorial presentation but, even within this planning it is possible to identify routines and possible use of tacit knowledge:

'If it's a course I am really au fait with, I would lay out the whole teaching plan for the year but would revisit each one to make sure it's still appropriate; this is my ideal.

This way you can be gently preparing students in, say, tutorial three for something you might do in, say, tutorial 13. It's written down in the sense of having the handouts laid out for each tutorial but the emphasis can change when the emphasis has changed in the assignments or there are changes in the units. On the whole, Course Teams do not send out directives that would amend my tutorial strategy.

The handouts used to be more extensive: now there is more in my head and the handouts are more sparse. They are more acting as prompts for me to go into more detail. It is also a tool for the students as they have to put together their own notes to make the handouts richer.'

This again shows the self-identity as expressed in the metaphor of being the 'enlightenment' girl; this self-conception is reinforced with Imogen's description of what she is trying to do with her groups, and how she believes learning is taking place:

'Discussion on rhyme scheme by applying to the poem, chance for them to check their ideas, if they have read it; and if not, a chance for them to hear the concepts for the first time and other students' ideas. It's in a different form and register than the course materials, more informal and I can clock them. If I can see faces glaze over, I can check their understandings and offer a chance for them to check their own understandings; it's more interactive and in smaller chunks. Small points even

concentrating on single words such as melody, “you cannot do the wall without the bricks”.

I am trying to see what they know or what they think they know, so that is the drawing out but I am also making sure they understand the course concepts – that’s the inputting.

Let’s say they are making a cake (reading the text). I will give them eggs, sugar etc. but some will use brown or white sugar, some will break open the eggs but others may use them differently and will make a different cake, but all will be cakes. The most capable students could do it without me, as it’s in the course units; but others need help in understanding the concepts and why it’s useful to use those concepts to develop their understandings.

I can see how the students are coping, so for example pushing the capable student by introducing a new concept that is beyond the level of difficulty expected, introducing academic articles. A simple way yesterday evening was by introducing dialectical relationships, which took the course a little bit further because I thought the group were up to it.’

Assignments

There is further evidence of routines being developed for marking and giving feedback, in the planning of assignment processing and the use of tacit knowledge; the routines are still individualistic to this particular associate lecturer. We can also see how assignment planning is linked to tutorials and student support in a holistic way:

‘Before the assignments come through the door, I try to put together an assignment plan for the year. So if they have to look at a painting, we look at a different painting at the tutorial before. The plan looks at what should be covered but being careful not to write the assignment for them.’

As with case study 1, there is a method adopted to establish some benchmarks for the assignment marking, and of particular interest for this case study is the use of a 'generic guide' system devised by the associate lecturer herself; this, together with her skilled practice, allows her to mark an assignment efficiently, sometimes within 20 minutes:

'Read a couple of assignments before I start marking. I used to read the lot but with experience you realise students fall into bands. I usually pick a very good one and one weak one: based on previous performance, they help establish a benchmark. Getting a feeling about precisely what is required and what they can be expected to produce. Then, when I can bear it, I start marking; I tend to start with the earliest submitted, as this seems fairest.

If I am familiar with the course, I will have a good idea what to expect. I set up a generic guide, claims about the text, provide evidence about text and analysis of text. I provide them with specific examples and modified for individual students, every student is different. If it's someone I have never met, my tone will be more formal; others I know well I can have more of a banter.

One, I make notes on the script, being explicit, "nice direction but however...." pressing and asking for something else; and two, offering a further comment, I would type up a fuller explanation and offer them an example from someone else. I do this on the computer so it becomes a resource for marking others.'

As with all three previous case studies, considerable effort has been spent in coming to an understanding of the marking process, to justify it to herself, as well as the students; once again, the associate lecturer is conscious of the monitoring system:

'I am clear why an assignment is a "C" and one is an "A". It is a subjective process, I know this, but have to be pragmatic, I have to mark it. It is also subjective because I have been to standardisation meetings where one marks as a "C" and one marks the

same assignment “A”, but this is beyond me. I have to trust my own marking, confident but not complacent.’

Student support

In this case study, the holistic nature of student support is more paramount with Imogen, as we have seen, using tutorials to try to pre-empt student queries in between tutorials and assignments; she also tries to use any email or phone contact to check out understandings and go beyond the presented problem from the student.

Imogen is keen to maximise the opportunities of student contact to check on their progress; no anxiety was expressed about students submitting late assignments or trying to get away with not submitting on unwarranted grounds, but there is some concern that email contact might limit the possibility of using an initial contact to engage the student in a dialogue:

‘Length of emails and phone calls will vary with the nature of enquiry. Sometimes students don’t realise how complex the issues are, so I encourage them to catch me before or after the tutorial so we can have a dialogue.’

Happy for phone calls to be longer as I am able to enter into a dialogue with the students. I can more readily ascertain their understandings, which is not so easy to do with emails.

Even with late assignment requests, it’s good to have a dialogue as the presented problem may not be the real issue and you can reveal this and start to resolve them with a dialogue.’

Standards are not specifically mentioned, but Imogen sets very demanding standards for herself and her students, expecting them to undergo a transformation as a result of their studies; she becomes concerned about her practice if this does not seem to be happening.

7.5 Knowledge resources

Knowledge of people

As with the other three case studies, the large figures in the practice of Imogen are her students, they are the figures around which her practice is built. As we see, other figures do impinge on Imogen's practice but not to the extent of her students:

'I do feel part of a community with my students: I have a number of students who have become friends, but I realise there is a power relationship here, I wonder if the power relations change over time.'

Number of former students also contact you, unhappy about their current tutor, 'it's a real bugger'. It puts you in a very difficult position. You explain the university does have procedures and support mechanisms for such circumstances and I ask them to contact the staff tutor. I have in the past invested a lot in this as I care about them and want the best for them, but I have learnt to disinvest and pass it on to staff tutor. I use to get more cross and upset but more pragmatic now.'

The importance of students as the central figures in associate lecturer practice in these case studies can also be seen by how incidents involving students are held in memory, recalled and thought about, regardless of how rare these incidents might be:

'You are also aware of their circumstances: once, I was vacillating about giving a 39 or 40 mark to a student who had just had a miscarriage, so I put academic circumstances to one side. I made that judgment because of the substitution rule; this meant the mark would not have made a difference either way to the overall course mark but would have made a huge difference to the confidence and well-being of the student. But this is very rare, we are talking about one occasion out of thousands of assignments I have marked.'

Two years ago, I had a student I could not handle, none of my strategies seemed to work, I felt he was a long way along the autism continuum. Seemed unable to respond

to others' comments and also found it difficult to move on. I was also concerned about the effect on the group. Really tough to be sensitive to him and keep him on the course and also to keep the rest of the group going and leave them feeling they were still getting sufficient of my attention. In this instance, I did contact the staff tutor; it was a type of self-protection, to make sure I had done all I could (but this was the only time in six years).

Most years I think of one student, 'shit, you really don't want me as your tutor'. I think I am trying everything I know but it is not working. This might be prejudice with older students, who don't like my humour and want the 'academic gravitas' left in, but I constantly debunk this. This does not suit those who think it should be difficult and academic and I have not really cracked this. Still working on this as it is not satisfactory to say "I don't suit you so tough".'

Once again, as in case study 1, the experience of a previous lecturer, while a student with the Workers' Education Association, has also had an influence. These are not just episodes placed in memory but are still actively referenced to make sense of current practice. They could be seen as types of stories in the Orr (1996) sense, creating a story about how tutorials should be practised. However, if this is such a story, it has not been socially constructed with other associate lecturers; any 'community of interpretation' has not been reached collectively. Such a social construction may be part of the process, with students as those who hear the story but who may also change it:

'WEA tutor was a big influence: not realised it at the time, but was promulgating the idea of large and small group work, very effective tutorials, but a great sense of a relaxed atmosphere, with room for students to take things to where they wanted to take it. I had sat through loads of poor Open University tutorials that were mini-lectures or had no structure at all. (The large and small group model was a model I found very easy to use. I ask myself: what do they need to be able to do by the end of the tutorial? I explain the process and also allow them to input into the process.)

Allow them to look at the texts or paintings and have their own insights. Feedback sessions so they can hear what other groups have done and allows me to draw out general points. '

As with the other three case studies, there is contact with the staff tutor and, in this case, the Arts Faculty manager; additionally, as with the other research participants, contact is intermittent and often brought about by student issues.

This level of contact, *pro rata*, might be seen as being equivalent to that of other teaching professions. However, what is lacking is the intensity to bring about the socially negotiated meaning within practice, witnessed by Wenger with other work groups, rather than the number of occasions that colleagues meet.

There is no contact regarding the subject area or wider issues concerning learning and teaching. In this case study, the staff development events organised by the Faculty within the Region are more of a constant, being regular, twice-yearly events. As with case study 3, there is also evidence of using a network of family and friends to discuss practice.

Knowledge of procedures, systems and policies

Imogen has a good knowledge of OU procedures, systems and policies, as can be evidenced from the use of the substitution rule we discussed when looking at assignment marking, and the plagiarism case when she had to follow detailed procedures to bring the suspected case to the university's attention.

In addition, as part of her academic self-identity, Imogen has developed a narrative for herself concerning academic conventions. She does not regard these conventions as being restrictive, but as helpful rules for her students to follow:

'Academic theory and conventions need not be a constraint, it can also facilitate students to clearly make their points rather than being a constraint. Structure has enabled them to produce substance by marshalling their thoughts and offer a cohesion rather than waffle away.

Sometimes, the intellectual insight is so unusual that they are articulating something without academic conventions. Usually, however, if they don't conform, they are whittling all over the shop. '

Imogen is aware how systems can label and categorise students, and guards against this affecting her practice:

'Very aware of the dangers of stereotyping students; for example, 'FAF' (financial assistance) students are described as being a drain on a tutor, one of my strongest students was a FAF student. Don't allow pre-experience to determine how you view that student. '

She is able to quote the course-marking framework and is comfortable using it. This may be because she has confidence in her own judgment, and the course team has confirmed that this is what they also wish her to do. There is, therefore, a level of trust that allows the marking framework to be used in a flexible and imaginative way and the framework itself is worded to allow for professional interpretation:

'At the Open University, these are told to you, A210 (course code) very prescriptive, even provide a grid.

Has student engaged, is there evidence of this, with the course material?

Has the student engaged with particular text the question is about?

Have they conformed to a range of academic conventions, is it a structured essay, subject introduced, have they made a number of points, does it use appropriate tone, detailed, logical, rational, formal, does it reference, quote, offer a bibliography?

Have they answered the question?'

As with case study 1, Imogen places a great importance on turning the assignments around as quickly as possible for her students, and treating them fairly by marking and returning first those which were submitted first.

She is also conscious of her marking being monitored, and would be concerned (as in case studies 1 and 2) if the monitoring reports were not to her satisfaction; she would be forced to reflect on and possibly amend her practice, and that could to some extent undermine it.

As expressed in case studies 1 and 2, there is concern about how the increased use of emails by students might be affecting practice. There is a clear preference for phone or face-to-face contact, which may be partly due to email traffic reducing the personal bonds that develop between students and associate lecturers.

Knowledge of organisational life and issues

As with case study 3, it is individual students who figure most prominently in Imogen's practice; the organisation is there, but very much in the background. However, the espoused mission and values of the OU do have a profound effect on the rationale, motivation and sense of self-identity that she has constructed:

'Once an Open University colleague said an Open University degree was not worth much. I fundamentally disagree with this; sometimes it increases income and status or provides professional recognition, such as a Teacher Assistant being able to move on into teaching. Also secondly, students come to the Open University with the feeling they are not academic, but they feel they have missed out and want desperately to share in the education, it brings about a dramatic transformation in confidence, and you are able to watch students blossom. That is what I want: when it does not happen, I agonise about why and what I can do for them.

In one year I had 16 part-time contracts and it made me cross that I was not recognised as a full-time member of academic staff. Now I have come to a point where I realise I want to teach OU students and not at a campus university, so I might as well shut up and get on with it.'

Imogen does identify facets of a community, or at least a sense of community spirit expressed in a feeling of belonging, and manifested in acts of mutual support:

'There is a sense of community: for example, I was sent £70 worth of gardening vouchers as wedding presents from colleagues, a card was sent round and signed by us all when a colleague became seriously ill, so there is a support mechanism but it's not the regular contact you might have at a more conventional job at a university. We have a group of 'ladies that lunch' but it only happens once a year.

Most of my practice takes place here in my home: I know the Arts Faculty manager and staff tutor but you don't bump into them on a regular basis in your own home, do you? When things go wrong or there are issues, you feel more part of a university.'

Imogen was the only research participant to mention union representation. She had met a senior representative of the OUAUT and felt that this meeting highlighted the disparate nature of associate lecturers; consequently, the difficulty of representing such a diverse group. Imogen felt the representative spoke for associate lecturers who had a full-time job plus a part-time OU contract, and not someone like herself, who depended on her OU work.

7.6 Summary

It is important to Imogen that her positive continuous narrative she creates for herself is seen both in terms of a mother and a professional academic lecturer. Her studies into gender issues and feminism have not only allowed her own exploration of herself and the world from these perspectives, but have produced a pedagogical viewpoint that sees education as a transformative process, both in improving the material well-being of her students and their intellectual abilities, thereby their own abilities to construct new identities for themselves.

This places a high expectation on education and she is dissatisfied if the process does not seem to be having these transformative effects on her students. Imogen sees herself as the 'enlightenment girl' and as such sees the possibilities of education as available to all. This is an important democratic belief, that all can learn and it is not the natural gift of a few.

Studentship

The pedagogical stand of the ‘enlightenment girl’ above brings with it the expectation that students can all learn the curriculum; it is down to her and her students to find ways around any learning difficulties or barriers. This requires the majority of her students to follow academic conventions and to engage consciously with the course material.

It might be assumed from the use of learning outcomes for her tutorials that Imogen holds an epistemological stance, seeing knowledge domains that can be defined with considerable precision. However, she uses learning outcomes much more progressively, using them to explore, appreciate and analyse the ‘canon’, rather than trying to pigeonhole knowledge into neat and tidy categories. This again shows the considerable agency open to associate lecturers in a dispersed system, even in areas that might seem prescriptive, such as learning outcomes.

Pastoral care

The drive for the transformative effects of education places pastoral care higher in importance for Imogen than maybe in the other three case studies. This is not the ‘Mother Hen’ effect referred to in case study 1 but a concern for the complication, the personal and value-laden nature of learning as perceived by Imogen. There is a sense that students are in some way a reflection of her own academic abilities as a lecturer, and their success or failure is in some measure her own success and failure. There is evidence that ‘space’ is being created between herself and students in order to stop what Imogen has perceived as student issues engulfing her own self-identity.

Community

The espoused values of the OU are important to Imogen’s own sense of identity, and she has come to a positive point in her narrative that teaching OU students from her home is what she wants to do. She has also developed her own ‘cultural artefact’ with her generic marking guideline. However, as this has been developed without the input of other associate lecturers, it may not be seen as ‘cultural’ in the same way as described in communitarian theory. It is

another example of the agency available to associate lecturers that she was able to develop such a tool for her practice without a relationship with other associate lecturers or input from the organisation.

Again, we have reifications of theory that have not been subject to mutual negotiation and, as a result, terms like pastoral care, tutorials and correspondence tuition have different meanings for her in the detail of her practice.

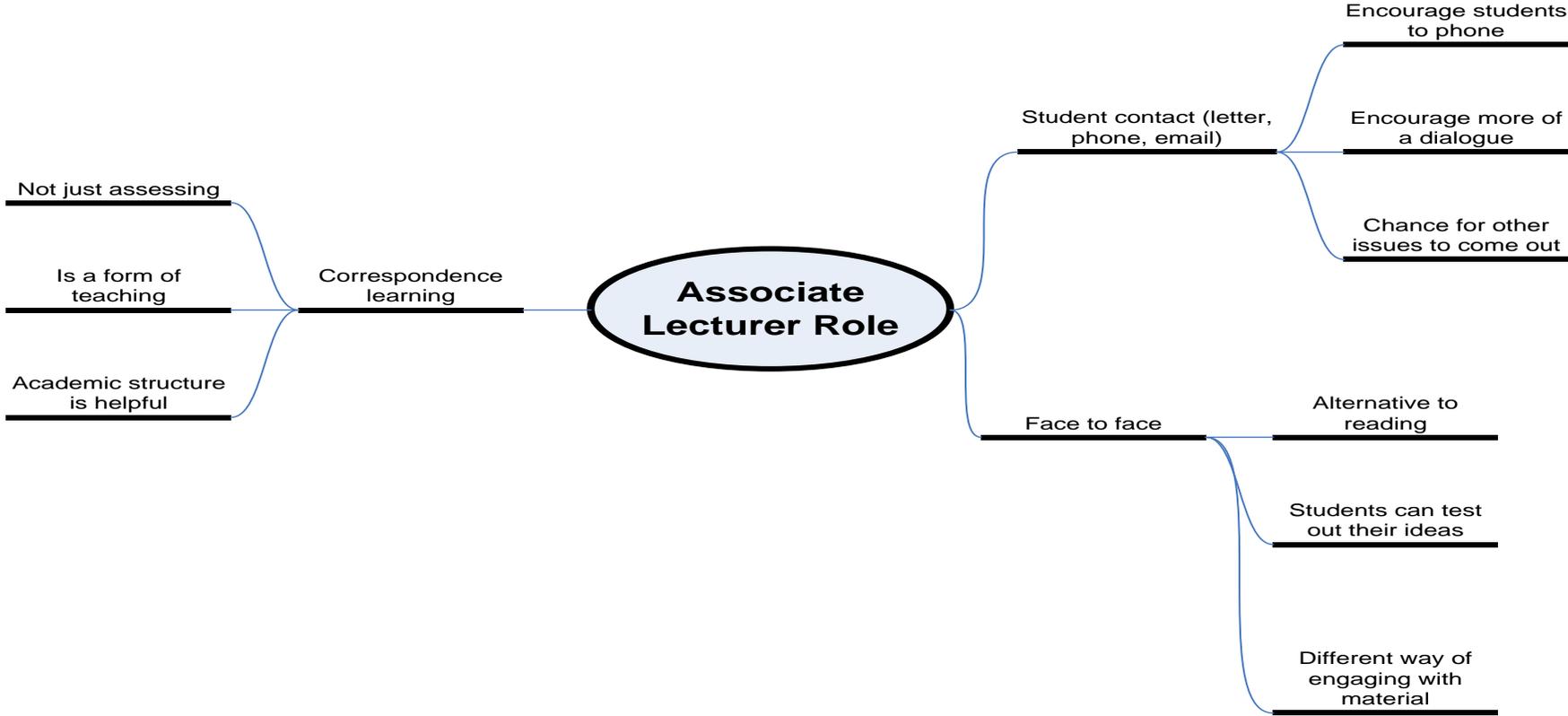
The opportunities to meet other colleagues are eagerly taken up by Imogen and a sense of community is created with, for example, cards being sent to ill colleagues, her own wedding recognised with presents from colleagues and occasional lunches. However, this is different from the intense mutual negotiations witnessed by researchers such as Lave and Wenger.

The relationships with other associate lecturers and colleagues within the university are more infrequent, and the connections are of a looser nature. The relationship with the university is described in a more positive nature and is seen as a source of support when things go awry.

Again, experiences outside of the 'community of practice' are important in the narratives, with the model provided by the WEA tutor, her small and large group work, and the experiences of being a student herself, good and bad. This would suggest knowledge constructed as part of experiences is at least generated from without any community of practitioners, as well as from within.

It is difficult to place the students, who are the large figures in all four case studies, into the models of social practice theory. It is like trying to bring the customers of the medical claims processor studies by Wenger into the community of practice. Students are an important facet in occupational identity-building for associate lecturers, which is not adequately explained by models of communities of practice.

Figure 4: Practice Cluster Spider Diagram, Case Study 4



CHAPTER 8 Analysis and synopsis

8.1 Introduction

The typologies developed by both Eraut and Blackler used in the analysis of the data collected, are used in this chapter to identify, map and come to a deeper understanding of the knowledge resources used by associate lecturers; the chapter also discusses the difficulties and limitations of this approach when the aim of the research is to come to a more integrated understanding of the nature of associate lecturer activity.

In order to move towards this more complete picture of associate lecturer practice and in addition to recognise that this practice is carried out within and as part of a social context, social practice theory, activity theory and actor network theory are all used to expand and deepen the understanding of associate lecturer practice in a dispersed community.

8.2 Biography and identity

Each case study starts with a biography and identity section; it may not seem apparent why these sections should appear in a thesis exploring current practice and the knowledge resources used to carry out that current practice.

The answer at one level is that the case studies reveal historical incidents and experiences that still have a profound effect on the beliefs and values of the associate lecturers involved in this study, and on how they carry out their current practice. However, they also have a profound effect at a deeper level. Giddens (1991 p. 14) offers a powerful definition of self-identity and how it affects all our actions:

'Self-identity for us forms a trajectory across the different institutional settings of modernity over the duree of what used to be called the 'life cycle', a term which applies much more accurately to non-modern contexts than to modern ones. Each of us not only 'has' but lives a biography reflexively organised in terms of flows of social and psychological information about possible ways of life.

Modernity is a post-traditional order, in which the question 'How shall I live?' has to be answered in day-to-day decisions about how to behave, what to eat – and many other things – as well as interpreted within the temporal unfolding of self-identity.'

Using this concept, the case studies can be seen as snapshots of interpretations of current practice, and as part of a continual process of creating self-identity; the world is both moulding the process and individuals are also moulding the world. The use of identity-building allows us to bring together the cognitive and the social, and to see these four associate lecturers in an integrated way, as whole beings within a social setting that they themselves are also moulding as well as being moulded by.

8.3 Knowledge resources

Each case study then proceeds to explore knowledge resources in terms of knowledge of people, procedures, systems and policies, and knowledge of organisational life and issues. Again, the importance of these on current practice is highlighted by Giddens (1991) and how he sees organisational life as being one of the main facets of modernity. Giddens identifies the major feature of modernity as being the organisation; what distinguishes the modern organisation is not so much its size or bureaucratic nature, but the way it is able to carry out concentrated reflective monitoring. Via this monitoring, Giddens argues organisations are able to regularise and control social relations across time and space; they both permit and entail.

Giddens (1991 p. 16) paints a picture of a 'runaway world', not only in the pace of change but also with the scope and profoundness of this change, its effects on social practices and modes of behaviour. The future is continually drawn into the present by means of the reflective organisation of knowledge environments. Modern organisations can presume the precise co-ordination of the actions of many people, even though they are physically separated from one another; the 'when' of these actions is directly connected to the 'where', but not, as in pre-modern times, via the mediation of place.

This research initially used two parallel definitions of knowledge from Eraut (2000). The first is codified knowledge, also referred to as public or propositional knowledge. Eraut defines codified knowledge as being subject to quality control by editors, peer review and debate, and given status by incorporation into educational programmes, examinations and courses. It includes propositions about skilled behaviour, but not skills of 'knowing how'.

The second definition is personal knowledge, as the cognitive resource which a person brings to a situation that enables them to think and perform. This personal knowledge incorporates codified knowledge in its personalised form, together with procedural and process knowledge, experiential knowledge and impressions in episodic memory. Eraut includes skills as part of this personal knowledge, thus allowing representations of competence, capability or expertise in which the use of skills and propositional knowledge are closely integrated.

Eraut therefore suggests codified knowledge could be identified by its source and epistemological status, and personal knowledge by the context and manner of its use.

Codified knowledge is explicit by definition; personal knowledge may be either explicit or tacit.

The tacit part of personal knowledge is defined by Eraut (2000) in three categories. The first is tacit knowledge of people and contexts; he sees one of the most important features of any workplace or community as being the people with whom one interacts. Such knowledge provides the basis of unhesitating daily interactions with others.

Secondly, Eraut (2000) identifies implicit theories, inferred correlations or casual linkages between attributes of a person or an organisation. These theories are called implicit, because they are seldom explicitly stated by the knower; such theories form part of the taken-for-granted world of the knower, their social reality.

Thirdly, Eraut (2000) identifies tacit knowledge in action, action described as routinised when actors no longer need to think about what they are doing because they have done it so

many times before. Routinisation starts by following other people, manuals or checklists, or even self-devised procedures. Learning by repetition enables the actor first to reach the stage where the aid of a person or checklist is no longer required, and then to progress to a future stage where an internalised explicit description of the procedure also becomes redundant and eventually falls into disuse.

This typology of tacit knowledge was initially useful in analysing and identifying if such categories of knowledge could be found within the narratives of the four associate lecturers, how they were used in practice and the linkages to associate lecturer biography and identity. For example, tacit knowledge of people and contexts could be illustrated by case study 3 where students are described as the big figures in Joe's life, people struggling to learn; the tutor describes the great satisfaction he feels in this, and how he feels part of the joy of learning. He describes how student issues and personal things would trigger in his memory a whole range of issues about the student. The tutor does not carry the assignment mark around in his memory, but has a broad perception of whether the student has generally done well or not.

In case study 2, the tutor has a well-developed image of his regional manager; he sees this as a functional relationship in terms of, say, getting a course tutor vacancy filled, and not one in which to have discussions about learning, teaching or the subject-matter. He is aware that conversations with this individual, from his perception, are dominated by him complaining about things. He perceives contact with other associate lecturers as being limited in nature and assumed this was normal, each tutor being autonomous and self-contained; he had also developed an opinion that the mentoring system was nothing more than a joke.

On closer examination, the examples from case studies 1 and 3 not only show a knowledge of their students but also indicate an inferred theory, namely that learning should be fun and be a joint exercise between teacher and students. This knowledge of students is not just used in face-to-face situations, but also in less obvious cases such as marking assignments, with

associate lecturers recalling a thread of issues on a particular student and using this to adapt their assignment feedback to the individual in a more personalised form.

This identified a difficulty in using the typology in grounded research; even short narratives can demonstrate more than one of the categories of knowledge; the richness of practice that is demonstrated in using the knowledge holistically could easily be lost if each narrative were reduced to one type of category.

Associate lecturers get to know their students and others in the organisation for a purpose; these intentions, and the responses that associate lecturers receive from others, make up another part of the reflexive process and remind us of the usefulness of seeing knowledge as a verb rather than a noun. As argued by Kelly (1955), people develop personal constructs or ways of construing their environment and these in turn affect their understanding of, and hence behaviour towards, those whom they meet. Tacit knowledge of people is not unbiased. For example, one cannot mistake the biased nature of the comment on mentoring (or the lack of it) in case study 2; this implies there was a greater expectation and a disappointment in the current mentoring system as experienced by this associate lecturer.

In terms of the concept of a 'continuous narrative' and the idea of a 'cocoon of practical consciousness' offered by Giddens (1991 p. 53), tacit knowledge of people and context are an integral part of that narrative and cocoon; separating them out creates the possibility of losing some of the understandings that have been developed by the associate lecturer.

People and their contexts are also often part of the figurative language used by associate lecturers to describe their practice; again some of the understandings are lost if they are removed from the language patterns being used. As Wubbels (1992) identified, figurative language used by lecturers often relies on the use of *gestalts* such as metaphors, models and analogies; as we have seen, students are such a big part of associate lecturer practice that the *gestalts* in this research often refer to student traits.

The strong interrelationship between Eraut's knowledge types is not limited to people and their contexts, and is further emphasised when identifying evidence of implicit theories, inferred correlations or casual linkages between attributes of a person or an organisation. This can be illustrated in case study 3, when the tutor explains how his tutorial starts as soon as the first student arrives. And how important he feels about making them welcome, as small things can upset people and prevent them from relaxing. The tutor has a sense of pride when a 'buzz' is created in the tutorial, feeling good that he has created it but also worried this does not always happen; at other times, it can feel like 'wading through spaghetti'.

The tutor has also constructed an important perception of his role as making sense of the Open University for his students in the first year, because he feels they have a lot to understand and his goal is to make them feel more comfortable with the organisation by the end of that year. Part of this role is to remove any panic in his students and to try to make them concentrate on the positives; he sees this as part of the emotional side of studying with the OU. He tries to make course concepts more accessible to his students by finding examples that he feels they will find more familiar, thereby offering a more comfortable context for students to grapple with the concept. There is recognition that students may process information differently and the tutor sees this in terms of different learning styles. The tutor also wishes this to be an active process, working through the concept and examples together with his students.

These narratives give indications of possible implicit theories of teaching. For example, the need to be welcoming to students and make them feel ontologically secure, to lose the panic and support students emotionally by focusing on the positives, and cognitively by making course concepts accessible, recontextualising them so students can make connections between their present understandings and what could be new, strange or even threatening concepts. There is recognition by the tutor that these discussions with his students may be driven by the next assignment, and he is always looking for opportunities to broaden out the discussion.

However, again the narratives make more sense when these implicit theories are linked to knowledge of people and also linked to practice. When linked in this way, they can be seen as part of the third Eraut categorisation of ‘routinisation’, tacit knowledge in action. The implicit theory of wishing to provide ontological security is congruent with the practice of making students feel welcome and making concepts accessible, and requires some knowledge of the students in the group. These categories are not linear or hierarchical but together do begin to show the complexity of associate lecturer practice.

A possible explanation for these strong linkages between Eraut categories is offered by Horvath *et al.* (1996 p. 7) in terms of Tulving’s (1972 pp. 382–403) theory of memory. Horvath makes a distinction between episodic memory for specific, personally experienced events and semantic memory for generalised knowledge that transcends particular moments. The traffic between these two memory types is explained by Horvath as mental processes that are sensitive to the covariance structure of the environment, to ‘what goes with what’ in the world.

This offers a possible explanation of how memories of certain incidents retold in the case study narratives, such as the classroom incident of over 40 years ago in case study 1, or the positive experiences of being a pupil of a WEA tutor in case study 4, might be used to build a more generalised knowledge, such as the perceived need for control in the teaching environment in case study 1 or the use of small and large group work in case study 4.

This interwoven nature of knowledge is further emphasised when examining the narratives for signs of routinisation, tacit knowledge in action. In these narratives, you can see all the types of knowledge coming together; a good example of this is in the types of routinisation associated with associate lecturers marking and giving feedback on assignments. The tutor in case study 2 describes how the assignment-marking guide just becomes a reminder, and, after marking five assignments, it is no longer needed. In case study 1, the tutor does refer to the ‘Green Form’ to look for a pattern in past marks, not in order to predetermine the mark but to get a feeling of the student’s previous marks. However, he was adamant that he was

open-minded and wished to be pleasantly surprised, regardless of previous marks. It is interesting to note in case study 2 how the pen has also become a type of cultural artefact; the tutor is only prepared to use a black or blue pen because a red pen is associated with school teaching in his perception. The order of the routine of assignment marking is also commented on by the tutor. Sometimes, he builds up the assignment comment sheet (PT3) as he marks and sometimes he marks the assignment in 'chunks' and goes back to the PT3 after each chunk, aware that some of his comments may be less relevant as the student addresses them later in the assignment. The introduction of the electronic assignment marking system (ETMA) is also commented on, changing the way assignments are marked in the sense of place. As result of the ETMA system, assignments are increasingly done at home and not in small periods of time at work or travelling.

The knowledge of the course is described as being 'tacit' by the tutor in case study 1; he looks up references but regards his knowledge of the course as being so 'deep' that he does not have to refer to them. Unlike the tutor in case study 3, this tutor does not have a mental picture of the student whose assignment he is marking. He has 'mental notes' of the course material they should have covered in the assignment in broad terms but, again, is prepared to be surprised by a different angle taken by a student and thus prepared to adjust his mental notes. The tutor in case study 1 chooses a student assignment which he anticipates will produce a 'good' assignment. This is in order to build up his own confidence that he has perceived the course in the same way as his students. It also gives him a 'gentle' start into the process and helps act as a benchmark for the other assignments. There is an emotional dimension, with the need for the tutor to take courage in readiness for a 'poor' assignment, armed with the extra confidence of knowing what a good assignment looks like. There is also a need for persistence in order to get through five or six assignments in a two to three hour marking session.

These routines in assignment marking not only indicate possible routinisation in action, but also the use of tacit knowledge of individuals (in this case students) and implied theories

about what makes a good, average or poor assignment. However, these routines are interspersed with deliberative thinking; for example, if a student takes a valid or surprising angle on a course concept, or if a student who had submitted previously poor work submits a good assignment. Again, this mixture of routinised knowledge and deliberative thinking shows the advantage of seeing knowledge as an active process of building understandings, rather than as a static typology.

Gibson (1986) sees 'affordances' as a metaphor of the environment: what it offers those living in that environment, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill. The verb 'afford' is in the dictionary, but the noun 'affordance' is not and has been made up by Gibson. It is something that refers both to the environment and to the animal (those living within the environment): they (affordances) have to be measured relative to the animal. They are not just abstract physical properties – an affordance is neither an objective property nor a subjective property, but it could be both. It is equally a fact of the environment and a fact of behaviour; an affordance points both ways, to the environment and to the observer.

Goodyear (2000 p. 21) sees the possibility of learning happening within a learning architecture and this is about 'crafting' affordances. Architecture (built space) does not determine activity, but bad architecture endangers some kinds of valued activity. Good architecture can nurture it, but the users of built space still have proper scope for autonomy.

Using this metaphor by seeing the built space as the OU teaching systems and then adding the research findings of Tait (2002 p. 6) that the 'intrinsic, self-actualising motivation was strong in her sample of associate lecturers in the Open University'. When Tait's (2002 p. 13) survey asked the question 'what would you be most keen to participate further in?', the most forceful responses turned out to be variations on the themes 'making a difference to student learning'. The case studies in this thesis would support these findings in terms of students being the most dominant influence on associate lecturer practice. Therefore, returning to the built space metaphor, associate lecturers seem to be taking the maximum opportunities

provided by the built space to take advantage of these affordances to concentrate on their students.

Evidence of the bidirection of affordances (Knight 2002 p. 157) can be seen by the associate lecturers feeding back and trying to influence the built space; the tutor in case study 4 feels she is required to deliver less-than-perfect courses, but was pleased to hear from a central academic (in a frank and pragmatic session for associate lecturers) why courses were produced in such a way and the constraints that they were under. The tutor in case study 2 describes how his students report they just want the MBA after their name, i.e. get their 'ticket punched'. He feels students could make more of the course material, but he believes the OU has been set up for 'surface' learning to take place; despite the course materials being written for 'deep' learning, the demands on part-time students are too great for this to happen. In contrast, the tutor in case study three sees his tutorials as opportunities to get off the course 'treadmill' and broaden out to explore ideas in a more experimental way.

In case study 4, the associate lecturer was even prepared to develop her own cultural artefact in order to help her with assignment processing. This sophisticated computerised general marking tool allowed her to mark and give feedback within 30 minutes per assignment. Generic feedback narrative was developed to cover each concept that might be discussed within an assignment. However, these feedback narratives were not used in a mechanistic and standardised way, as might be suggested by the extreme teacher-focused concept discussed earlier. Instead, each narrative was personalised and appropriately added to, in order to reflect the relationship building that was being constructed between student and associate lecturer. For example, as the relationship deepened, the feedback narrative might be made more light-hearted and make references to incidents at the tutorial or build on comments from previous assignments.

The ability of associate lecturers to undertake skilled routine tasks that still require interruptions of deliberative thinking is essential in a teaching environment where they feel 'crowded' in terms of the part-time nature of their employment and the amount of time they

are contracted to spend on teaching. These facets of skilled behaviour are essential to understanding the nature of portfolio working, which requires workers to have a number of routines from different employment contexts, and the need for a myriad of deliberative thinking in a range of contexts.

Eraut's (1994) typology has allowed this thesis to explore the complexity of the knowledge resources used by associate lecturers, the importance of the interrelationships between these categories and the skilled ways associate lecturers marshal these resources to carry out their teaching practice.

Despite the emphasis placed on these interrelationships between knowledge resources, there is still a danger of reductionism and assuming that identification of Eraut's classifications adds up to the whole of knowledge resources available to associate lecturers. Giddens (1991) identified this reductionism as a feature of modernity and described the 'disembedding' of knowledge from their particular locales, and the creation of expert systems that try to capture the essence of practice. The danger of such expert systems is that they use knowledge categories as definitions, and fail to appreciate the rich and complex way they are put together in order to be used in practice.

In order to avoid the possibility of disembedding and losing the particular locales, and to maximise the possibilities of seeing the knowledge resources holistically, this thesis also analyses the knowledge resources by using Blackler (1995). Although coming from an organisational learning angle, Blackler's categories offer the possibility of avoiding these limitations of competencies, especially in his use of 'embedded' knowledge, which he describes as the taken-for-granted knowledge requiring minimal conscious deliberation, and 'embodied' knowledge, which is action and context-specific, relying on interaction and sensory awareness in working contexts.

Returning to the previous narratives describing assignment marking and feedback, it is possible to illustrate Blackler's category of embodied knowledge. Zuboff (1988) says such knowledge

depends on people's physical presence, on sentient and sensory information, physical cues and face-to-face discussions, is acquired by doing, and rooted in specific contexts.

Certainly, the narratives on assignment marking are action-oriented and only partly explicit; as explained earlier, there is an 'other' (the artistry) which constitutes part of what may seem a mundane and routinised operation. In the definition of Zuboff, sentient (which is the power of perception by the senses) is used by associate lecturers when using these powers both in terms of the written word, phone contact and physical cues (if students attend tutorials), in order to build a relationship with the student and to create an image of that student, even if they have not met physically.

Blacker defines embedded knowledge as knowledge which resides in systemic routines, based on the work of Granovetter (1985); his idea was that economic behaviour is intimately related to social and institutional arrangements. Embedded knowledge is analysable in systems terms, in the relationships between, for example, technologies, formal procedures and emergent routines.

We have already identified systematic routines that have been put into place by the university, such as the monitoring system, assignment substitution rules, procedures on plagiarism and how they influence associate lecturer practice. Research participants made reference to the growing use of email for student contact and the use of the Electronic Tutor Marked Assignment (ETMA) system. Although not specifically mentioned by associate lecturers, there is a growth in electronic systems that will impinge on their practice in the future, for example the 'TutorHome' website that gives associate lecturers a range of information including, for the first time, their allocation of students and any changes in student details.

This systems approach to the analysis of associate lecturers' knowledge is helpful, as it points to the importance of the relationships between technologies, formal rules and

emergent routines. However, as was discussed with the Eraut categories, do the interrelationships make sufficient links?

How do we establish the boundaries between one activity regarded as a 'system' and another, and how are they in turn linked? For example, seeing the assignment-marking system as a system comprised of technologies (ETMA), people monitoring, formal procedures (substitution rule, submission dates, late submission rules) and emergent routines (such as the development of a generic marking guide in case study 4), the routines of finding a benchmark (starting with a good one) and deciding how to build the PT3 feedback form (at the end or build as you go), would create a respectable system map. There would be a danger in this systems approach of ignoring the considerable individual agency that is put into the system by associate lecturers, and the system boundaries need to be drawn in a way that reflects the individual nature of marking practice. If not, we are in danger of marginalising important aspects of the system or ignoring them completely. In such a system map, we would also need to emphasise sufficiently the importance and complexity of interfaces to other systems in order to capture the many connections between different parts of practice.

This already complex picture is added to by our earlier discussions on biography, identity and beliefs to become what Nespor (1987 p. 324) called an entangled domain. Nespor argued that the nature of teaching and the teacher's work is often so ill-defined that thematic features only partially overlap and connections are often incomplete and unclear. When confronted with such entangled domains, cognitive and information-processing strategies do not work, appropriate schemata are disconnected and unavailable, the teacher is uncertain of what information is needed or what behaviour is appropriate. Unable to use more appropriate knowledge structures and cognitive strategies in these situations, the teacher uses belief and belief structures, with all their problems and inconsistencies.

Blackler (1995) himself turned to social practice theory to offer further insights into this 'entangled domain' described by Nespor; it is important in Blackler's third category of encultured knowledge with its emphasis on achieving shared understandings and the idea of

knowledge being socially constructed and open to negotiation. These communitarian models are also important in relation to this research where, as already indicated, the traditional components of a community may be different, or of a different order, for a dispersed community of associate lecturers working in the Open University.

8.4 Associate lecturer discourse

We can also see their effects on the discourse used by the associate lecturers in the four case studies, and especially the use of metaphors and images to capture in narrative the essence of their practice.

Calderhead and Robson (1991) undertook a study of 12 primary school teachers; they were found to hold particular images of teaching, mostly derived from their experiences in schools as pupils, which were sometimes highly influential in their interpretation of the course and of classroom practice.

The evidence of past experiences influencing present practice in the case studies would seem to support the findings of Calderhead and Robson. Witnessing a classroom incident 40 years ago was still influencing the practice of the associate lecturer in case study 1; it was still influencing his belief in the need to maintain control of his teaching environment and the internal struggle he has within himself to be more relaxed. We see in case study 4 the influences that a WEA tutor has had in the belief in group work and how it should be managed. However, the source of influences on associate lecturer practice is not limited to the classroom, and increasing numbers of associate lecturers come from non-educational backgrounds.

Associate lecturers are able to draw on a wide field of experiences, and see part of their role as making the course material more accessible to their students by relating it to everyday experiences. This perception of the need to relate course material to student everyday experiences may, in some part, also come from another belief that they are dealing with ‘non-traditional’ students who have not followed the conventional paths of education (a

belief supported by the institution), rather than doing so as part of a general theory of teaching and learning such as notions of scaffolding within zones of proximal development as suggested by Vygotsky (1978).

Watzlawick (1993 p. 47) makes the case that experiences and knowledge of everyday life result in images that represent people's constructions of reality. These images are the essential knowledge of people about the world, i.e. 'world images'.

If we explore the case studies for 'world images', we have already discovered influences which are dominated by the student group and, to a lesser extent (but still influential) of the discipline, the department and the organisation. It would seem plausible, therefore, that the 'world views' of associate lecturers are being moulded in a two-way reflexive process that is distinct from their full-time academic colleagues in more conventional universities. As we have analysed the interconnections between biography and identity and current practice, we need to see what connections they have to the knowledge resources used by associate lecturers in their practice.

8.5 Organisational considerations

Giddens suggests one of these connections between biography, identity and knowledge resources is the massive increase in organisational power associated with the emergence of modern social life which has brought with it a type of surveillance and supervisory control; this control can take the form of 'invisible' supervision in the Foucault sense or in the use of information to co-ordinate social activities.

This definition of how organisations can separate time from place, and the possibility of articulation of social relations across wide spurs of time-space (up to and including global systems), described by Giddens (1991), offers a possible explanation of how an organisation such as the OU can still influence the practice of thousands of associate lecturers, even when the evidence in the four case studies suggests they are only loosely connected to the organisation. For example, this might help to explain how the assignment-marking

monitoring system has such an effect on the current practices of all the research participants. If seen as a surveillance system in the Giddens (1991) sense, you begin to see how, as in case study 4, it changes the way in which the associate lecturer gives feedback (seeing it as a public document as well as a document for the student) and how a report suggesting an associate lecturer was marking low, as in case study 2, can produce such a sense of outrage and undermining of current marking practice. This could be seen as a type of ‘invisible’ supervision in the Foucault sense, and shows what power a system can hold, even when highly impersonalised.

This invisible supervision may also have more positive attributes as the power of the organisation can be drawn on by associate lecturers; for example, in case study 4, things are perceived as going less well with a student and the organisation is contacted, and it was certainly during these contacts that this particular associate lecturer felt more part of the university.

An alternative explanation to activity theory for the trends identified in this research is offered by Jones and Moore (1993 p. 390) who see these as trends devised for the purposes of social control. This is achieved by the development of ‘expert systems’ that are detached from local contexts and practices, and are assumed to have general application independent of context. These expert systems can then be used to remove the power of professions to define their knowledge and practice within their own fields; control is instead with the organisation, which controls via technical methods, such as the regulation of outputs and performance indicators.

This is the process of disembedding referred to by Giddens (1991 p. 18) when ‘expert systems’ are built without the social relationships, and the encultured form of knowledge we discussed earlier in this chapter is instead reduced to a list of functions.

Evidence for this process can be seen in the 11-point role definition (Appendix B) that was devised by the organisation as part of the new contract negotiations to describe the role of

the associate lecturer, and is in stark contrast to the narratives of the four case studies of this research. There is no mention of the routinisation of practice, variations in practice and beliefs or the differences in the continuous narratives of self-identity that underpinned their individual practice. If this is the beginning of an expert system, it paints a homogenous and uniform picture of associate lecturer practice that is at odds with the findings of this research. This transformation from the practice described in the case studies to the eleven point role definition is explained by Bernstein (1990 p. 181) as expert systems institutionally recontextualising aspects of primary discourses and disembedding and incorporating areas of everyday practice. Control of expert systems is maintained by the use of a 'pedagogic device', which removes practice from its contexts, relocates it into a selective reordering and focuses into an imaginary practice that eventually becomes the way of talking about practice, as if it is 'real' practice.

There is evidence of the beginnings of such expert systems both in the espoused documents of the associate lecturer but also in how the university considers the role should be carried out in documentation in Tutor Toolkits, Supported Open Learning materials and the introduction of the new TutorHome web portal for associate lecturers.

However, there is little evidence so far that, if this 'pedagogic device' is being used by the organisation, it is having much effect on the actual practice of associate lecturers. It could be that these moves to an 'imaginary' practice have had insufficient time to establish themselves or, alternatively, it could be a further facet of dispersed communities, in that such power devices are less effective in them. For example, one would expect to see more evidence of the discourse of the imaginary practice coming out in the narratives of the four case studies. Bernstein (1971) had envisaged that the new imaginary discourse was to be embedded by skills training. Just as the dispersed nature of associate lecturer practice makes the mutual negotiation of meaning difficult, it may also be limiting the effects of the pedagogic device and the embedding of any imaginary discourse.

As we have seen, there is evidence, of discourses concerning competency and vocationalism which Jones and Moore (1993) would see as reflections from expert systems and the creation of imaginary practice from these systems; the powerful recontextualising imagined via the pedagogic device at least seems a weaker force when applied to the practice of associate lecturers. If these forces of social control are operating, there seems the possibility that there are also social forces working in the opposite direction. This again might be especially so in a dispersed system where there is a stronger sense of individual agency and the organisation has to work even harder to maintain its control or influence.

The effect on practice is that, as tradition loses more and more hold on the practices of our daily lives, individuals are faced with a 'dialectical interplay' between the local and global, and are faced with an array of diverse lifestyle choices through which they have to negotiate themselves, unable to allow tradition to make choices for them.

The locale for associate lecturers in this research is the home environment: that is where assignments are marked and is also sometimes where tutorials or additional sessions take place. Even when the tutorials take place in a tutorial centre, the locale for the associate lecturers is the home. This can be contrasted with an Open University that has increasing global aspirations (students studying all over the world), with increasing numbers of programmes being delivered on a national basis from one, or a small number of, administrative locations, rather than the historical model of each Region delivering all programmes. This can increase the 'invisible' nature of the organisation with greater reliance on electronic systems of information delivery and contact (e.g. the expectation that associate lecturers log on regularly to the TutorHome website). This website provides details about the membership of their student group and any subsequent changes, as well as a large array of other information.

This creates the possibility in the modern world that knowledge itself is no longer seen as being stable, established by centuries of sureties of tradition and habit; doubt becomes a pervasive feature of our everyday life as well as philosophical consciousness, and forms a

general existential dimension to our modern lives. Knowledge becomes a number of hypotheses, which may be true but at some point may need to be abandoned. Systems of accumulated expertise, that are important features of our identity, are increasingly being questioned and divergent in their implications.

8.6 *The emotions of being an associate lecturer*

In order to be able to operate in and with the world, we need to have a certain amount of ontological security, what Tillich (1977) calls the ‘courage to be’, and robustness of practical consciousness. The alternative to this is chaos, uncertainty and practice paralysis becoming overwhelmed by anxieties. Practical consciousness helps to keep us going with our daily routines, and keep any anxieties in check.

Therefore, it is possible to describe the practice in the case studies as in some senses fragile, depending on the level of ontological security of the associate lecturer. A good example of this is the discussions in case studies 3 and 4. Both associate lecturers had experienced, at staff development events, the subjective nature of giving marks for student assignments and, through a reflexive process, both had come to terms with this subjectivity in their own way. They were also conscious of the need to come to this practical response, which may be unproven and even unprovable; otherwise they would be unable to proceed with marking assignments. It is nonetheless both a sturdy and fragile social construction.

Further evidence of this sturdiness and fragility can be seen with case study 2. The research participant is deeply concerned at the suggestion that he marks low – his anxiety is dealt with by satisfying himself that this is not the case by comparing his assignment marks with the exam marks of his students and finding little difference. This additional work of comparison provides ontological security and helps keep the anxiety, created from the monitor reports, from disturbing his practice. One can see, from the discourse used, that this is both a cognitive and emotional process.

Kierkegaard (1989 p. 87) captures these struggles, describing to 'be', for the human individual, having ontological awareness; the struggle of being against non-being is the perpetual task of being alive, not just to 'accept' reality but to create for oneself ontological reference points as the integral part of 'going on' in the context of day-to-day life. All humans 'answer' the question of 'being' by the nature of the activities they carry out.

For the associate lecturer in case study 1, the trauma of witnessing a teacher hiding from a class could offer an ontological reference point, an incident that quickly and authentically brings to mind why he believes some control is necessary and also how the memories of being an 'A' level pupil and then teaching students going for public exams created the feelings that there must be something both more exciting and more lasting. He felt the desire to bring about these conditions by 'loosening up' and allowing more freedom in his tutorial, but the need for control would never quite go away; hence the struggle referred to by Kierkegaard.

Even in the world of modernity, there is still a place for tradition, and it still has an effect on current practice. Tradition can create strands of 'authenticated practice' which are carried forward into the future; time is not empty and a consistent 'mode of being' relates future to past. Tradition has the ability to create a sense of firmness about things as it mixes cognitive and moral elements – the world is seen as it is because it is as it should be.

There is evidence in the case studies that associate lecturer practice is 'authenticated' by the interactions with their students and has at least as much influence on practice as the organisation and the discipline. If a teaching strategy seems to be working in terms of students increasing their understanding, the strategy is stored and is available for use in future practice. Equally, if a strategy does not seem to work for a particular group, the reasons are debated by the associate lecturer until they have a resource of what one participant called 'little strategies' to call upon. As can also be seen in the case studies, this 'mode of being' created by associate lecturers is not just a cognitive process but is also an emotional process. Feelings of excitement, anxiety and concern are created in the tutorial

situation, but are also present in the assignment-marking process, along with feelings of dread and drudgery.

8.7 Students at the centre of associate lecturer practice

The evidence in the four case studies places emphasis on the students and the ‘self’ at the fore in the process of associate lecturer identity-building. These findings are in contrast to other research findings, such as those of Henkel (2002) who found in conventional university settings a greater importance placed on the discipline and the department as the key factors in academic identity-building in the UK. The research of Henkel follows that of Clark (1983) which defined first the discipline, and secondly the university or enterprise as the key communities in which academics engage in their identity-building. Clark argues they form an asymmetrical and incommensurate framework of influences: the dominant but diffuse power of the discipline is in part embodied in the local and tangible form of the department, which is in itself derived from an institutional and indeed a national context. Being a member of a department can influence individuals in their orientation towards their discipline by the collective daily responsibilities of being a department member.

The evidence of this study would suggest the local and tangible is not the department for associate lecturers; it is their own homes and their own student group. The day-to-day dialogue, negotiation of meaning and growing mutuality is with their students, not with departmental colleagues.

As we see with the discussion on ‘surveillance’ and the ‘invisible’ power of organisations, the Faculty, Course Team and university do have an influence on associate lecturer practice, in terms of cultural artefacts such as Course Teams Marking Guides, or providing overall course, individual block and unit aims and objectives and the course material itself. However as can be seen in the individual nature of the case studies, these still provide considerable room for individual associate lecturers to find their own orientations to their practice.

This concern and ability of the research participants to adapt to the differing needs of their students has been researched by Entwistle *et al.* (2000 p. 22), who showed that some teachers developed what they termed a 'multiple inclusive' approach in order to accommodate students with differing levels of interest in the subject. To illustrate this approach it is necessary to look at two extreme conceptions of teaching and then compare the evidence of teaching conceptions in this research against these positions. It is then possible to see how the multiple inclusive approach can be formulated from drawing on both of these extreme positions:

The importance of conceptions and beliefs about what constitutes quality teaching and learning has been well researched (Kember 1997, 1998; Prosser and Trigwell 1997; Prosser, Trigwell and Taylor 1994; Samuelowicz 1999; Samuelowicz and Bain 1992). Entwistle *et al.* (2000) illustrate the two extreme conceptions of teaching. In a teacher-focused approach, the teacher is concerned with the content and with covering the syllabus fully; it is seen as their duty to develop student knowledge and skills that are needed to pass examinations, even if they recognise that this is giving their students a narrow kind of education. In a more student-focused approach, the role of the lecturer is seen as bringing inquiry to life, challenging students to think things through for themselves, maintaining a sense of theatre and constantly looking for opportunities to engage students' interest and thinking, challenge current student perceptions. The metaphor used is a masterful jazz musician, improvising and interacting with partners, allowing the instrument to speak, to express and inspire, rather than having to clumsily pluck or blow to force a predictable outcome.

Associate lecturers in this research demonstrate conceptions of teaching in their practice from both these extremes. In case study 2, the associate lecturer is concerned whether his students have the specific knowledge and skills in order to gain the MBA but, even here, he is concerned to bring a wider perspective of what he regards as the 'real' business world into their study, and to press students to apply the models they are learning to their current business situations. In case study 4, course, block and unit aims and objectives are used, not

in a ‘clumsily pluck or blow to force a predictable outcome’ way, but to provide an environment for her students in which they have an understanding of what is expected, to provide coherence and progression. In certain ways, they do provide a framework but these need not be limits, as Gibson (1986) suggests they can be seen as ‘affordances’.

So, evidence from this study would point to associate lecturers adapting their practice, drawing on a number of beliefs and conceptions of teaching, rather than there being evidence of a developmental process, from a teacher-focused to a more student-focused approach. With a self-motivation of wishing to meet their students’ needs, associate lecturers are prepared to draw on many different practices in order to accommodate their present student group; this seems to be driven by pragmatic needs of the student group rather than by espoused theories of what constitutes good teaching. It is not a matter of applying good teaching theory but a more messy process, the *praxis* of theory and practice.

Kember (1997 p. 263) made an analysis of 13 papers investigating university academics’ conceptions of teaching and concluded that, in spite of the diversity of the samples and the independence of the research studies, the findings showed a high degree of commonality, with the categories of teacher conceptions of learning being closely comparable. However, importantly for this study, he observed that there is not always an automatic relationship between underlying beliefs and observable teaching approaches. It was possible to see teacher conceptions as a continuum that could be moved along back and forth. The concept of a ‘continuum’ of teacher conceptions may help to explain why associate lecturers holding student-centred conceptions of teaching at times do employ approaches that appear inconsistent with that belief, and *vice versa*.

Kember (1997) suggests that a lecturer who holds an information transmission conception is likely to rely almost exclusively upon a unidirectional lecturing approach. Case study 2 comes the closest to this approach but, even here, there would appear to be a willingness to consider moving along the continuum to a more diverse teaching approach than this type of unidirectional approach. He still believes students could ‘seek high level learning’ but, in his

opinion, the OU system is set up against it; he does not see his role as regurgitating the course material but as bringing the 'real business world' into his students' studies, the 'bigger circle'.

Trigwell and Prosser (1996) studied 24 first year university science teachers' conceptions and found a consistent congruence between teacher intention and strategy. This thesis would seem to support these findings. Case study 2 has an overall teaching conception of getting students through their examinations, and this seems to have led to a teaching strategy closer, but not equal, to the transmission model. On the other hand, the overall teaching intention in case study 4 is student transformation, which seems to have led to a strategy closer to approaches of student-centredness. However, seen as a continuum, both offer the opportunity for movement and improvement. Therefore, the idea of the 'built space' and architecture may possibly be inappropriate metaphors for the nature of associate lecturer practice, as it does not convey the fluidity that is part of the reflexive process of occupational identity-building and is too rigid to allow for the changing nature of social constructs and conventions.

8.8 *Teaching as magic*

Heathfield (1999), in making comparisons between knowledge types, noted an increasing movement from the objectification of knowledge to where procedural, situated subjectiveness becomes crucial. She goes on to quote Eraut (1994) who refers to the parallel with artistic or theatrical performance, where the text is not everything but quality may rest in much less easily quantifiable and communicable aspects. Eraut clearly acknowledged an 'other' which he believes plays a significant part in valued professional action. He uses the reference to artistic endeavour to signify some less tangible and codifiable quality in operation through practice, but does not identify what this mystique, magic, creativity or artistry might be.

The parallel with artistic or theatrical performance and face-to-face tuition is a strong one but, for a teaching system that is not predominantly face-to-face, a more appropriate

metaphor might be the affinity that readers make with certain journalists, or listeners make with radio programme characters and presenters, even though they may never have seen them. As can be seen with the narratives concerning assignment marking, connections are made with the students and feedback is used to create the rapport with the audience associated with a theatrical performance; it certainly has emotional aspects both for the associate lecturer and the receiving students.

Ignoring the possibility of this 'other' would leave this thesis vulnerable to the warning from Jones and Moore (1993) that by reducing work practice to competence statements through a process of functional analysis, skills and behaviour are disembedded from everyday social relationships and cultural practices. Culturally embedded collective skill is replaced by an individualised, technical competency. Saunders (2002 p. 3) reinforces this, arguing that lists of competencies which constitute the items in a qualifying system may connect to actual 'job capability' in the way cybernetic or robotic representation of a human reminds us of a person but somehow fails to capture the essence of 'personhood'.

Henkel (2002) in her research identified that, in the Social Sciences and the Humanities, aspiring academics were given a structured and systematic induction into their disciplines. An increasingly competitive labour market encouraged them to be active in disciplinary dialogue and to publish at an early stage of their career. This meant they needed to acquire the 'tacit knowledge' of their disciplinary community more quickly, and that the discipline as a feature in identity-building had been strengthened recently.

The disciplines in which the four associate lecturers were teaching are important to them. In case study 1, a major motivation for wishing to teach for the OU was the desire to have access to Social Science higher educational materials. In case study 2, although described negatively, there is a genuine concern about keeping standards high within the business studies subject area, encouraging students to access material beyond the course and to apply concepts within the course to the business situation within which the students operate.

However, within the case studies, disciplinary matters are usually discussed in terms of student learning; for example, concern is expressed about students when they are finding difficulty in building up an understanding of course concepts, and the question associate lecturers ask themselves in this study is: ‘How can I help my students in this process as part of their teaching practice?’ In contrast to Henkel (2002), the discipline is the teaching and learning of the discipline that is the local base for associate lecturers, rather than the key being the discipline itself.

8.9 Overview

As discussed in Chapter 2 (on methodology and methods), humans operate within systems that are often indeterminate and non-linear; it should be no surprise, therefore, that we have created a complex and intricate picture of practice in a dispersed professional community, such as associate lecturers at the Open University.

We have postulated that this might usefully be seen as an activity system, with instruments of practice, rules of practice and a division of labour between participants, a practice that allows for the continuing change of the subject, object and outcome of the practice. It requires the inclusion of students and the organisation, and a high level of agency for individual associate lecturers. The picture is further complicated by having the activity system criss-crossed with chains of force relationships; some of these chains connect actions within the system and other chains connect actions from outside. Practice itself is a mixture of knowledge resources, some tacit, routines and reifications, beliefs and all part of a process of identity-building.

These insights into a dispersed professional community have implications for the research questions posed in Chapter 2, and it is to these that the concluding chapter returns.

CHAPTER 9 Overview: associate lecturers within a dispersed community of practice

9.1 Introduction

This concluding chapter argues that, in order to have a fuller understanding of associate lecturer practice in a dispersed community, it is not only necessary to understand the nature of this dispersal and its effects on the community but also the greater emphasis that this dispersal places on the 'self' for the resourcing and maintenance of practice.

The chapter does this by examining the major components of a community of practice, such as participation and the negotiation of meaning, and how these components need to be understood differently when applied to a dispersed community.

Social practice theory argues that workers collectively, through participation and negotiation of meaning, create their own rules, division of labour, use of cultural artefacts, discourse and establish their own unique identity within the community. This thesis, by using activity system theory to look at associate lecturer practice at the Open University, suggests parts of the activity other than 'peer' involvement need to be considered in order to fully understand associate lecturer practice. Especially important in a dispersed community are biography, the organisation and students.

This chapter identifies the need to include students and the organisation as essential features of any system that is used to describe the nature of being an associate lecturer. It also identifies the fluidity that is required in any such system description of associate lecturers and their use of knowledge resources; for example, these knowledge resources are constantly constructed to meet changing circumstances, one construction can play a role in the next construction in the myriad of decisions and activities that comprise daily practice.

9.2 Features of a dispersed community

To answer research question 1: 'What are the professional practices and knowledge resources used in the context of a dispersed community of associate lecturers at the Open

University?’, we revisit the major features of a community of practice in the context of a dispersed community, beginning with the concept of participation.

Wenger argues that participation is a more encompassing process where participants are not just active in the practices of social communities but engaged in the construction of identities in relation to these communities.

This thesis has been able to identify indications of this identity-building, with the form of belonging centred around relationships with students and the organisation, rather than other associate lecturer practitioners. We have analysed evidence in case study 2 of a rejection of belonging to ‘academia’ and a desire for identity to be built around business consultancy; in case study 4, a desire for an identity built around being an academic professional and a mother, teaching OU students from her home.

Within a community of practice, negotiation of meaning is seen as a living process, constantly creating new situations and negotiating anew the meaning of that situation. Importantly for this thesis, negotiation does not necessarily involve conversations or direct relationships with colleagues; in this way, it is not the same as collaboration. It is a process of mutual recognition, the ability to see something of ourselves in the particular situation and therefore participation becomes a constituent of our identities.

This definition would encompass experiences of associate lecturers working at home, often isolated from other associate lecturers, and who construct images of students as they mark assignments, even though they may not have met up at tutorials. This process of marking, as part of their practice, becomes part of their identity; they create meaning, influence the wider world and, in turn, are influenced by that world, all as part of the reflexive process.

In order for a community of practice to function, Wenger (1998) argues that the meanings created by individual members of the community must be co-ordinated. Meanings need not be held in common but must be in some way interconnected; because the participants are working together in a joint enterprise, it is not a uniform but a collective product.

Wenger points out that a shared practice can come about in diverse and complex ways.

Mutual relations can be a mixture of power and dependence, pleasure and pain, expertise and helplessness, success and failure, amassment and deprivation, alliance and competition, ease and struggle, authority and collegiality, attraction and repugnance, fun and boredom, trust and suspicion, friendship and hatred.

The evidence from the case studies provides ample examples of these types of mutual relationships. This study can point to the struggle in case study 1 between control and letting go in the tutorial situation, the boredom of teaching examinable pupils and the attraction of teaching non-examinable students. There is the suspicion and resistance created by the assignment-monitoring system in case study 2, and the repugnance felt at being classified as a 'low marker' by the system; the sheer fun of creating the 'tutorial situation' in case study 3, and the enjoyment of learning alongside his students and the sense of trust established between associate lecturer and students, in order to have the feeling of being allowed into each other's worlds; the aspiration in case study 4 for her students to experience the same sense of 'transformation' that she had herself experienced through study, the belief that we all have the ability to learn, seeing herself as the 'enlightenment girl'.

However, in a dispersed community such as associate lecturers at the OU, these mutual relationships are constantly being renegotiated between an individual associate lecturer, the organisation and the students. Therefore, if the term community is to be applied to the situation of associate lecturers, it must be able to incorporate the organisation and the student body.

Equally important in this type of dispersed community is that the coherence and interconnectiveness is provided in large part by the organisation and the students, rather than between associate lecturer practitioners. Examples of this are the ongoing negotiation between the university and associate lecturers on what type of circumstances should be allowed for late submission of an assignment, and the influence of student expectations on the nature of the tutorial situation. In case study 4, the associate lecturer felt the group could

be stretched by introducing concepts from outside of the formal course; she also felt the group would accept such introductions as being legitimate and not wasting their time because they did fall outside of the course. The more didactic approach to tutorials in case study 2 was justified in the belief that this was the best way of meeting his own student group's expectations. These situations are not static and could well be renegotiated in future tutorials.

The Open University has developed a number of organisational mechanisms to try to foster a sense of community among part-time tutors; for example, regional and central staff development events that bring associate lecturers together. The Regional Centres keep in contact by providing newsletters and other information, and associate lecturers have their own newsletter known as *Snowball*. Course Teams and Regional Centres have developed electronic conferences in order to facilitate communication. However, these organisational mechanisms did not figure greatly in my discussions with the research participants. The regional newsletter was mentioned in case study 2, but otherwise they were not mentioned. All these mechanisms are explicit, but there is some evidence in the data for tacit mechanisms, such as informal groups of associate lecturers, for example the occasional lunch group in case study 4 and use of other associate lecturer materials that have been posted on the website in case study 2. However, these relationships lack the shared practice identified by Wenger (1998) brought about by intense mutual negotiation.

Evidence from the case studies has indicated the possibility of a number of tacit routines within associate lecturer practice, and that routinisation may extend to the preparation for activities as well as the activities themselves. One example is the routines undertaken by associate lecturers before starting to mark the assignment.

It is difficult to find evidence in the case studies for these routines having been developed in a collective way – quite the opposite; the evidence would suggest the level of individual agency in the development of these routines is quite pronounced.

It is not suggested that these routines are developed in a social vacuum; they are constructed as part of the reflexive process, being influenced by wider social factors and also as part of their development, influencing the world in the two-way reflexive process. However, evidence for the collective moulding of practice by a group of associate lecturers seems to be absent from the case studies.

9.3 The nature of associate lecturer knowledge

In order to answer research question 2: ‘What the relationships are between knowledge resources, practice and the process of occupational identity-building?’, the research has referred to sections on knowledge as knowledge resources. This is in recognition that knowledge can be perceived as constituted in all our human activities: knowledge resources become knowledge when they are utilised in human activity. This way of perceiving knowledge also highlights the difficulty of then seeing how knowledge can be packaged and commodified. Despite the difficulties of gaining an integrated picture of associate lecturer practice, we have been able to postulate and map a number of knowledge resources, tacit routines and pre-routines used in their practice.

The situated nature of knowledge is important to this type of perception of knowledge. Knowledge can be regarded as being situated when the social contexts are not just part of the problem being analysed, but also are part of the solution. The situated nature of associate lecturers can be emphasised by re-examining our indications of associate lecturer routines and how they use all of the knowledge typologies suggested by Blackler (1995) and Eraut (1994, 2000) and possibly more besides.

It would be possible to break down the description of associate lecturers marking assignments into mechanistic steps, which could be seen as adding up into the completed routine. However, we have already seen that this would produce a deficient model of what is actually going on when associate lecturers are for example scriptmarking. It is seeing routines as an unskilled operation that is learnt by repetitive actions rather than a skilled routine that creates room for a whole range of knowledge resources to be activated and put to

use in a highly integrated way and allows for a stream of continuous split-second decision-making. Associate lecturers point to a certain amount of drudgery in the assignment-marking process, but we have identified within this skilled routine a range of knowledge resources. Knowledge of people, tacit beliefs and conceptions of teaching, knowledge of procedures, systems and policies, the impact of organisational life and the wider social world; not in some causal adaptive way but as part of their practical consciousness, which is the outcome of a two-way reflexive process.

This thesis has postulated that much of the knowledge of associate lecturers is not just of the vertical kind (experts in a given field) but also of a horizontal nature, the multiple contexts in which associate lecturers undertake their practice. This practice both demands and affords different, complementary and conflicting cognitive tools, rules and patterns of social interaction.

Therefore, associate lecturers are faced with the challenge of constructing their knowledge resources anew for each of these situated actions; this is not a matter of transferring knowledge they already hold to a new situation, but rather building the knowledge for the new situation. Structures seen as social conventions are part of this knowledge-building and, consequently, the boundaries will be different as a result of the associate lecturers' actions. In this sense, the associate lecturers are engaged in practice that is polycontextual and boundary-formulating.

9.4 Associate lecturers within an activity system

Activity system theory offers us the ability to include the student body and the organisation in the system. It helps us to answer research question 3: 'What is the relationship between associate lecturer practice and their working environments, e.g. sector, institutions, faculty, department, discipline and other influences?' It also offers some fluidity within the system by different parts of the system being able to occupy the spot of subject and object.

However, this fluidity is limited to internal relationships within the system. External

influences are explained in terms of other activity systems that are influencing other systems, by way of force relationship chains or overlapping activity systems.

While activity system theory is useful in extending our understandings, it offers a model where the boundaries of the system are given, and external influence is explained by members of systems undertaking forms of boundary crossing. It is possible that the boundaries are also part of the mutual negotiations, part of the reflexive process and therefore they would be better seen as social conventions; their rigidity is dependent on those conventions being followed and opens up the possibility for them to change. Rather than systems overlapping, we would have systems merging and separating as social conventions emerge and disappear, lose or gain power, as a result of the relative strength in the following of a particular convention.

As individual agency is strongly in evidence in the construction of routines, so is it in the reifications of practice. The routines for assignment marking are quite different for each case study, not only in the way activities are carried out, but also in the thought processes that contribute to these actions.

In case study 3, the associate lecturer has a strong image of the student in his mind as he is marking the assignment and a whole range of personal details and issues concerning the student are drawn on during the marking process. In case study 1, more use is made of previous performance information in terms of assignment marks, but with an openness and desire for students with poor or average marks to surprise him with a 'good' piece of work. These could also be seen as evidence of associate lecturers finding ways of overcoming the drudgery of assignment marking and trying to make their practice more enjoyable. Apart from these routines being constructed within the influences of the wider social world, they are also influenced by the organisation.

The Open University has in place large systems to monitor associate lecturer marking; it is through these systems and staff development sessions that the organisation hopes to provide

the co-ordination of individual associate lecturers' practice. It is in this sense that reifications of practice become a 'collective' effort.

The type of co-ordination resulting from the negotiation between individual associate lecturers and the organisation is of a different nature from that understood by Wenger and his research on medical claims processors. The organisation desires to set the boundaries to what it regards as 'acceptable' norms of practice, and hopes this will be enforced by line managers and staff developers by promoting these norms as best practice. The whole process is given a sense of objectivity by using statistical reports, and the use of terms such as 'statistically significant variations'.

The interpretation of these reports is a matter of negotiation between line managers (staff tutors) and the individual associate lecturer and, as can be seen from case study 2, can result in considerable resistance on the part of the associate lecturer.

It is possible to see these descriptions of systems of monitoring as examples of the 'imaginary practice' being created by the organisation, what it would term 'best practice'. The results on actual practice are more complex than just the adoption of this imaginary or best practice by associate lecturers, and these results are often not what the organisation had planned. Again, the dispersed nature of associate lecturers may make the adoption of any imaginary practice more difficult and the organisation of any staff development or line management intervention more problematic.

The evidence in the case studies would indicate support for Giddens' (1976) proposition that organisations have a growing importance in the process of identity-building. Therefore, given the importance of the organisation, it may be possible for the organisation to adjust some of the mechanisms it uses to try to sustain a sense of community. For example, it might build on the importance that is still placed by part-time associate lecturers on the discipline and how it is taught. Given the evidence of the importance of students in associate lecturer identity-building, it may be possible to introduce structures such as group teaching, so that

experiences of different student learning could be shared. It may be possible to introduce mechanisms whereby students could be involved in discussing their learning and their experiences of teaching.

This thesis has discussed the situated nature of much of the knowledge put into use in associate lecturer practice, and how authors such as Lave have suggested that learning occurs most effectively when it is an incidental by-product of genuine participation in meaningful activities. It has discussed how knowledge can be seen as part of the identity-building process undertaken by individual associate lecturers, as part of the reflexive process with the social world. The social world is not simply a backdrop to their practice, but a constituent part of the process, shaping and being shaped.

The thesis has discussed the importance of how the 'built space' provided affordances for associate lecturers to construct their own practice. However, if we replace terms such as 'structure' and 'built space' with social conventions, we gain a perception that not only are the structures themselves changeable by the reflexive process, but also that the metaphor is not so much about boundary crossing as boundary changing.

9.5 Indigenous community

Wenger (1998) recognises the organisation's desire to set boundaries and establish 'acceptable' norms of practice, and sees this type of pervasive influence of the employing organisation to control practice as being mostly successful in his research. However, he argues that an indigenous practice is produced by practitioners in response to this pervasive influence, and practice is developed in ways not determined by the organisation but which are collectively theirs.

There is evidence in the case studies for the development of this type of indigenous practice, for example the ways in which associate lecturers use espoused artefacts from the university such as tutor notes on marking assignments. These are used in inventive ways unintended by the organisation. However, what is striking in the case studies is the individual nature of the

inventiveness and development of practice routines, rather than them being developed as a result of collective endeavour of associate lecturer practitioners.

The growing importance of organisations in our self-identity-building has been identified by Giddens as one of the major facets of what he describes as modernity. However, organisation is only one important facet in the process of associate lecturer identity-building, and the dispersed nature of their existence places a high importance on their own resources in order to resource their own practice.

In case studies 1 and 4, we have indications of how the organisation gives the individual legitimacy. It offers a type of esteem and builds the self-confidence to regard oneself as a professional academic. Even in case study 2, where this type of legitimacy is rejected, it is still used to build an alternative self-identity and as part of the justification for that alternative.

Giddens (1991) goes further and advocates we understand structure, not in a way that sees it in terms of a visible given form, but rather in terms of a flow of people's actions, connecting them to attributes of self-consciousness. Giddens understands society in terms of complex recurrent practices which form institutions. These practices, in the case of associate lecturers, depend on the habits and forms of life which they adopt; associate lecturers do not just use these recursive practices in their activities, the life practices constitute the activity itself.

If recursive practices are types of convention, what Wittgenstein (1968) called the ability to 'go on' in the diversity of contexts of social life, then Giddens (1991) argues that people can only act conventionally because of mutual understanding of convention – one cannot invent one's own conventions.

If the above explanation of social life is a plausible one, then in the case studies you would expect to find indications of these social conventions. The difficulty for researchers is that these conventions are also largely tacit. Associate lecturers are much more knowledgeable than can be represented by what they say in the case studies; what they do in everyday life is

far more than how they describe what they do. For example, in the tutorial situation they are picking up hundreds of verbal and non-verbal clues about what is actually going on, interpreting this information and making teaching decisions in a constant, but often tacit, process.

Once again, the thesis can point to plausible indications of what these conventions might be in the four case studies. There is throughout a sense of the need for academic justification for the feedback and marking process. It is not acceptable, i.e. not part of the conventional norm, just to give a mark. There is a convention that the mark needs to be justified to the student and, in a way, as part of a process of self-justification. Although the whole process may be recognised as being subjective, the mark needs a type of objective justification. How this is achieved varies between the four participants, but the convention does act as a type of structure.

Similarly, the four case studies describe four different ways of delivering a tutorial. However there is, across them, a sense of respect for what students are trying to achieve. The tutorials may be more or less didactic, and perceptions of student motivations may differ, but the dignity of what the student is trying to achieve is not questioned. Even in case study 2, where the qualification is regarded as students wishing to have their 'ticket punched', this is not regarded as their fault – it is seen as them trying to succeed in difficult circumstances. Any sense of the learning being of a 'surface' nature is seen not as being the student's problem, but as a result of how the system has been set up: there is still a legitimate dignity to what the students are striving to achieve.

This student dignity also expands into a sense of academic legitimacy. What is being undertaken by students is different to, say, conversations they might have in the pub or what they might read in the newspapers. There is an expectation that they will eventually be able to argue their case in an 'academically' acceptable way, for example by providing evidence for their argument, also being open and respectful to alternative arguments, a type of 'democratic liberalism'.

In the area of student support, there is a sense of associate lecturers having a convention of trying to help students remove barriers to their learning, even if these barriers are more of a pastoral kind and fall outside of the academic content of the course. However, there is evidence that would suggest a convention might also recognise that associate lecturers have the need and right to manage this student support in order to allow for the creation of ‘space’ between themselves and their students. There seems to be a possibility of a convention that assumes student support could become an all-pervasive activity that would overwhelm associate lecturers if they were not allowed to manage it, and avoid such a consequence. If these are types of conventions or indications of conventions, it is these that provide the structures for associate lecturer practice. The additional advantage of seeing these structures as a flow of actions connected to self-identity is that they can be perceived as being less static, a boundary to practice but something that is more pliable, something that can also be seen as changeable via mutual consultation, and therefore also part of the reflexive process.

9.6 Closing remarks

This thesis has taken the researcher and its readers on a complex journey towards understanding the nature of practice in a dispersed professional community of associate lecturers at the Open University. This complexity has involved seeing knowledge in a different way from the ‘traditional’, as being something that is ‘out there’ waiting to be captured by individuals. Instead, it is seen as a continuous process of reconstruction to meet the myriad of demands placed on individuals as part of their practice, and is constituted in the reflexive process of occupational identity-building that is continuously moulding individuals and the social world. This view of knowledge, identity and practice opens up different challenges for educational professionals in a dispersed community, which has the trends, identified in Chapter 5, of accreditation, vocationalism and portfolio working.

Postscript: professionalisation of part-time lecturers

This thesis has made an analysis of a small number of part-time professional tutors who carry out their practice within a dispersed community. This dispersal makes the type of mutual negotiation and creation of a unique occupational identity within a community of practice associated with social practice theory a different matter for part-time tutors at the Open University. They are more dependent on their own agency and 'self' to carry out their practice. This results in routinisation of practices that have a high degree of autonomy and individual uniqueness, the limits of which are negotiated with their students and the organisation (the OU) rather than their peers.

By approaching a deeper understanding of part-time tutor practice through seeing their activities as part of a wider integrated framework of occupational identity-building, the influences on practice and, in turn, how practice affects their social world, can all be broadened out and be more inclusive of the factors that influence practice. It allows for biographical experiences, past and present student issues, and organisational life all to be part of who they are as a professional part-time lecturer. Wenger sees our unique place in the world as being reached by a process of mutual understanding that is collectively gained. This thesis has indicated that the organisation and students play an important role in reaching an understanding of occupational identity for part-time tutors at the OU, and this is a continuous process of sensemaking as lives are lived.

This integrated approach, in turn, would allow staff developers, such as myself, to have these factors legitimately included as part of any future staff development frameworks and processes. As tacit knowledge is often gained without conscious attempts to learn by participants, and therefore without any explicit knowledge about what has actually been learned, they might not know of its existence. Staff developers may need alternative methods to reveal this tacit knowledge (such as story-telling and events around 'critical' moments in practice). This would have the dual advantage of making such development programmes more authentic for part-time tutors and of helping them see these factors as part of the

recontextualisation that is required as part-time tutors are required to become ‘boundary crossers- into new curriculum areas (such as Foundation degrees). It would also help them to retain a professional identity, even though they might increasingly be required to manage a number of employment portfolios. If this boundary crossing and recontextualising of knowledge resources could be validated, it would, in turn, create validation processes that would have greater legitimacy among part-time tutors and offer the possibility of this validation being recognised as a genuine reflection of the professionalism of part-time tutors. This may require staff developers and validators to be comfortable with insights which might be only provisional, on a much longer journey that individuals are taking to understand their own practice.

As a researcher

This study has allowed me to appreciate and absorb the many linkages between biography, experience, knowledge resources, organisational life and practice. As a ‘natural interventionist’, with a motivation to improve, I have been able to make a direct link between the need for educational research, the creation of an evidence base and making interventions to improve practice. This is not a ‘positivist’ approach to intervention, looking for the ‘killer intervention’, but an approach that struggles with the complexity and the multiple consequences, planned and unplanned, that any such intervention may have on practice. I have become comfortable with the indeterminate and non-linear nature of research and human activity, and the need for integrity and wholeness when the unit of analysis is individual practice.

This has, at times, produced thoughts of ontological panic and fear, and the possibility that the only way forward was to take a ‘*laissez faire*’ approach to practice. I have slowly come to a greater sense of ease with complexity: no longer is my first need to simply know, but to struggle with complexity and seek a deeper understanding of how research can play a pivotal role in this struggle towards sensemaking.

APPENDIX A

RESEARCH CASE STUDIES RELEASE CONSENT FORM

	Author of Research Graham Cox
	University Lancaster University
	Date March 2005
	Research Participant
	I request my name in the case study to be changed to:
	I request the following details are changed in the Research (Please give page and paragraph number and first line of narratives to help identification)
	I have concerns about the case study and would welcome a discussion on the following: (Please give page and paragraph number and first line of narratives to help identification)
	Any other comments you would like to make to the author on the case study:

APPENDIX B Role of the tutor

	Duties of the tutor	Associated activities	Examples of sources of support
1	To provide correspondence tuition, assessing students' work according to given marking schemes and giving written and other defined feedback to students to help them in their learning.	<p>Provide correspondence tuition with comments, which explain the grade and give suggestions to help students to improve.</p> <p>Return marked assignments to Assignment Handling office within 14 days of the cut-off date of submission to ensure students benefit from prompt feedback.</p> <p>Provide written feedback to students using correspondence tuition as a 'teaching tool', linking feedback to course materials and to encourage, motivate, stimulate and explain. This is a core activity for all students.</p>	<p>Staff tutor/Regional manager</p> <p>Course materials</p> <p>Tutor assignment-marking notes</p> <p>Monitoring of grading and correspondence tuition</p> <p>Teaching and assessment strategy for the course</p> <p>SOL Reader (Chapter 3)</p> <p>Staff development activities</p> <p>Open Teaching Toolkit: Correspondence tuition (publication in progress)</p>
2	To provide academic support which may be offered through face-to-face, telephone or electronic teaching methods.	<p>Plan and deliver interactive, participative and responsive teaching sessions to support course content and student learning development.</p> <p>Encourage individual students to participate in academic activities and be prepared to provide individual academic support (see also 8).</p>	<p>Staff tutor/Regional manager tutorial visits and feedback</p> <p>Course materials</p> <p>SOL Reader (Chapters 2,5 and 6)</p> <p>Open Teaching Toolkits: Effective tutorials Tutoring online: Using CMC to support learning</p>

	Duties of the tutor	Associated activities	Examples of sources of support
			How do I know I am doing a good job? Supporting students by telephone
3	To monitor the progress of students on their course including making contact with students who do not submit assignments and authorising late submission of assignments where appropriate.	<p>Monitor study progress of students and explore alternative ways of providing academic support for those who appear not to be actively studying or who are experiencing difficulties.</p> <p>Maintain brief records of contact.</p> <p>Grant assignment extensions according to the SOL Reference File guidelines. Refer student(s) to Student Services for additional support.</p> <p>Maintain dialogue with Regional Student Services regarding issues of student progress.</p> <p>Try at least twice to contact individual students not submitting assignments, ideally using a different medium (phone, letter, email).</p>	<p>Staff tutors/ Regional managers</p> <p>Regional Student Services</p> <p>Staff development activities</p> <p>SOL: Reader (Chapter 4)</p> <p>SOL Reference File</p> <p>Open Teaching Toolkits</p> <p>Student Toolkits</p>
4	To be a first point of contact for students for course- and study-related advice and support, facilitating Study Groups where appropriate and to refer other matters to Student Services and regionally based Faculty staff.	<p>Make students aware you are their first point of contact for course- and study-related advice.</p> <p>Make timely responses to student-initiated contact seeking your assistance – preferably within 2/3 days but within a maximum of 7 days under normal circumstances.</p>	<p>Staff tutor/ Regional manager</p> <p>Student Services</p> <p>SOL Reader (Chapters 1, 4)</p> <p>Open Teaching Toolkits</p> <p>Websites:</p>

	Duties of the tutor	Associated activities	Examples of sources of support
		<p>Encourage students to make contact and exercise your professional judgment when and to whom to make referrals.</p> <p>Actively encourage and facilitate the setting up of self-help groups and/or support networks.</p> <p>Support students in building and reflecting upon their plans for personal educational development and study programmes – by helping students focus their questions and refer to appropriate sources of information/ advice/guidance.</p>	<p>AL World</p> <p>Learners Guide</p> <p>Courses and qualifications</p> <p>Career planning</p> <p>Open Teaching Toolkits</p> <p>Student Toolkits</p>
5	To make contact with all students to welcome them to the course and, for students new to the OU, to provide an introduction to the OU's method of supported open learning.	<p>Make initial written contact outlining your support role and stating how and when you can best be contacted.</p> <p>If possible, follow up initial contact with a phone call to establish a personal contact.</p> <p>At the start of the course, help students new to the university to understand OU teaching and learning support methods.</p> <p>Help students to understand how the different components of the course fit together within the context of the university's teaching system.</p>	<p>Student introductory meetings</p> <p>Staff tutor/Regional manager</p> <p>Regional and Faculty staff development activities</p> <p>SOL Reader (Chapters 1, 4)</p> <p>Websites: AL World/Learners Guide</p> <p>Learning with the OU starts here (booklet)</p>

	Duties of the tutor	Associated activities	Examples of sources of support
6	To help with the development of study skills in connection with the course.	<p>Help students identify and/or develop the particular learning skills to engage effectively in OU study.</p> <p>Help students to develop specific skills relating to their course.</p> <p>Through correspondence tuition, provide individualised support and guidance for the ongoing development of skills.</p>	<p>Staff tutor/Regional manager</p> <p>Regional Student Services</p> <p>Course materials</p> <p>SOL Reader (Chapters 4, 7)</p> <p>Open Teaching Toolkits</p> <p>Student Toolkits</p> <p>Websites: Learners Guide</p> <p>Student Toolkits</p>
7	To make proactive contact with students at a number of defined points in the course (e.g. first TMA, examination support etc.).	<p>Encourage submission of the first TMA through proactive contact a week or two ahead of the due date.</p> <p>Encourage the submission of subsequent TMAs for students who are actively studying (e.g. at first tutorial, FirstClass Conference, email/ telephone/ letter).</p> <p>Follow-up non-submission of assignments with particular emphasis on the first time a student fails to submit an assignment and students 'at risk'.</p>	<p>Staff tutor/Regional manager</p> <p>Regional Student Services</p> <p>Open Teaching Toolkit: <i>Revision and Examinations</i></p> <p>Student Toolkits: Revision and examinations (paper and online)</p>

	Duties of the tutor	Associated activities	Examples of sources of support
8	To identify individual student needs for additional support, either referring students directly to Student Services for information and advice or contacting Student Services and/or regionally based Faculty staff to initiate follow-up action.	<p>Be alert to indicators for individual student needs through different modes of contact (e.g. via assignments, at tutorials, phone calls).</p> <p>Make a judgment about what help might be needed and whether you are able to provide it.</p> <p>Be prepared to provide separately funded additional academic and learning support where appropriate.</p> <p>Refer as necessary to staff tutor/Regional manager or Regional Student Services for other/additional support.</p>	<p>Staff tutor/Regional manager</p> <p>Regional Student Services</p> <p>Additional support (special sessions)</p> <p>Student Toolkits</p>
9	To provide feedback through a variety of mechanisms (e.g. survey response, attendance at debriefings) on the student learning experience.	<p>Seek regular feedback from students to inform your own practice and your feedback to the university.</p> <p>Offer feedback on issues related to assignments and course materials.</p> <p>Respond to requests for feedback from the Course Team on the course design and presentation. Respond to feedback requests from the Regional Centre.</p>	<p>Staff tutor/Regional manager/Course Teams</p> <p>Regional Student Services</p> <p>SOL Reader (Chapter 7)</p> <p>SOL staff development file</p> <p>Open Teaching Toolkit: How do I know I'm doing a good job?</p>

	Duties of the tutor	Associated activities	Examples of sources of support
		Respond to requests for feedback from the university in the form of quantitative and qualitative surveys.	
10	Take part in staff development activities to maintain and enhance their professional experience and commitment to personal development.	<p>Reflect on and review practice and plan your future development.</p> <p>Participate in staff development activities provided by the Region or Faculty.</p> <p>Engage in continuing professional development through individual reading and reflection in response to identified needs and interests.</p> <p>Keep abreast of developments in academic area (e.g. through formal study of OU courses/ external courses and conferences/accessing OU Library).</p>	<p>Staff tutor/Regional manager</p> <p>Faculty/Course briefings</p> <p>Mentor</p> <p>Regional staff development programme</p> <p>Probation feedback</p> <p>OU Library</p> <p>SOL Staff Development File</p> <p>Staff fee waiver scheme</p> <p>Flexible fund</p>
11	<p>To use information communication technology, when appropriate.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching/supporting students • Accessing information to undertake duties in relation to students • Facilitating contact with academic units • Dealing with administrative contact and communications with the university 	<p>In preparation for supporting web-enhanced courses – 2004</p> <p>The activities below relate to all tutors</p> <p>Communication: use electronic communication to make contact with and respond to students/ Regional and Faculty colleagues/other ALs</p>	<p>Generic/Faculty staff development</p> <p>SOL Reader (Chapter 6)</p> <p>Open Teaching Toolkit:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Tutoring on-line: using CMC to support learning</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">ASKIT - CDROM help/training in IT</p>

	Duties of the tutor	Associated activities	Examples of sources of support
		<p>Academic Admin: be able to access information to enable you to support your student group (e.g. student listings and details, timetables, cut-off dates)</p> <p>Information: access AL World for web-based information: Learners Guide, courses websites</p> <p>For tutors supporting web-focused/ intensive courses, details will be given in the relevant course teaching and learning strategy.</p>	<p>Websites:</p> <p>Learners Guide</p> <p>AL World</p>

List of resources

- Open Teaching Toolkits
- Effective tutorials
- Effective group work
- Learning how to learn
- Reading and note-taking
- Writing skills
- Effective use of English
- Effective use of numbers
- Tutoring on-line: using CMC to support learning
- Revision and examinations
- Working with disabled students
- Supporting students with mental health difficulties
- Supporting students in prison
- Equal Opportunities
- How do I know I am doing a good job?
- Telephone tuition
- Correspondence tuition

APPENDIX C Main elements to ALDAP

There are three main elements to ALDAP:

1. A framework, which describes the main activities which are required of associate lecturers, together with the necessary underpinning values and knowledge.
2. A development process, which each associate lecturer documents in their development file.
3. Support for applying to join the Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE).

The ALDAP framework is based in turn on seven main areas or aspects of an associate lecturer's work:

1. Planning, for example of a whole course presentation, individual tutorials, other teaching sessions, and how resource materials will be used.
2. Teaching, including as appropriate through correspondence tuition, face-to-face, by telephone and on-line.
3. Assessing student work, awarding marks or grades and giving feedback on performance
4. Creating learning environments and supporting learners.
5. Reviewing teaching (including via feedback from students, peers and line manager) and the course(s) on which an associate lecturer teaches by contributing to their review.
6. Developing professional capabilities and where appropriate contributing to the development of University courses(s) and processes.
7. Integrating, as appropriate, scholarship, research and/or professional activities into teaching and supporting learning.

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