



# UNIVERSITY OF LINCOLN

Conceptualising the Student-University relationship  
within a UK higher education institute.

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# Aims

- To provide a brief overview of the research study
- To set out the proposed theoretical framework in order to invite and seek feedback on its use.

# Project Overview

- The research is focused on the social contexts within why and how student voice is used within an institution and how this affects the practices and procedures.
- The aim is to:
  - work with participants to construct the discursive reality of how the historical, political, economic and institutional influences affect the way students, staff and senior management are involved within the student-university relationship.
  - establish how this proliferates through to working with students.

# Research Questions

- What are the drivers behind how and where student voice fits within the hierarchy of a university?
- Who wants to be involved in improving the collective teaching and learning experience and why?
- Who ultimately makes the decisions and alters policy?
- What are the challenges, barriers and tensions to a more democratic student - university relationship?

# Research Design

- The study will take the form of a post-structural ethnographic case study.
- The institution selected as the case example is one of the first in the UK to set-up a Student Engagement unit within the University's infrastructure and in the words of the University "*placing students at the heart*" of the institutions governance processes.

## University

Observation of Education and Student Life Committee over the academic year and informal gatherings

Interview Vice Chancellor, Chair of ESLC, SE manager, Sab officer Academic Affairs and Head of membership services



## College

Observation of Education and Student Committee over the academic year

Interview of Chair of ESC and College Representative



## Two Schools

Observations of two School student - staff committees and informal staff meetings over the academic year

Interview of Programme Leader, SE champion and School Rep



Survey to all students

Group interview 1 x 6-8 'general' students, 1 x students involved in SE partnership activities, 1 x student reps



## Summary of Research

10 x interviews, 3 x Group Interviews, 3 x observations at School, College and University level, survey of all students, informal journal



**Figure 1: Overall outline of the planned data collection**

**Table 1: Outline of the associated relationship between the research question, methods, data analysis and theoretical framework**

Research question	Methods	Data	Theoretical Framework
What are the drivers behind how and where student voice fits within the hierarchy of a university?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policy Documentation (What are these documents?)</li> <li>- Interview with key stakeholders (School/College Rep, SE Champion, Chair of ESC, SE manager, Chair of AAC, Sabbatical officer for AA)</li> </ul>	Thematic analysis / Discourse analysis	Foucault's analytics of power and concepts of discipline, surveillance and governmentality
Who wants to be involved in improving the collective teaching and learning experience and why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Quantitative questionnaire to all students in the University</li> <li>- Student Group Interviews</li> <li>- Interviews with Student reps / Programme Leader</li> </ul>	Thematic analysis	Foucault's analytics of power and concepts of discipline, surveillance and governmentality
Who ultimately makes the decisions and alters policy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observations at School, College and University level.</li> <li>- Interview with key stakeholders (School/College Rep, SE Champion, Chair of ESC, SE manager, Chair of AAC, Sabbatical officer for AA)</li> </ul>	Thematic analysis	Habermas' theory of knowing (empirical/analytical, historical/hermeneutic, critical)
What are the challenges, barriers and tensions to a more democratic student - university relationship?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantitative data</li> <li>Group Interviews and Interviews</li> <li>Observations</li> </ul>	Discourse analysis	Foucault's analytics of power and concepts of discipline, surveillance and governmentality

# Theoretical Framework

- The study aims to blend critical and post-structural approaches within an ethnographic case study.
- Habermas' theory of knowing will provide a theoretical framing from which to try and determine how students are incorporated within the student-university relationship.
- Foucault's concepts of discipline, surveillance and governmentality will guide the methodological approach to discourse and dialogue.

# Questions, thoughts and discussion

- Do the suggested theoretical frameworks enable me to address the questions and understand both the power relations at play and the influences affecting the student-university relationship?
- Can anyone see any issues with using this framing?
- What does this particular framework highlight/ make visible that others may include, and what does it hide or mute?