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Power, Passion and Politics: A Grounded Theory Study of Academic Experiences in Policy Development and Implementation in Higher Education

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MSc.

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of
Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
to the

Technological University Dublin
School of Informatics and Engineering

Supervisors: Dr. Larry McNutt, Dr. Philip Owende
May 2022
0.1 Declaration of Authorship

I, Marie Brennan, declare that this thesis titled, Power, Passion and Politics: A Grounded Theory Study of Academic Experiences in Policy Development and Implementation in Higher Education. and the work presented in it are my own. I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a PhD degree at this University.
- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated.
- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed.
- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work.
- I have acknowledged all main sources of help.
- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself.

Signed: __________________________________________

Date: ___________________________________________
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Abstract

This research study is designed to investigate the lived experiences and perspectives of the academic community on policy development in Irish higher education. A review of the current policy landscape in Ireland and Europe and in particular empirical studies concerning policy implementation provided the focus of the study. The initial study focused on contemporary literature on policy development practices affected by globalisation and subsequently the issues at a national level. Where the gaps in knowledge were identified were in terms of policy implementation at the local level and where the study is aligned. The participants in the study are academics from three Irish higher education institutions in Dublin. The research objectives are to understand the processes used in policy development and the academics’ personal lived experiences of these and their concerns and develop a theoretical framework that will inform policy development going forward. The substantive area of study for this research is academic policy experience and concerns. To support this, data was gathered through initial focus groups and one-to-one interviews with academics across the three institutes. Classic grounded theory was the preferred methodology for this project as an authentic way of capturing the voice of the participants generating a wealth of rich data. This rich data revealed participants’ views, feelings, intentions, actions and context structures of their lived experiences. The data collection sought descriptions through field notes, observations, detailed narratives and interviews. The research followed Glaser’s classic grounded theory approach to develop a theory. The theory of personalising dissonance highlights the core concerns of the academics as the interpretation and implementation of policy. The theory presents the basic social and psychological process of how academics overcome their concern. The core category has three interdependent categories that are resolving conflict, prioritising career and bridging gaps. These categories were identified through coding field notes of interviews, theoretical sampling, theoretical coding,
sorting, and integrating the concepts to develop the theory. This thesis presents the background and motivation, the chosen methodology in detail, an in-depth look at the theory and a detailed discussion on how the theory integrates with the current literature on policy implementation and existent behavioural theories. Two areas where this research contributes to knowledge are academic policy in Irish higher education and the empirical application of classic grounded theory. It highlights academic experiences around policy development and implementation are an issue for higher education. The theory presented explains the patterns of behaviour used by academics in overcoming their concerns. Finally, there are suggestions made in this thesis for possible future projects that will further compare and contrast with the study or contribute to the development of a formal theory going forward.
Acknowledgments

Completing this research and writing this thesis has been one of the most significant academic challenges I have ever had to face. With the support, patience and guidance of the following people this study was successfully completed. It is to them that I owe my unending gratitude.

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donated her time to edit the final draft.

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It was a challenge to complete the thesis in the midst of a global pandemic but following an invite to join a PhD writing support group online I found the support that would get me through the final 18 months of writing. I would like to thank in particular Dr. Sinead McGrath (Ireland), Dr. Rachel Maley (USA), Dr. Nashid Alam Annanya (UK), Dr. Claire Knowles (New Zealand), Delene Human (S.Africa), Cara Cato (S.Africa), Deepti Mahajan (India) and many more who joined our writing sessions during that time. I would like to thank these fellow writers for their stimulating discussions, many sleepless nights we were working together, for all the fun we had in the last year working from all corners of the world. I thank my friends and my family for their support and encouragement during the process in particular my sisters and brothers-in-law and my extended family of sisters and brothers-in-law. I would like to thank them for supporting me and caring for my children when I needed them. I would like to thank my mother, Kay, for her unending support and love. Last but most certainly not least I thank my husband, Jim, and my children, Patrick, Jamie and Mark, without whom this effort would have been worth nothing. Your love, support and constant patience have taught me so much about sacrifice and compromise, even if there were times when I was missing from the table. You lovingly and unselfishly left me alone to write this thesis and spent many days with relatives to allow me to focus. I am deeply sorry for the time we spent apart but if I can give you anything its advice that anything is possible when there is passion.
It is the mark of an educated person to seek in each inquiry the sort of precision which the nature of the subject permits. (Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics)
This thesis is dedicated to my children Patrick, Jamie and Mark. I also dedicate this to the memories of my dear father, James and my sister-in-law Donna. This is for you.
Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This research aimed to investigate the lived experiences and perspectives of the academic community on policy development and implementation in Irish higher education. The rationale for the study was to develop a theoretical framework that will inform policy development. Two areas where this research contributes to knowledge are academic policy in Irish higher education and the empirical application of classic grounded theory. The study contributes to higher education policy knowledge in a theory of how academics overcome their concerns with academic policy within higher education institutes in Dublin. The thesis also presents the classic grounded theory (CGT) method and processes used to develop the theory on how academics overcome their concerns with policy development and implementation in Irish higher education. The participants in the study are academics from three Irish higher education institutions (HEIs) with at least five years of experience. Following the grounded theory process of theoretical sampling, the participants were sourced for data gathering and analysis, described in detail in chapter four. Chapter two reviews the literature on policy analysis, development, and implementation practices and contributes to knowledge from a policy development perspective and provides a framework to initially guide the interviews with academics. The views discussed
in chapter two are addressed further from a social psychological perspective in discussing the findings in chapter six.

1.2 Background and motivation

The research project’s initial goal was to explore and critique higher education strategies to encapsulate student experiences in higher education institutions and involved a critique of the process in place in HEIs nationally and internationally. Based on this assessment, what was discovered was that lived experiences in policy development and implementation were under-researched and highlighted a different area of investigation and interest: the development and implementation of policies at the local level. Studies of higher education policies have focused primarily on development and evaluation, and few have given voice to those responsible for their implementation (Deleon, 2002, Honig, 2006, Howlett, 2019). This study gives voice to the academics on their academic policy experiences, and the theory presented herein explains in detail how they overcame their concerns. The research concerns that emerged at this stage were: what were the documented policies, and by whom were they written? What influenced the policy? Most importantly, was the policy’s impact timely and successful, and how was the effect measured? The focus is to observe policy and processes, including policy and policy effectiveness gaps. This shift in direction will be discussed further in chapter two. Consequently, the focus was on the academics and their experiences of policy within their institutions and to develop a theory that would inform policy going forward. The theory developed would be grounded in the experiences of the academics.

1.2.1 Rationale for the study

In Ireland, little research has been conducted on academic experiences of policy development and implementation in Irish higher education. More specifically, there is an absence of a theoretical understanding of how academics experience policy and
the behaviours they use in response to policy within their institutions. Generating a theory from the academics themselves, who are experiencing issues with policy in Irish higher education, is the core element of the study. The theory is generated around identifying the main concern shared by academics within Irish higher education institutions. The significance of this study lies in its examination of the experiences of academics with policy and will provide a theoretical understanding of academics’ experiences of policy development and implementation. It contributes to knowledge development within this area. As addressed in Chapter three and four, grounded theory is used in this study to address important factors related to academic experiences of the research respondents. New knowledge in this area will assist policy writers, academics and professionals within higher education to understand better the issues around policy development and implementation expressed by the academics and the impact this has on their experiences within their institutions.

### 1.3 Aims and objectives

The research aims to study and observe academic lived experiences and perspectives on policy development across Irish HEIs. Data was gathered through focus groups and one-to-one interviews with staff and academics within these institutions. One objective of the research is to understand better the processes used in policy development and implementation. The academics’ personal lived experiences and concerns with policy development within their institutions will be investigated. The second objective of the research is to develop a theoretical framework that will inform policy development. This research’s substantive area of study is academic policy experience and concerns. From a grounded theory perspective, if the research goes outside the substantive area too soon, there is a danger of irrelevance, fit and theory workability. Once confidence of the fit and workability of the initial conceptual framework is reached, comparisons are made with data in other substantive areas that provide richness to the theoretical content of the substantive theory being developed and
described in chapter six.

1.4 Theoretical framework

Lysaght (2011) highlights the necessity of identifying a theoretical framework for a dissertation study. Grant and Osanloo (2016) state that a researcher’s choice of framework is not determined by impulse or reason but reflects important personal beliefs and understandings. They add that the framework chosen serves as the structure and support for the study’s rationale, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance, and the research questions. The framework relates to the “nature of knowledge, how it exists concerning the observer, the possible roles adopted, tools to be employed consequently, by the researcher in his/her work” (Grant and Osanloo 2016, pg.572).

A common concern for grounded theory researchers is how to deal with the question, ‘what theoretical framework is underpinning your study?’ Anfara and Mertz (2014) argue that theoretical frameworks are not synonymous with methodological issues or research paradigms. Wu and Volker (2009) adopt a different view and recommend that researchers clearly define an understanding of their research approach’s philosophical and theoretical underpinnings. Wu and Volker, (2009) argue that although “theory is the outcome of [grounded theory] research” (pg.272), they also position grounded theory within symbolic interactionist philosophy where it may not be appropriate to do so. Symbolic interactionism observes how people interact with each other through meaningful face-to-face interactions, and these actions may be repeated over time. A theoretical framework is not used to guide this study’s inquiry as classic grounded theory was used for data gathering and analysis. The researcher is the primary participant in the data collection and analysis and uses an inductive stance. Every effort is made to procure meaning from the data to remain true to the method. This research’s theoretical underpinnings may not be symbolic interactionism and will only become apparent when the theory has been developed.
Grounded theory (GT) is often a positive research method (Bryant and Charmaz, 2007). Bryant and Charmaz also distinguish between objectivist and constructivist GT. Grounded theory, as per Glaser, ”can be used with any philosophical position as long as the researcher feels comfortable with uncertainty, ambiguity, and confusion, and is open to emergence” (Glaser, 1998, pg.44). This realisation is a key breakthrough in this study as it follows classic grounded theory, so it is an inductive approach to developing the theory. The theory is grounded in data gathering and analysis.

1.5 Research method

Glaser and Strauss developed Grounded Theory in 1967 when studying dying patients. They aimed at constructing theoretical explanations of social processes. They define Grounded Theory(GT) as simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis, creating codes and categories from the data, constant comparison (making comparisons during each stage of the investigation) and advancing theory development during data collection and analysis. The intent is to move qualitative inquiry beyond descriptive studies into explanatory theoretical frameworks, providing abstract conceptual understandings of the studied phenomena. They urge grounded theorists to develop new theories rather than look at the world through existing ideas (Glaser, Strauss, 1967). Kathy Charmaz was a Barney Glaser student and illustrated in her book “Constructing Grounded Theory” a different approach to the method. Constructivist grounded theorists identify their preconceptions, whereas classic grounded theorists do not. The researchers using constructivist grounded theory co-construct the final research product with participants.

Glaser sharply criticises Charmaz’s reconfiguration of GT. He opposes the constructivist emphasis on descriptive capture, asserting that it denies and blocks the true conceptual nature of GT (Glaser,2002). Glaser argues that the clear objective of GT is conceptualisation rather than an accurate description of participants’ experi-
ences (Glaser, 2002). Due to Charmaz’s emphasis on the latter, Glaser asserts that Charmaz is “misled” in considering her methodology a GT as a more accurate classification would be Qualitative Data Analysis (Glaser, 2002). The constructivist grounded theory would have been a more appealing approach for this study because the writings on that approach were easy to follow and understand. However, after attending seminars and workshops facilitated by experts, the classic approach was applied to do justice for the methodology and successfully develop a substantive theory. Classic grounded theory is the most appropriate method for this study as the theory is grounded in the data.

As with the literature review, using prior theoretical frameworks with grounded theory is a disputed issue. Mitchell and Cody (1993) argue the grounded theory methodology because the role of prior theory is “veiled in obscurity” (pg. 171). Morse (2001) argues that without a theoretical framework to draw on, some researchers “find themselves rapidly mired in data without the ability to conceptualise or position their study or findings within the existing body of theory” (pg. 9). Morse further states that “literature should not be ignored but rather “bracketed” and used for comparison with emerging categories” (pg. 9). The role of extant theory in grounded theory is different from traditional research approaches and does not suggest that the generation of a grounded theory proceeds in isolation of existing theory or that a grounded theory is theoretical.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) acknowledge that the researcher “does not approach reality as a tabula rasa” (pg. 3) and cannot erase from their mind all the theory they know before beginning research. Glaser (1998) objects to selecting a theoretical framework before commencing a grounded theory study and using theory to conceptualise the problem or concepts. However, Glaser (1978) advises the researcher to read in areas other than the substantive area throughout the study. Reading for ideas and style fuels the researcher’s creative processes and helps to develop theoretical sensitivity. Theoretical sensitivity can also be achieved by a preliminary literature review in the substantive area or personal experience (The Grounded Theo-
ory Review (2012). A distinction must be made between using concepts that are sensitising to sharpen one’s awareness and theoretical concepts that will impose a framework on the data. The approach adopted in this research study demonstrates scholarliness by addressing theory from a research-theory perspective instead of a theory-research perspective (Elliott and Higgins, 2012).

1.6 Data collection

Data collection consists of one-to-one interviews with academics across the three HEIs in Dublin, reflecting grounded theory following Glaser and Strauss’s data gathering and coding mechanisms. As a result of this the emergent theory is rooted in the data. This methodology is the preferred choice for this project as it is an authentic way of capturing the participants’ voices that, in turn, generate rich data. This reveals participants’ views, feelings, intentions, actions, and context structures of their lived experiences. The research inquiry sought descriptions through field notes, observations, personal accounts, detailed narratives and interviews.

1.7 Literature review

After completing the research following the classic grounded theory method, the researcher moves to the literature to verify and compound the theory and findings. Going to relevant literature allows the researcher to find the gaps in the literature and where the thesis contributes to knowledge and research. The concern in adopting a classic grounded theory method for a PhD study is the thesis structure. Applying the classic grounded theory processes and analysis in a study means the researcher is advised to not go to the literature too soon. The challenge is to present a PhD thesis in a format that is not conducive to classic grounded theory but meets the criteria of a PhD thesis. This is one of a couple of concerns the researcher experiences when doing a grounded theory study, as discussed in detail in chapter three, section
3.7.4. Once the literature review has been completed, the researcher must decide how to present the literature that will give the reader context and contributions from an empirical perspective and theoretically from a behavioural perspective that still focuses on the contribution to knowledge.

The thesis structure differs from that of a classic grounded theory presentation and the structure of the document needed to be addressed, in particular the position of the literature reviewed. In order to facilitate a clear presentation of the argument and contribution of the thesis, the literature related to academic policy in the context of global, state, and Irish higher education will be discussed in chapter two. A review of the current policy landscape in Europe and Ireland will also be outlined in this chapter. The literature review will include contemporary policy analysis, but the core focus in chapter two will be where the findings in the CGT study contribute to knowledge on policy practices and policy building. Issues and concerns around practices are at the lower level where academics experiences with a policy are felt and how the theory presented contributes to this.

The second review of the literature is placed after the findings chapter, in chapter six, and focuses on the key elements of the theory and how they contribute to the literature from a social psychological perspective. The discussion of literature in this chapter relates to what is happening for academics in terms of behaviours such as dissonance, power, making decisions, participation and academics positions. The emphasis here will be on gaps in the literature focusing on behaviours around policy and practice that have not been the focus of policy sociologists or researchers, as described in chapter two. This review will focus specifically on behaviours related to the academic experience of policy and how they overcome their concerns.

Once the main processes emerge and in keeping with Glaser’s maxim, all is data, the literature is treated like any other data source and woven into the theory in the constant comparative process. In other words, “the literature is discovered as the theory is” (Glaser, 1998, pg.69). In this way, it is hoped that the “grounded theorist will generate a theory that transcends the literature, synthesises it at the
same time” (Glaser, 1998, p.120), and produces a theory that is relevant and fit for the context (Elliott and Higgins, 2012).

1.8 Conducting the research as an academic – an insider dichotomy

The researcher’s status concerning the participants or community they are studying is an area of concern. Merriam et al. (2016) assume that each status (insider, outsider) carries advantages and disadvantages and that more recent discussions are around complications resulting from both. They believe that positionality, power, and representation are useful concepts when exploring the insider-outsider dichotomy. The more one is like the participants in terms of culture, gender, race, and class, the more impact on the research. Participation or positionality is the researcher’s position concerning the person being interviewed, and that would be their insider-outsider dichotomy. Power is the power dynamic between the two participants and the study, the interviewer and the participant. They also discuss the power that the interviewer may have over the participant and vice versa. It is assumed that access will be granted and meanings will be shared to validate findings and that this is assured. Representation represents the truth in the findings (Merriam et al., 2016).

Concerning this study, all participants were academics that were known to the researcher and some were colleagues working on the same campus. There were a number of participants that would have been at a higher level than the researcher and others were similar in position within the institute. Regardless of this level of position what the researcher found is when approached in a professional manner and in particular, when anonymity and confidentiality are promised, follow on interviews are always on an even level. It is expected that sometimes when interviewing more senior academics that there will be a perceived power dynamic but again when professionalism is maintained this power is not evident or implied. Power as a researcher
interviewing somebody within their community fosters advantages from both perspectives, the interviewer and interviewee. Either can consider the location of the interview and what information is shared. Academics sharing something private such as non-compliance with policy within an institution, requires trust. Whether one is an insider or an outsider, there must be consent. There is the promise of confidentiality and anonymity. There was a trust set up between the researcher and the participant, especially because the researcher is an insider within the community. Participatory action then focuses on the empowerment of people through participation in knowledge construction. Participants are colleagues in the research process and equally in control of the research (Merriam and Simpson, 2000). The findings using a grounded theory study as an insider are concepts and the categories generated and grounded in the data. They are produced through analysis and are relative to the spoken word, and all quotes are anonymised and used to compound the theory being developed. The theory explains how the academics within the study process their concerns with academic policy and were completely confidential. It is completely anonymous, but it is a theory grounded in the data. There is a true representation, but it is based on what was discovered in multiple interviews. Participants are advised of this prior to the interviews taking place.

Merriam et al. (2016) believe that being an insider, one could be accused of being biased and too close to the culture to be curious enough to raise provocative questions. However, the questions are open for discussion using a grounded theory study and the debate is the opportunity for academics to speak. Through theoretical sampling, further participants are sourced, questions are focused, and access to other samples or sources easily happens. Being an insider means having easy access to participants and asking more meaningful questions. The disadvantage could be in the interpretation or view of the results. However, the grounded theory process involves constant comparison. Constantly comparing categories and codes throughout the process mitigated potential researcher bias or preconception. This method and the theory generated using it is from the participants’ perspective. An outsider doing research
might see things that insiders would not, consequently making a more objective portrayal of the data. The theory is grounded in what the participants have said, thus becoming more conceptual rather than descriptive. It is what is happening in the data that is ultimately conceptualised. Grounded theory lends itself very well to an insider or researcher within a community because of the meticulous processes used in the methodology.

Kamuha (2000) believes insiders are too close to the data and know too much or are similar to those studied. He also argues that, as well as challenges, there are advantages. According to him, native researchers are grounded and situated in the “dual and mutual status of a subject-object” (pg.441), as both the subject of the study and the participant being studied. His views echo those of Merriam et al. (2001) and Merriam and Simpson (2000), who suggest that being a non-native in a particular field may create access problems. Being within the community, getting access, particularly in this current study, is not an issue. The data is on the researcher’s doorstep. Merriam et al. (2001) describe some interviews as being “away from home” (pg. 407). In the current study, the researcher went to two other institutions where she is not known to interview academics that she does not know. There is that moving away from her current community. Yakushko et al. (2011) reflect on working within one’s community and believe there could be an opportunity to give back to the community in which the researcher belongs. They suggest a desire for researchers to return to that and argue it as a privileged position. They also believe there is a cultural obligation to bring back the knowledge to their cultural family (pg.279). What an insider “sees and understands will be different from, but as valid as, what an outsider understands” (Merriam et al. pg.415).

Concerning the study described in this thesis, the author is an academic interviewing other academics in policy development. However, the author and the researcher do not have any experience in policy development. The experience is not there for her to interpret the findings personally. The academics are open to discussion, possibly more, as they talk to a counterpart. The disadvantages of being an aca-
demic interviewing academics are counteracted by the fact that academics open up to other academics about their issues and concerns, resulting in the rich data that Glaser talks about (1967,1998). Lewis (1973) states, “it is necessary to approach a study through a multiplicity of perspectives, have different interests and needs influence these and that the views of both insider and outsider must be accepted as legitimate attempts to understand the nature of culture” (pg.590). Mills, Bonner and Francis (2006) argue that grounded theory exists on a methodological spiral and how researchers implement it depends on their epistemological standpoint and the relationship between the researcher and the participant. They believe that people are influenced by their history, culture, and the culture that shapes their view of the world. Glaser (1978, 1998) argues that objectivists believe reality exists independently of consciousness, which is how their world can be understood. Guba and Lincoln (1989) concur, arguing that GT is inductive and that grounded theorists only seek the participants’ concerns in the substantive area. They do this by collecting, analysing, coding and generating a theory. Somewhere along the way, the researcher meets several points of departure highlighting how the method has been reformed or remodelled over time (Mills et al.,2006). This happens for the researcher based on their ontological or epistemological beliefs. Researchers could still side with Charmaz (2006) and remain true to the methods depending on their chosen coding paradigm from an epistemological perspective. Strauss and Corban (1994) are adamant that they do not believe in pre-existing reality. Researchers tend to choose the paradigm in line with their beliefs about nature and reality. Using classic grounded theory in this study means the researcher would only ever apply theoretical codes if they fit and were relevant and never forced.
### 1.9 Thesis structure

The thesis is divided into seven chapters with multiple subsections, as indicated in the table of contents above.

Chapter two covers policy research in context. The literature on current policy development from global, state and local perspectives will be covered. The focus will be on current practices in Ireland and Europe to form the focus of the study and the formation of the research questions.

Chapter three provides a detailed overview of the grounded theory methodology from classification, data-gathering through analysis, and theory generation. The evaluation of the methods and limitations are also discussed in this chapter. This chapter also describes the challenges of using classic grounded theory in detail.

Chapter four outlines how the method was implemented and includes data collection interviews, coding, memoing, sorting, and theory generation. Ethical issues encountered before and during analysis are outlined in this chapter.

Chapter five provides a detailed overview of the theory, including the basic social and psychological process the academics use in overcoming their concerns. The core concerns and issues are presented, and the core categories and sub-core categories. All the properties of the categories are described in detail. The main concern and the core category is presented, and the different phases in the basic social psychological process are identified.

Chapter six provides a detailed discussion of the findings and how they correlate and contrast with literature from a social psychological perspective. Literature on behaviours related to how academics are overcoming their concerns is presented as a complete literature review. Chapter seven concludes the research study with a summary of the findings, the study’s implications, future work and a personal reflection from the author. The contribution to knowledge and the study’s trustworthiness are also presented in chapter seven.
1.10 Summary

In summary, the purpose and rationale for this grounded theory study highlight the necessity of having the academic voices heard in how they respond to policies within their institutions. This research highlights academics’ core issues and concerns in policy development and implementation. A comprehensive literature review in chapters two and six allows this study to be firmly situated within the context of the research findings as per grounded theory. The method chosen for the study is a classic grounded theory that allows the theory to be developed using inductive techniques to produce a substantive theory that is grounded in the data. This thesis presents the methodological approach, the study’s findings and a detailed discussion of its relation to the current literature and theories. Its original contribution is in the form of a comparative analysis of literature and theory developed from the participants’ core concerns. This research offers several contributions based on the findings. These research findings present a theory to inform policy within Irish higher education institutes and other organisations and highlights higher education’s academic voices.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter provides an overview of the literature on policy analysis, development and implementation practices. It presents the background and motivation for this work. The policy analysis that will be presented will include global, state, education and local policy development issues and the key contributors as illustrated in figure 2.1. The initial review will focus on contemporary policy issues and concerns and, in particular, how globalisation has affected policy practices and discussions on policy sociology. The initial review will also focus on policy and education policy and how education policy has been affected by managerialism and governance and how bureaucracy and power have affected the implementation and responses to policy. An overview of empirical studies nationally and internationally and how they formed the context for the study will be provided. This literature will draw on the current policy landscape in Ireland and Europe and how that informed the study of local-level practices. In reviewing the literature, a range of empirical studies concerning policy implementation were selected because they relate to the focus of this study. Gaps in knowledge have been identified throughout the review that focus on key contributions of the thesis. Current policy practices and concerns are further highlighted to explain how the questions for exploration were formulated.
The following section will discuss what policy is and policy analysis.

2.2 Policy analysis: what is policy?

Ozga (2000) describes a policy as a “vehicle or medium for carrying and transmitting a policy message” (pg.33), which policymakers write at the state and national level. These messages then translate into local-level policy text. Lingard and Rizvi (2010) argue that policy is determined by authorities’ role in the organisation or school in which it is being implemented. They believe that teachers will interpret policy and interpret and translate that into practice. They assert that this translation is important for change to occur and correlates to the works of Erasmus and Gilson (2008), where the different interpretations and implementation shape policy over time. According to Lingard and Rizvi (2010), a policy is synonymous with making decisions. These decisions are not made in isolation and expresses patterns of the decisions made by the political actors on behalf of state institutions such as univer-
sities. They are normative rules and regulations and are “designed to steer people’s actions and behaviour” (pg.4). They also argue that policy refers to anything that can be achieved, regardless of its design authority, and that policy implementation is not always straightforward.

Luke and Hogan (2006) describe a policy as trying to change the “behaviours and practices of others to steer change in a particular direction” (pg.7). The policy involves allocating resources such as human, economic and ideological views. Easton (1953) describes the policy as an “authoritative allocation of values” (pg.129-130). Ball (1990, 1997) describes the context of policy practices and the influences that affect the implementation and interpretation of the policy. Ball believes a connection exists between the context of text production, which is the development of policy and the practice of the implementation on the ground. This connection will be investigated in this study.

Ball (1990, 1997) suggests that policies speak to the subjects rather than those speaking to them and indicates power and authority over the implementation subjects. Lingard and Rizvi (2010) assert that sanctions can lead to penalties for poorly implemented policies. The discourse of power and authority is felt in state and public policy. At a lower level and within the institutions at the level of implementation, there is a fear of reprimand. Analysis involves decoding the text for context and its effects on the practice and are the policy outcomes. Authority is essential to interpreting and analysing the policies as authority underpins the policies, who are writing the policies, and how it has been exercised or allocated. The authority to develop policy ensures consent to the policy and steers practice (Lingard and Rizvi, 2010, pg.12). These practices will be observed in the accounts of the academics in the current study. According to Rizvi and Lingard, authority is the central notion of policy and is not addressed explicitly by policy researchers. The current study observes power contributions to the conflict felt when academics implement policy.
How they overcome it will be indicated in theory, what penalties have been experienced, and how they have been addressed.

Ball (1990) describes policy text as a discourse of policy. He argues that policy is framed in broader discourses or broader discussions. The language used like ‘we’ and ‘our’ reflects the concerns of the policy and the direction of change between policy creators and the readers (Rizvi and Lingard, pg.8). These discourses are also thought to decipher who speaks, when, where, and with what authority (Ball, 2006, pg.48). The concern then is whose voice will be heard and what level of authority they have to affect policy changes and, in particular, disputed policy? In terms of the cycle that policy has been referred to by Lingard (2006, 2010), Dale (1999), and Ball (1990, 1997), policy processes are important because it does not acknowledge a straightforward relationship in the setting of policy agendas. They believe what is important is producing policy text and implementing it into practice. However, they are also aware that this produces ‘ad hoc’ and discursive relationships between development and implementation (Ball, 1997). Ball (1994) describes policy text as words and actions to be enacted and intended. The implementation concern then is that the policies are written and may never be implemented as intended. What is happening concerning extant policies within the institutions in this study will be observed.

Henry and Taylor (1997) describe a policy as a more specific document or text between process and product. The text requires ongoing changes and the processes of implementation into practice. According to contemporary policy writers such as Lingard and Ball, a policy is about change and reform, especially in educational systems. They believe that policy desires or imagines change. It offers the future state of affairs change after the policy has been enacted. Henry, Lingard, Rizvi and Taylor (2013) discuss doing policy analysis and policies that have value and are more than just the text. However, they describe this text as burdened with bureau-
cracy depending on who is writing. They believe policies are written in context, and their implementation is never straightforward. They also talk about education policies in particular that interact with other policies. It is not difficult to see this correlation especially with gender equality and sustainability, two very current social issues prevalent in most organisations and institutions. Moreover, in many ways, according to Lingard, policy avoids complications. Policies provide a general overview, but they leave room for interpretation (Lingard and Rizvi, 2010). What needs addressing are the practices at the local level of where these educational state policies are implemented and discovering the patterns of behaviour interpretation and implementation at that level.

Henry and Taylor (1997) argue that policy is prone to consequences, probably because the state writes them. State influences firstly initiate education policy to promote change within the sector. Multiple factors are involved in policy creation at this level, including funding, resources, and agendas. Policies change over time, and policies are reinvented based on old policies. The concern then amongst these researchers is that if this is the case is the policy just going over old ground and that these new policies are redundant. These concerns revolve around the subjects that have to implement the policies and whether they accept this change. Ball (1997) argues that not all organisations or subjects will embrace this change. What is important is how are they accepting these policies and what is happening at the coalface of policy implementation within higher education, a question that this research study will address. Concerning most contemporary policy writers such as Taylor, Lingard, Rizvi and Ball discussions on globalisation are taking place and how what is happening on the world stage shapes educational policies on a national and local level and will be discussed in section.
2.3 Globalisation and education policy

The global economy, communication and political relations are changing global communication and creating a sense of belonging and identification worldwide. This is the case of policy sociology, correlating to Ball’s (1990, 1997) perspective, as opposed to the state, where the work of Lingard is positioned. According to Lingard and Rizvi (2010), the global economy and political agendas affect education policy. They are concerned about how this globalisation influences education policy and provide a way of looking at policy studies informed by the experiences of policy making and evaluation from a global perspective and understanding the processes of globalisation on the policy cycle (Lingard and Rizvi, 2010). They provide an analysis of policy that shows how education policies represent values across global, national, and local processes around policy development and implementation. Their focus is on the content, processes, and rules for education policy that have a new relationship as a result of globalisation and new approaches that can be applied to policy analysis and, in particular, education policy. Their focus is on public policy and how that is affected by globalisation. What is important in policy research and analysis is to look at the broader picture of policy conception. Where do the policies originate, and who writes them? In the current climate, what is affecting local and national policy development is how education is being influenced by what is happening globally. Education and knowledge generated within these institutions is strategically linked to the economy. Much research has been done at the global level of policy and policy analysis and in the line of policy sociology as conducted by researchers such as Ball, Lingard, Taylor, and others.

Fazal Rizvi and Bob Lingard (2010) study the formation of education policy and globalisation and its effect on education policy. Their study argues that the studies in policy are linked to change processes and, in more bureaucratic forms, administrative control and decision making. According to them, original policy studies
were related to policy sciences described by De Leon and Vogenbeck (2017). They were shifting the attention to administrative control and directives around change. This control is at the state and national level and it is important to discover if these practices are evident at the ground level where education policy meets its subjects, the academics and the students.

Early policy studies discuss public policies ably in developing, implementing, and evaluating public policy. These studies are related to the needs of the state and the priorities, and the effectiveness of the state. The problems that arose at that stage could be solved through research and techniques developed by social scientists (Lingard and Rizvi, 2010). In addition to providing helpful information to policymakers, though, from an academic policy research perspective, they were also interested in governments and what they did and how they managed the policy process. A neo-liberal ideology shapes policies and how they were created, implemented and evaluated. Globalisation involves incorporating the world in the development of these policies (Lingard and Rizvi, 2010). Globalisation affects state policy and subsequently affects local policies developed. Globalisation is intrinsic to the policies developed and implemented within organisations and institutions worldwide.

Globalisation may affect policy development and result in tighter accountability controls within organisations for the goals to be achieved, which may negatively affect the subjects. This type of accountability or tighter control may result in what Lingard and Rizvi believe is that only some objectives of policies will be implemented. The other objectives may not be implemented, and the goals may not be achieved. Tighter controls are representative of this new managerialism in policy development and management and control. This is representative of culture and is more about being seen (Lingard and Rizvi, 2010) to perform, rather than the actual performing of the policy. Monitoring staff for the performance of the policy, the focus is on performance and the performance of the academics and the students who are close to the desired outcomes, whilst regulating others. Ball (2004) recognises this type of enforcement of accountability as unintended dysfunctional effects and of perfor-
mance in the context of English education systems. The effects of accountability frameworks imposed on the teachers and that, in one sense, looking at necessary policy change can sometimes deny existing provisional, professional autonomy and policy practice (Lingard and Rizvi, 2010, pg.20). Autonomy, they believe, is necessary to achieve policy goals. Lingard and Rizvi look at the research over 20 years, up until 2010, looking at change and new agenda settings used in policy development. According to them, one consequence is fatigue or reform fatigue (pg.21). There is also resistance from those in policy development and those refusing to change their views. Fast, quick policies that result in the people on the ground not being committed to the policy and implementation, and then there are unintended consequences, but what are these unintended consequences at the ground level?

Policies developed as a result of globalisation will subsequently influence national and local levels. However, will this change be accepted at this level? These documents cascading down to national and local level will not necessarily have ‘buy in’ from everyone. The problem is that there will be resilience and “counter-dispersive activity” (Ball, 1997, pg.261, Mac and Ghaill, 1994). In the public sector, it is possible to identify some mixed messages at work where old and new management practices are at play together and will affect the practices on the ground. This study will observe current practices on the ground and the extant issues and concerns at that level.

2.4 Policy formulation and concerns

When discussing education policy and policy sociology, what is happening regarding political agendas influences this. Ball (1997) designed a template of policy education research from design and scope to the embeddedness of the policy to the ethics and peopling of policy. What is particularly interesting about this is the design and scope of policy that looks at the policy and practice, the focus of policy, the
temporality of policy, globalisation of policy and national policy and is significantly related to the focus of this study. However, Ball had three unique ideas in his discussion on education policies. The first was new reformed policies are more important than the older ones. However, his writings and many other sociology writings talk about policy as change, but the older policies are erased. However, new policies are developed based on these. Nevertheless, the concern that should be addressed is, are these policies effective and implemented correctly? Creating new policies based on the old is going back over 'old ground' that possibly is not working for some or all of the subjects. Within the institutions, the focus of the current study is policy development and implementation perspectives.

Ball (1997) also looks at ‘reform policies’ that indicate what schools should do differently. He argues that reform at the state level should be implemented the same across the wider geographic area, if at all possible. Ball describes policy orientation and practice orientation, and the differences between these are the case with the classrooms and teachers in schools. According to him, they are “freestanding’, self-determining and out of context and unaffected or unconstrained by the requirements of a national curriculum” (pg.265). If this is the case, then the policies to be implemented at the school level may not all be implemented the same within the different schools. If this is happening, who is blamed? What Ball believes happens in these settings is the policymakers’ unreflexively ‘blame-based tactics’, where the policies are always solutions and never part of the problem. He argues that the problem is in the school or the teacher, but never in the policies. This is a concern Ball discusses from the policymaker’s perspective and should also be viewed from an academic’s perspective on the ground.

Policy researchers over the years focus on the policy practice gap, which is an ever ongoing issue and will be discussed in section 2.7. This policy practice gap is evident until recently without assuming that the gap represents an implementation failure on the part of the schools or that the teachers are responsible for this gap.
(Ball, 1997). Without considering what they are expected or required to do or the complexities and practices of implementing it, they talk about bad practices rather than questioning the policies themselves (Ball, 1997). This study will address the correlation between design and the interpretational claims researchers make about research subjects and whether they are still experienced.

Policies pose problems to the subjects and are indicated in much policy research, particularly Elmore’s (1996) discussion on policy, indicating that focusing on one policy will forget the other policies. The discussion should be broader rather than focus on a particular policy issue. All the subjects should understand policies in the same way in every setting. The local resources and histories and commitments to this will differ, according to Ball (1997). Ball also argues that policies should be clear and fixed instead of awkward and incomplete and that this will differ accordingly across various institutions. The current study will observe the experiences of academics in policy development and implementation within their institutes, and will be carried out across three campuses in Dublin. In his discussion on policy research and analysis, Ball is interested in a certain trajectory on how policy should be analysed from global to national and local practices on the ground and the commonalities and linkages between these. Global and the state concatenate down to the local level and influence local practices. However, there is also a trajectory of policy development and implementation at the local level that should be studied. As mentioned before, local development and local implementation of these policies are influenced by national and global strategy and is a focus of this study, the lower level of policy implementation, the ground level where the policy is implemented by the subjects they are intended for, and in this study academics in higher education.

Ball (1997) argues that policy research needs to look local. The local level is where this current research will focus. Ball (1997) does look at the relevance of the local level of policy and that there are local competitive arenas. In the education research,
schools and classrooms and the cultural environment within the schools may look and sound the same. However, policy failure conveys a sense of regional community or setting. The current study will look at the policy-setting at a local level within institutes of education in Ireland and discover whether culture is an issue.

Ball (1997) believes that policies do not tell their subjects what to do, but rather the policies create conditions where the range of options available in deciding what to do is narrowed or changed, or particular implementation goals are set. He also views policy as something done to people and that the recipients implement the policy. The recipients of implementation could be disadvantaged or advantaged by it. He also described policies as imposing problems for the subjects of implementation and having to be solved in the particular context in which they sit, and this study will discover what these problems are and how they are being solved. Ball argues, though, that policies do not tell subjects what to do, but in fact, they give options of what to do, but that these options are significantly narrowed as the goals are set. Ball argues that the subordinates need to be creative in their action or social activities to implement policies. The responses to these policies are where some of the implementation issues are. He argues that most people who do these policies are displaced by the policies or put out by the policies. He notices that there could be noncompliance and narrow-mindedness amongst the practitioners. It is these people that policy research is about, and the sociology of policy lies. This research intends to discover what those practices are, the interactions and concerns at that level, and how these subordinates are implementing policies? Are they, as Ball describes, displaced with them? As Ball states, a policy is a change. It is important to look at the actors and their identities as important facets to look at and recognise and observe what effects these particular actors or voices have with the policy. The following section will review how state policy formulation influences education policy.
2.5 State policy analysis

Stephen Ball (1994) observes authority as one of the central tasks in policy research, and the texts and discourses and the effects of policies are the key aspects of policy research. According to Rizvi and Lingard (2010), concerning state policies, what is happening is “implementation is disjointed, and more politics and trade-offs are involved” (pg. 10). What Lingard and Rizvi believe, though, is that changes in the state will invariably produce rules for education policy, its content, and its purposes. So they discuss public policy and authority of the state. The government, corporation, or social authority influences education policy. The policy is designed to ensure that power is exercised and achieved through institutional norms and practices. Rizvi and Lingard argue that concerning state policy implementation and development, the changes in the structure is that the state implied rules concerning education policies are in the processes used in the development of the policy cycle. However, education policy has become more globalised and requires a new approach to education policy studies (Ball, 1997, 2021). In the context of this study, it is not going to be an immediate concern, as the studies focus on the practices is at the more local level. However, it gives context to those issues and concerns felt at that level by the academics. Lingard (2006) studied the changing state of policy production in education from policy sociology. The focus of his study was state policy perspective as a result of findings from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), of which Ireland is a member state. He argues that a more sophisticated state theory should be incorporated into the policy cycle approach and described in the following section.

2.5.1 The policy cycle: policy development and implementation related to state

Political processes involved in the policy development can affect policies. There is also correlation between public and private policies and how each influences the
other. The states in the OECD could be viewed as competitive states that contribute to a competitive educational policy framework. Practices and management practices in the private sector have also affected practices at the state level and the educational sector (Lingard, 2006).

Ozga (1987), Dale (1992) and Ball (1993) contest any relationship between control of the state and the policy cycle and educational policymaking and practice. Policy sociology, which is the link between the politics and the sociology of the people who develop and implement policies, claims how the state could control these policies locally. However, they believe that the practice and policy sociology affects the teachers and the practitioners at the local level. State structures and state control is disregarded, and the teachers modify these policies over time regardless.

Lingard (2006) argues that the significance of state is important in both political and theoretical terms concerning education policy. He also mentions managerialism and new managerialism, resulting in tighter control over government policies and educational policy.

Ball (1990), in his study on policy and policymaking in education, argues that education policy should be acknowledged under discussions of economic reform and change. He recognises the development implementation relationship he believes is important in policy sociology. He looks at this from a state level but could also be viewed globally. He acknowledges the “messiness and the complexity” (pg. 9) of the process of policy. In his study on politics and policymaking, Ball analysed three levels, the economic, the political, and the ideological. The theories associated with these are theoretical strategies and are structural, interactionist and discursive (Lingard, 2006). Ball acknowledges a lack of theorising about policy and the current study will theorise about policy at a local level where the impact of implementation and development are felt and observe local level practices and develop a theory to
explain these. In his discussion on state policymakers, Ball (1990) acknowledges the impact of bureaucracy and managerialism on policymaking. He believes in the significance of these players in their ideological positions. According to Grace (1987) and Lingard (2006), the state is the locus of power and control. The agencies they want to change will also be a locus of control to be exercised at every level of the policy cycle.

Dale (1990) observes policies and legislative texts written at a state level and how they become modified over time at the local level. At the local level, the modifications are related to the history and culture of the particular school. This indicates a concern and as previous implementation researchers have asserted (Elmore (1979), Pressman and Waldavsky (1984), Barrett (1980)) there needs to be a connection made between development and implementation or that implementation should be incorporated into policy development. Severing implementation from the formulation of policy “involves not only a distortion but a serious misunderstanding of the role of the state and education policy” (Dale, 1992, pg.393).

Ball (1990) concludes a relationship exists between the policy outcomes and the power schools have to exercise a specific outcome. Cycles that conduct and cause a displacement and the sociology behind this is observed by him. He observes this relationship between state policy and education policy. He studied the transformation between the legislative text at a state level and what is happening at a school level. Lingard is interested in the policy theory cycle, and Ball is more interested in the policy sociology cycle. The policy cycle that Lingard discusses consists of three contexts of policymaking: the context of the influence of policy text production, the practice, and the “interactive and continuous relationship between these contexts” (pg. 40). He also argues that there is a need to theorise the relationships between these local and state bodies’ main sites. He also argues that the policy cycle approach seems to forget that schools are local sites of the state, even within
the transfer of power or succession to local management frameworks. This research relates to a policy sociology study as it observes practices in development and implementation of education policy. It attempts to observe concerns of academics and will develop a theory that will look at and describe how academics are overcoming their policy concerns with policies developed by authority at the local level. Ozga (1987) describes policy sociology as rooted in the social science arena. It is different from other policy approaches within education and concerned with managerialism and implementation concerns and one of these issues is interpretation of the text.

Lingard (2006) discusses that text can be deciphered differently amongst many readers in different contexts. The context that Lingard describes as an authoritative top-down manner and that the state has control over this and that the state’s role is a central factor in the style of the text used. It is legalese, and can have multiple interpretations. Interestingly, Lingard discusses power at the local policy cycle site and argues that power is facilitative and dispersed rather than possessed or controlled.

Ball (1993) also recognises that policy text is open to multiple interpretations, and the discussion should be about who is reading and who is writing the text. He also talks about this “redistributing of voice” (pg.9) and that voices should be heard. Furthermore, the current study will provide that voice from the perspective of the implementers of these education policies and how they respond to policy.

Dale (1992) suggests that the state should focus on education policy. He asserts that it is important and necessary to link state to education policy and that the most important element of understanding education policy is looking at the state. There is a need to go beyond the policy cycle that Lingard discusses and state control and requires a theoretical move beyond this. However, Dale and Lingard believe that the state is not enough to analyse education policy or understand the relationships
and the conditions established by central policy and the practices at the local level. The next section will provide further context for the study by describing how policy is developed at a national level within Ireland and how that provided further focus for the research.

2.6 National policy analysis: Irish higher education policy framework

Higher education institutions have grown rapidly in the past three decades, and managing them has become a challenge. This results from increasing numbers attending universities and institutions and new methods and modes of delivery (Hunt, 2011). Hunt argues that what also influences the rise in numbers is universities have been strategically linked to the connection with social and economic challenges in their locales. The emphasis then focused on the management and leadership within these organisations. What will also influence the administration and management of these institutions is also affected by the position of higher education internationally. The concern then is the policies developed to recognise this structural change. As a result, change of structure will affect culture, or even more so culture will impede change, an issue that will be addressed in this study.

2.6.1 The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030

During the year 2009 through to 2010, discussions were ongoing about the future of the landscape of Irish higher education. The government at the time established a working group to review and consider a future policy and strategy for higher education and appointed Colin Hunt as the chair. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 was published in 2011. The vision identified in this report was that higher education would play a central role in recognising Ireland as an enterprising, innovative, and attractive place to work with a good quality of life with
inclusive social structures (Hunt, 2011). If Ireland achieved this, it was essential to “enhance human capital by expanding participation in higher education” (pg.10). It was also suggested that the Irish higher education system broaden communication and engagements with other countries and education systems which is indicative of effects of globalisation. This would allow staff and students to compete on the world stage and share knowledge, and resources would ensue. What needs to be in place for this to happen is that all institutions involved have strong autonomous structures and governance. There would need to be funding and accountability for performance within them and the processes would have to be aligned with national priorities (Hunt, 2011).

Following the report, the government would have clear strategic roles and responsibilities that would apply to the organisations and institutions to implement the policy goals that would stem from these. These roles and responsibilities would be clear policy goals, defining the roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders, a balance of accountability and performance within the institutions and a clear definition of the relationship between the state and higher education (Hunt, 2011).

2.6.2 Governance and government

A relationship exists between the government and higher education. The government assigns a minister for education who has key responsibilities to work on behalf of the government and the higher education sector. However, the overall responsibility lies with the government. The role of the government is to develop the strategies and provide the funding. They are also responsible for the framework to ensure that the strategies are implemented. The objectives of higher education are informed by the “national priorities that are articulated by the government” (Hunt, 2011, pg.89). Furthermore, the higher education act was passed in 1971, and since then, there has been an authority, called the HEA\(^1\), responsible for funding and policy advisory. The HEA is responsible for the effective governance and regulation of higher educa-

\(^1\)Higher Education Authority
tion institutions and the higher education system. The authority must ensure that institutional autonomy is practised and that institutional strategies are aligned with national strategic objectives. These objectives include access to higher education, the responsiveness to the needs of wider society and the internationalisation of Irish higher education. Policies that are implemented at the local level represent these objectives and obligations. Each institution is responsible for successfully developing policies that define the strategies and their implementation. As described by sociologists such as Taylor (1997), Ball (1990, 1997) and Lingard (2006), the policy is about change. Still, it is the local level where these mandates are applied within the institutions and how change is accepted at this level. The purpose of this study will be to focus on the extant policies being implemented and the concerns of the implementers at the coalface of education policy and to inform future development.

2.6.3 Irish higher education landscape

One of the recommendations in the National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 was establishing a new type of university, a technological university. At this time, three institutes of technology in Dublin signed a memorandum of understanding establishing the Technological University for Dublin Alliance. These institutes were the Dublin Institute of Technology, the Institute of Technology Tallaght and the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown. The initial work undertaken included identifying overarching foundation themes that would guide the application for designation. One of these themes was the development of teaching and learning strategies. As discussed previously, the initial goal was to explore and critique strategy within higher education to identify aspects of policy that influenced learner experience. As an academic in higher education, there is an awareness of discussions around policy, particularly being an academic within one of the institutions that had just formed the technological university for Dublin alliance. The focus shifts to exploring educational policy experiences within higher education institutes.
Two studies that also influenced the direction of the study were Boyle and Humphries (2000) and Lillis (2015). Boyle and Humphries (2000) “A New Agenda for the Irish Public Service” stated that where no strategy had been implemented over time, certain requirements had been met unintentionally. Lillis (2015) observes a classical model, the “Masters of the Universe” Model, that assumes a stable environment where extreme change and unexpected events are not accounted for. In this event, a contingency plan would be put in place. If a policy does not exist, is it possible the practise still exists, and should there be a contingency plan for non-existent policies? It influenced the direction of the work. It also added to the researcher’s curiosity. One would need to consider when the policy would be implemented and how the impact would be obvious. The next section will cover the national forum review of policy and how outcomes also influence the study’s focus.

2.6.4 National forum review of higher education policy

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education conducted a review of the Irish Higher Education Policy landscape and, in particular, for digital teaching and learning. The report looks at criteria for determining if policy enabled implementation. A key question in the research examines the link between policy creation and successful implementation (National Form Review, 2018a). This research demonstrates that the three key elements for a policy to be enabling are:

1. Should be implementable.

2. Situated in Practice.

3. Reflective of HEI (Higher Education Ireland) priorities.

For a policy to be enabling and subsequently implementable, it should be situated in practice and reflective. The review describes a policy as implementable if it defines commitments to the HEI and has a clear implementation plan accompanied
by policy instruments and procedures. The review highlights a need for stakeholder consultation for policy to be situated in practice. Policy needs to be implementable at the operational level, facilitate innovation, and monitor and review for effectiveness. Adequate policy evaluation needs to occur to be deemed reflective and guided by strategic vision and objectives. The following table highlights the key dimensions of successful policy implementation as indicated in the national forum report (2018a).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of Enabling Policies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situated in Practice</td>
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<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective</td>
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Table 2.1: Key dimensions of successful policy implementation as indicated in the national forum report (2018a).

The National Forum publication also argues that ‘implementable’ policies can enable excellent practice. Policies deemed as enabling are identified as having a “high score to meeting criteria under being reflective of HEI’s priorities or being implementable rather than being situated in practice” (National Forum, 2018a, pg.11). Furthermore, the study found that without appropriate policy guidance, informal practices can emerge that may not serve institutions, staff or students well. The study concludes that 46% of the policies meet the implementable criteria, and 43% are reflective. An area of concern in the study is a lack of appropriate policy situated in practice. In a report by Murphy and Maguire (2018), on the national forum on policy review, they argue that consultation with students and staff should occur across the higher education sector for innovation and strategic alignment. They also suggest, where there is evidence of informal practices around policy, the need for consultation with staff members who will ultimately be implementing the policy is essential. More than half of the policies are un-implementable, and the resulting practices indicate this. The Higher Education System Performance Framework
2018-2020 highlights key educational objectives in Ireland regarding current practice and best practice. One of the requirements is to improve the quality of the learning environment and international best practices through quality and academic excellence. Internationally, there is a move from measuring quality through compliance and moving towards a quality culture rather than a tick-boxing procedure and shifting the focus from “process towards outcomes and emphasising the management of a quality culture” (Higher Education Authority, 2018, pg. 16). This ignited an interest for the researcher on the effect of quality and culture on policy experiences. The next section will highlight current policy practices that further influence the study’s focus.

2.7 Local policy analysis: practices and behaviours

The original motivation for this study focused on teaching and learning strategies. However, another dominant theme also emerged, the link between policy and practice experiences. During the research on teaching and learning, the researcher became curious about policy as every strategy document at some stage has a resulting policy document. Strategy is normally a high-level document with organisational goals and objectives outlined. Policies are derived from the overall strategic goals and are outlined as rules and regulations that form day-to-day decisions for the organisation’s work and functioning. As discussed in the previous sections they are also influenced by global and state strategy. Strategy is a plan of action, while policy is a working plan. The National Strategy for Higher Education to 2030 suggests creating a new type of university, a technological university, with its legislation and statutory authority. The initial vision was to explore the strategic processes inherent in developing strategies and formulate a participant informed strategy that was dynamic and accessible to encapsulate the learner experience. However, the focus shifted to academic policy experiences in higher education, particularly the three institutes forming the Dublin alliance’s technological university.
Concerning policy at the state and global levels, there are concerns over policy interpretation, implementation and consequences of variations. However, developments emerging on the European stage provides a different backdrop to this work. These are Bologna and Bucharest. The gaps between policy and practice in educational institutions are common in the Bologna process (2012) compared to the national forum review (2018a) of policy documents. They monitor staff and students’ behaviours within a university and focus on mobility. Practices in Europe are studied, particularly due to the Bologna process. A project that looks at the gap between policy and practice in educational institutions entitled “Closing the Gap between Policy and Practice” (Colucci et al., 2012) monitors staff and students’ behaviours within a university focusing on mobility. This project is known as the Maunimo Project. This study discovers gaps in policy development and focuses on policy and particular practices resulting from the Bologna process. This project monitors several behaviours of staff and students within a university, focusing on mobility. What is happening in practice is not representative of the policy and ignites interest for the researcher to determine if gaps in current academic policies existed and if there are concerns with higher educational institutions’ policy and noncompliance. Writers normally write policies at the top of the hierarchy, and the implementers and stakeholders at the bottom are where the effect can be measured. A key theme emerging from Bologna are policy gaps and shape the study’s direction. Does the organisational structure have an impact on policy? Referring to table 2.1, could structure and gaps be added to enabling or disabling policy dimensions? According to Maria Helena Nazare, President of the EUA², at the time, ”both the governments of the EUA and the European commission have articulated a strategic vision for enhancing mobility, entailing concrete benchmarks and better measurement of progress”. The question asked is: is it commonplace where policy has been articulated or documented, has progress been monitored sufficiently? The EUA contributed to policy

²European University Association
thinking, and a strategy was agreed upon in Bucharest in 2012. The EUA has a role in over 850 universities in Europe to put policy into practice. The document reflected how policy and practice could be better coordinated and extract what can be applied universally as a framework for other educational policies.

Another particularly interesting outcome of this project is the Mobility Mapping Tool developed to monitor progress. Savio et al. (2010) suggest the use of a PIS (policy Implementation strategy), an instrument that is used to attain the objectives or targets set out by policy but is broader in scope (Savio, N. and Nikolopoulos, K. 2010.) Is there a possibility that a tool is needed or appropriate to monitor policy? Two further empirical studies that influence this research involve teachers’ experiences with policies and principles in London’s secondary schools (Moore and Clarke, 2016, Moore, 2006). The aim is to look at how the teachers respond to policies they do not approve of and how unpopular policies are implemented at the school and classroom levels. The second study aims to learn more about how teachers experience and organise their working lives with educational policy and what cultural, practical, psychological resources they draw upon in making those responses. Moore’s study produces some interesting results regarding the actors within that system and how they react to a policy they disagree with. They feel that it is not their place to change policy or oppose it, and if they did, it would be a waste of time. Moore maintains that teachers are prepared to implement the policy because of the legal requirement and respect for democratic processes rather than an "internalised view of their relative powerlessness within the system" (pg.492). Reverting to table 2.1, two dimensions could now be part of the discussion on key elements that affect policy enablement, powerlessness and how academics respond to policies they do not agree with. The research objective is to discover concerns amongst the academics, develop a theoretical framework that allows a better understanding of policy, and discover if the participants have similar or different concerns.
Lingard and Rizvi (2010) argue that policy and texts have a desire and future desire when implemented. Desire is what Moore and Clarke (2002, 2004) describe in how subjects respond to policy within schools. They describe this desire as being seen to do right by the policy. Concerning Lingard and Rizvi’s assertion, what is the desire and whose interests are represented in the policy? The concern then is, what happens if there is disputed text within a policy? These ideas will be explored in the current study in how the academic experiences of policy respond to disputed policy text.

Moore (2004), in a study of school teachers, describes how the participant’s story was one of disillusionment brought on by increased bureaucracy. Moore observes how teachers adopt different strategies in their negotiations with policy. Some teachers find the process more difficult than others, regardless of their initial ideological position. Furthermore, he also finds that teachers in the same institution, who have similar ideological dispositions, just carry on. Moore is more concerned about why they do what they do rather than their ideological tendencies. He believes it is based on their personal experiences and these experiences and response will be observed in how they respond to this bureaucracy, a concept that is described in the next section.

2.7.1 Bureaucracy and disillusionment

Williams (2021) observes policy implementation and bureaucracy issues from a state perspective. He discusses the question of bureaucratic performance and policy implementation through the concept of capacity. Capacity is defined as the “ability of institutions to implement official policy goals effectively” (Hanson and Sigman, 2019 pg.2). It is commonly used concerning individuals, organisations, communities, systems and nations (Ubels et al., 2016). Andrews et al. (2017) define capacity as the ability of an organisation to empower and influence actors to do the right thing at the right time to achieve policy objectives. What these definitions have in com-
mon is their emphasis on the potential of bureaucracies to achieve these objectives. However, “it is bureaucracies’ nature that differs from their capacity, and the constraints and uncertainty imposed by their multiple political principals” (Williams, 2021, pg. 4-5). Williams posits that to advance the study of bureaucratic quality, researchers should seek to understand the implications of bureaucracies’ collective nature in policy implementation and focus measurement more towards the actual performance of the objectives rather than capacity (Williams, 2021).

Max Weber is credited with having and being the founding founder of organisation theory (Clegg, 1994). He looks at the study of the ideal type of bureaucracy. He identifies bureaucracy as a structure. Weber observes that bureaucracy takes over almost every sphere of life where organisations spread. Weber himself believes that bureaucracy is a human creation out of control. Weber regards bureaucracy as a scientific creation that takes over modern life and results in what he describes as disenchantment (Clegg, 1994). This disenchantment results in struggles and resistance. The context of the bureaucracy, according to Weber, is known as the “iron cage”. For some so-called subordinates within these iron cages of democracy, that existence becomes bearable. For others, according to Clegg (1994), there is opposition, and the iron cage that Weber describes is not only a prison. It is an institution that also allows freedom. Freedom is the ability to exist within the organisations through goals and purpose, a “faith dependent on the existence of the public and private sector bureaucracies” (Clegg, 1994, pg.55). If one examines the idea of bureaucracy as an iron cage, then the people within it are there because there is purpose and meaning from its existence. Even within these institutions, they thrive because they believe they are there for a reason. The bureaucracy of policy governs the academics within the institutions. They are aware of bureaucracy and power yet exist in what is seen as a kind of harmony but a conflicted harmony. Weber (1864-1920) predicts how bureaucracies and the ‘cogs’ or actors within these bureaucracies see themselves and position themselves. He sees a future for organi-
sational culture and bureaucracy. As many theorists refer to them, Weber suggests that subordinates swap personality for impersonal, objective rules and functions. He compares the work environment to a prison where rules and regulations are obeyed. Teachers in schools and academics feel that the governing types are bureaucratic rather than democratic. They feel that if they do not implement the policies, they will be reprimanded, or penalties will be incurred (Lingard and Rizvi, 2010), so there is a power felt with policy, a power that will be investigated within higher education policy development and implementation. The following section will outline empirical studies that observed concerns of power and control in policy implementation.

2.7.2 Power and control

Barrett (2004) looks at the top-down model of implementation. She emphasises power as the coordination of control by those with authority at the top of the hierarchy and that bureaucracy and power influence how the implementer of the policy should implement the policy’s objectives. Barrett argues that guidelines are established through these political processes and that the implementers have to implement them. Elmore’s (1979) bottom-up process involves gaining influence through conflict and power bargaining by the implementers. The power is primarily exercised to pursue and protect each actor’s interests and preferences rather than pursue legitimate public policy goals (Erasmus and Gilson, 2008).

Elmore (1979) looks at implementation from a top-down and bottom-up perspective. He argues that the relations within organisations from the top-down are formal and from the bottom-up are informal. He believes problem-solving runs from the bottom to the top. Gilson and Erasmus believe that actors use discretionary mechanisms in their responses to policy implementation and that discretion goes against the policy as it undermines conformance with policy and political process objectives. Bottom-uppers then have a positive view of this power of choice or discretionary power because it exercises the implementers’ efforts to adapt to local circumstances’
policies and secure broad policy and performance gain (Erasmus and Gilson, 2008). Like Lingard and Rizvi (2010) concur, variations in interpretation and translation can shape the policies over time.

According to Lipsky (1980,2010), implementers use discretionary power to cope with the environment’s public sector policies and describes them as street-level bureaucrats. Barrett (2004) agrees, describing them as actors attempting to control or direct their actions rather than promoting their interests or achieving performance gains. Newman (2005) describes how senior managers exercise agency in a dispersed field of power. Newman(2005) and Lipsky(1980,2010) support that policy is bottom-up and top-down. According to Lipsky, coping mechanisms are a method of dealing with the pressures placed on them and dealing with ambiguities in their day to day working life.

Rational choice and game theory are policy implementation tactics (O’Toole,1995, 2004). Policy implementation has been referred to as game playing (O’Toole,1995), an interesting analogy of policy implementation, especially with street-level bureaucrats. O’Toole mentions that facilitation should be made for links between the organisation units purely for cooperation between the units on a policy and to develop “trust through cooperation”. (2004, pg.47) Game theory provides advantages and the potential to “combine top-down and bottom-up approaches by treating all relevant actors as strategic players” (Cerna, 2013, pg.20). Clegg (1994) describes power as rules of a game that enable and constrain an action. Sharp et al.(2000) examine how actors also manage to control or direct others’ actions, and some people resist such efforts, similar game playing tactics. Clegg (1994) argues that some people may be unable to formulate the game’s rules. They are aware that they and others are employing game playing practices. The subjects can make sense, use discrimination adequately, yet “be at a loss to describe the methods they use to do so” (pg.159). Some people cannot deconstruct what they are meant to be doing. Where there are
rules, there is interpretation, and where there is interpretation, there is resistance. There will also be a certain amount of discretion. According to Clegg (1994), resistance is a struggle for power and a battle to limit resistance and escape from control.

Vanvelzer (2021) examines the issue of assessment policy implementation in one department at an institution in the United Arab Emirates and the effects of control on implementation. He explores how contextual factors influence actors in the implementation of assessment policy. Vanvelzer found this, particularly at the macro-level, where he believes the aim is to improve quality and accountability to produce highly skilled graduates. He states that the macro-level has a specific influence over the meso-level. Many factors influence the micro-level of the institutes, such as a highly centralised, top-down approach to implementation, quality and accountability, a multi-campus structure, and continuous culture of institutional change (Vanvelzer, 2021). He states that policy is an important determinant that influences actors unintentionally. He argues that the micro-level context impacts actors’ motivation, cognition, and power, which affects their interaction during the implementation process.

Erasmus and Gilson (2008) study power and policy implementation from a health service perspective and believe that more work needs to be done empirically on power and its consequences for policy implementation. They investigate practices of power and their implications on health policy implementation. They observe settings that illustrate how governance matters and how it influences policy outcomes. The exercise of power can generate misunderstandings among implementers of the policies and argue that a lack of understanding or misinterpretation could modify policies during their implementation (Erasmus and Gilson, 2008). These can be negative and positive consequences for the implementers. They look at different forms and sources of power in policy performance and the subtle ways of less exercised or less recognised policy enforcement exercises. Their study on policy from a health
service perspective describes how humour can exercise power and correlates to Grif-
fith’s study in 1998. Griffiths discusses how community health workers use humour
to resist their colleagues’ instructions or powerful colleagues and undermine their
professional hierarchies. Erasmus and Gilson also observe power and people. People
influence others in their professional roles, like doctors or nurses in the medical set-
ting or a teacher in an academic environment. In their study, they use observation
techniques and observe staff not exercising their discretionary power or sharing what
they are doing. Erasmus and Gilson suggest that power and the consequences on
policy implementation should be observed. They also believe discretion is an im-
portant part of healthcare policy implementation and needs to respond to varying
patient circumstances. The current study will observe whether academics use their
discretion to address and implement policy objectives and practice flexible policy
implementation.

2.7.3 Discourse analysis

According to Potter (1996), ‘discourse analysis’ is an umbrella term that describes
an interdisciplinary set of qualitative approaches used to study talk and text in so-
cial life. Talk and texts do not neutrally reflect the world, one’s identity or social
relations (Howarth, 2000). Policy text is legalese and can be difficult to understand
and interpret, and possibly because it is written at the state level (Dale (1990), Lin-
gard (2006)). Howarth argues that meaning is not a given, but meaning of all kinds
is produced in and through social practices. If this were true, surely professionals
in schools and universities would understand the policies they were presented with.
Linley and Joseph (2004), in their book entitled “Positive Psychology in Practice”,
describe how the discourse analyst presumes that language is performative and is
always doing something with a consequence. This consequence could be intended
or not. They believe that language can construct others’ identity and position and
dates back to philosophers such as Wittgenstein (1958) and others.
Angermuller et al. (2014) describes discourse analysis as “counter to the division of knowledge into specialised disciplines and sub-disciplines” (p.1). The field of discourse studies emerged in the 1960s as various forms of discourse analysis were developed and increasingly applied within the social sciences (Angermuller et al., 2014). Discourse studies are influenced by various disciplines and scholars such as Foucault and Goffman and many more and will be addressed again in chapter six.

According to Linley and Joseph (2004), discourse analysts also presume that it is through language that inequalities are produced and remain and, in particular, taken-for-granted discourses and practices become normalised. According to the open university network, the meanings and the language of policy could influence how people approach it and that humans are meaning makers and construct their reality based on their interpretations of events and objects. Language and metaphors used in certain circumstances and situations can be described as discourse.

However, understanding the relationship between discourse and social agency helps one to examine Frank Fischer’s (2003) term ‘post-empiricist’ understanding of policy and the policy processes. He argues that some ideas and discourses can have independent forces separate to the actors affected by it. Discourse in this view does more than reflect a social or political reality. Instead of understanding power in negative terms, such as controlling or manipulating others it makes much of the reality that has to be explained. This approach also emphasises that discursive power can determine the very field of action, including the tracks on which political action travels (Fischer, 2003). According to Fischer (2003), politicians and policy-maker’s language, whether transmitted through policy texts or other communicative processes, can influence social action. The power of discourse can be recognised in how public service managers tend to adopt ‘new’ policy language to legitimate change to their staff (Open University).
In a study carried out by Rigby et al. (2016) on school principals’ leadership conceptions, most schools have a formal policy for teacher evaluation. According to them, this particular policy can be interpreted broadly, and there is uncertainty with its outcomes, and implementing and evaluating the policy is a collective process. They mention that at least two people, the principal and the teacher, need to make sense of the document collectively. The authors believe that sense-making theory plays a role in implementing and evaluating that policy. They describe differences in how principals interpret the content or objectives of the policy. This depends on the individuals they are connected to, their schools and their previous experiences. The principals make sense of the multiple messages or objectives within the policy differently. They argue that providing a single, undetailed document or policy allows for varied implementation. There is an argument for a policy’s ability to be implemented according to local contexts' or specific needs (McLaughlin and Talbert, 1993). However, Rigby et al. suggest that first-year principals’ connections to colleagues or other individuals help sense-making or teacher evaluation decisions, not local needs. However, local needs should also be addressed in analysing policy implementation and practices.

2.7.4 Policy compliance

Weaver (2009) examines policy implementation and target compliance to understand public policy and compliance and why the particular policies’ target audience do not comply. According to Weaver, little attention is given to the final step of the implementation process, the target audience, the implementers and their behaviours. Weaver looks at theoretical approaches to understanding compliance, reasons for compliance and noncompliance, and strategies used by the target audience to cope with this. Weaver argues that policies are not self-implementing. The desired outcome is not declared, and many people need to implement them correctly to achieve policy goals and objectives. Weaver believes the actors act in what appears to be their self-interest, and that act is normally based on incentive or sanction. Com-
Compliance and monitoring cannot be ensured as it is costly. Weaver argues that some targets may be non-compliant because they lack autonomy over their decisions.

Etzioni (1965, 1966) describes an approach called compliance theory and mentions three types of power that organisations can possess: alienating, cumulative, and moral. He describes them as coercive - alienating, utilitarian calculative and normative - moral. He studies the relationship between power and involvement and argues that coercive power and participants in coercive institutions are normally detached and demonstrate alienated involvement. The coercive environment could be an alienating environment, the utilitarian environment could be calculative, and the normative environment has ethical concerns. These all influence how the actors will make decisions within the institutions.

Lunenburg (2012) argues that these different types of power, including coercive, utilitarian and normative, are useful in getting subordinates cooperation within the organisation. The effectiveness and approach depend on the organisation, the participants and the subordinate’s involvement, and the level of intensity in the participation (Lunenburg, 2012), but what affect does this have on the objects of implementation and how they respond to it needs investigation.

Spillane et al. (2002) discuss autonomy and argues that actors within the system are unwilling and cannot change their behaviour, a view echoed by Lipski (1980,2010) and McLaughlin (1986). Implementing agents intentionally or selectively ignore policies inconsistent with their interests and agendas (Lipski, 1968, Firestone, 1989). If policies are coherent and fit the agents’ plans and the actors, they will be implemented. They assume that teachers and implementing agents respond to the policymakers’ intended rules and objectives, which they either ignore or modify to suit them. However, they believe that this deliberate lack of policy implementation overlooks sense-making. According to Spillane et al., the idea of sense-making is not
the understanding of the policy or the interpretation of the policy but a combination of the individual’s knowledge or experience, belief, and attitude. As well as these attributes where the subjects situate themselves within their organisation will have an effect on their responses and is discussed in the next section.

2.7.5 Organisation structure

Rigby et al. (2016) observe how structure and agency influence policy implementation and organisational change. They argue that policies matter for the daily work of practitioners or educators. They believe that practitioners have to make sense of the ideas and practices and decide right or wrong. A structure can describe how we understand how things should be done, for example, a policy. It can also define the practices organised around those understandings and support them. Agency describes situational practices or an individuals’ ability to take action, such as the academics’ ability to implement a policy objective and understand it. They describe the relationship between structure and agency and examine how informal structures affect agency and individuals. Rigby et al. are particularly interested in the macro and the micro-level known as the meso-level. He tries to understand this space between policy and individual implementation and makes sense of institutional environmental interactions. They are interested in leadership and the relationships between the layers, particularly the meso-level and the consequences of those relationships. Researchers who focus particularly on structure tend to look at issues such as the policies written at the organisation’s macro-level. (Rigby et al., 2016) describe this relationship as an outline of the logic of reading instruction. They examine the interrelation between macro-level systems of reading and writing and micro-level practices.

Scholars who draw on structural accounts of policy implementation explain action as limited by economic, political and social contexts where performance is viewed through individual agents’ reports, patterns or explanations of behaviour, or human
motivation (Giddens, 1969). He believes that many can be found concerning individuals’ interaction within organisational structures or the relationships between structure and agency. The structure in this context is about the power hierarchy within the institutions. Researchers that studied agency studied the actors, such as teachers and the students. Typically, the focus is either on structure or agency but also emphasises one organisational level, such as the macro-environmental or micro-level classrooms. This research was from school teachers’ perspective and would be interesting to see if from academics in higher education contexts.

McLaughlin (1987) discusses his experiences on policy implementation in an article entitled “Learning from experience lessons from policy implementation”. He observes the relationship between policy and implementation programs and his personal experiences. He finds that policy implementation is incredibly hard to make something happen, especially in governance and particular institutional layers. It is hard because it is difficult to make things happen correctly. According to him, policymakers “cannot mandate what happens” (pg.172) and believes that policy will succeed with capacity, motivation, and commitment. This will reflect the implementer’s assessment of the policy’s value or the objectives’ appropriateness and believes what is important is motivation and participation in policy development. McLaughlin argues that the focus can shift from the institutions to the individuals in an implementation analysis, which this study will address.

Policy issues are with implementation, and many authors view this as part of the development process. The implementers do not understand the policy’s goals a or agree with their objectives at times. They believe that the writers of the policies are far removed from the actual policy. Teachers are responsible for carrying out policies, and their sense of ownership is crucial to implementing these policies (Bangs and Frost, 2012). According to them, most teachers feel that their voices are not adequately heard in education policymaking. To the best of the author’s knowledge,
there have been several articles on empowering teacher voice, such as Gozali et al. (2017), Lefstein and Perath (2014), McDonald (1986) and McDonald (1988). This study will focus on how they are getting that voice across and from the perspective of academics within Irish higher education institutions.

2.8 Policy sociology and education policy research

Stephen Ball’s (1990) focuses on the education reform act in England in 1988 and from this published Politics and Policy Making in Education to document that. Ball (1997) examines how policy is done rather than what it does. His initial focus was on who does the policy and where they get their ideas. His focus shifts to how policy forms the subjects of its intent (Ball, 2021), understanding policy issues and concerns and how some are real concerns and issues whilst others are not concerns or issues, and then some are ignored. Ball (1997) was particularly interested in education policy research, and he critiqued that many times. He believes that education policy research and development in human sciences is “very political” (pg. 263). He argues that there is a correlation between education policy and what is happening on the global stage politically, particularly in current policy writing around policy globalisation as described in section 2.3. Ball (2017, 2019) also observes networks and governance and how these enable and facilitate what he describes as policy mobility. Ball argues that this results from failure to address the structural power relations invested in the policy process. Studies show that governance is in policy development, but what needs to be explored is how power affects the practices on the ground and how the actors respond to that.

Ball (2012) looks at policy enactment at the school level and teachers’ responses to policy. His primary concern is how schools do policy and focus on the “dark corners” (pg.389) in which policy is done daily. He describes these interactions as mundane and not without struggles. He argues that teachers make sense of a “missed
match array of policies and constantly changing policies that are together incoherent and absurd” (pg.389). Ball (1997) believes that policy analysis should be regional, local, and from organisational perspectives. He argues that it is important to be aware of the degrees of play and flexibility and room for manoeuvring involved in translating policies into practices, particularly in the reform and change that policy identifies. Concerning the education sector and managerialism, the controllers are people or managers that provide the vision and the inspiration. However, Ball (1997) rates the school teacher as the main representative of what he describes as this new managerialism. It is crucial in transforming management in the schools and correlates with the academics in a higher education institution. If, according to Ball, they represent a new type of managerialism, are they experiencing that, particularly from a policy perspective and will be observed and discussed in the current study.

Ball (1997) argues that teachers, especially after the education reform act in 1988 in England, experienced a change and the values of leadership in the schools. He believes a policy is about change, and he believes that this change should be evident in the policy frameworks created. At the local level of policy development or the level of education policies, managers in this new managerialism society achieve a purpose of the state at the higher level through micro disciplinary practices and steering at a distance. Ball (1997) argues that management determines how employees think and feel about what they produce, demonstrating coercive control and that management impress the organisation’s core values on the employees. The concern is how this is being achieved. Is it through policy? Or some other mechanism. Furthermore, what is interesting in Ball’s study and his review looks at professionalism as being replaced by “accountability, collegiality by competition and interpersonal performance comparison” (pg.261). Where this is tested is questionable, and practices on the ground would highlight this.
Ball believes these are mechanisms representative of power. They are forms of power created through social interactions and play upon their subject’s insecurities. Ball believes that this is constructive rather than coercive power. New managerialism that uses ‘performance indicators’ as practices is characteristic of what Mintzberg (1983) defines as ‘machine bureaucracies’ and is encouraged (Ball, 1997). He observes self-scrutiny, self-evaluation, and self-regulation as mechanisms of empowerment, which will be discovered in how academics respond to disputed policies. The current study will observe the practices of the academics within higher education and how they experience policy at the coalface, are they influence by power and bureaucracy and what mechanisms they use in their responses to policy.

Ozga (2000) suggests that policy sociology should tie together the macro-level analysis and the micro-level ones with the subject’s actions. According to Ball (1993), the challenge is to relate this ‘ad hocbery’ of the macro with the ‘ad hocbery’ of the micro without losing sight of social action. Ball agrees with Ozga’s (2000) justification that policy sociology should tie together these practices. This study will observe these macro-level practices of development and how they are affecting micro-level practices of implementation and how macro-level policy building is affecting micro-level practices.

Ball (1997) argues that education is cut off from social policy change. He discusses the idea of theorising and providing concepts and interpreting the policy process and the effects of policy. He describes these and argues that “theories offer a language of imagination instead of the language of the policy that can be sometimes bland and technical and desolate” (pg. 268). Troyna (1994) asserts that applying theory to social sciences research reveals and undermines what is invisible in current practices. Interestingly, Ball looks at the theorisation or the use of theory in policy education that offers discourses of policy outside the traditional discourse of policy and looks at it and maintains a boundary between the research of policy and
the research for policy. Ball also argues that theory can be seen as finger-pointing and that many people who carry out theoretically informed research lack a sense of reflexivity. They make claims about knowledge and the social aspect of it. Ball coined a phrase, ‘isolationism’, regarding policy research, and he said he believes there is a disconnection of policy research in education from the social policy arena. The following study will develop a grounded theory on the academic perspectives of policy and develop a theory in how they are overcoming that. The following section summarises the main elements and the formation of the research questions.

2.9 Summary

Several studies completed in policy building and implementation focus on policy formulation and how that is addressed at the meso and micro levels. After reviewing practices at the state and local level, the current study will focus on practices and experiences at the micro-level of policy development and implementation within Irish higher education. The participants will be academics focusing on their experiences and practices on the ground within higher education.

The current study will involve collecting data from academics to investigate their lived experiences on policy development and implementation on the ground. This study aims to investigate academics’ experiences of policy and how they overcame them. This will then address a gap in knowledge of experiences of academics in higher education and their voices in the context of policy development and implementation.

The literature on policy practices highlight concerns around structures and practices within institutes concerning policy. This research’s substantive area of study is academic policy experience and concerns. This research aims to study policy from academics’ perspectives in institutes of technology in Dublin and, most importantly, as these institutes were about to become the first technological university in Ireland.
The research objective is to understand the processes used in developing a policy and the academics’ personal lived experiences and concerns. The second objective of the research is to develop a theoretical framework that will inform policy development. This research adopts a classic grounded theory approach.

Subsequently, the “theory” that emerges is grounded in the data (Glaser, Straus, 1967). Given the nature of the research, GT is deemed the preferred methodology as it is an authentic way of capturing the participants’ voices and concerns. In particular, the key dimensions for possible exploration in the study as discussed in the literature. In particular, the key dimensions for possible exploration in the study are indicated in table 2.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible Dimensions of Policies to Explore</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Implementable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situated in practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective</td>
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<td>Quality</td>
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<td>Culture</td>
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<td>Non-compliance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Powerlessness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gaps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2: Possible dimensions of policies to explore based on literature review

### 2.9.1 Formation of research questions

To allow a grounded theory to emerge and uncover the participants’ voice, there must be a limited number of initial questions that are not too broad. Integration with literature uncovers the study’s uniqueness and contribution to knowledge in the field.

The grounded theory methodology process, like any research, involves going into the field with a question. The question asked is concerning their experiences with policy. Do they have any concerns? What are the concerns, lived experiences and
perspectives of the academics in higher education institutes, and what concerns do they have going forward? Hence, using the grounded theory means that the author goes into the field with an open question to determine the academics’ concerns and trusts that the grounded theory method gives the academic a voice with the question, “What are the lived experiences of academics in higher education institutions?” The following chapter presents the grounded theory method used to gather and analyse the data to address this question and develop a theory that will discover the participants’ core academic policy concerns and highlight how they overcame them.
Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The aim of the research is to investigate the lived experience of academics concerning policy development in Irish higher education. The process for data gathering and analysis used the grounded theory methodology. The “theory” that emerges is grounded in the data. As described in chapter 2, the theory is developed as a framework of how the participants overcame their concerns. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss introduced the method in 1967 in a book entitled “The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for qualitative research”. Glaser and Strauss were unhappy with the way the existing theories dominated the social research worlds. They wanted to look at how new theories could be developed. They developed grounded theory in 1967 when studying dying patients for the purpose of constructing theoretical explanations of social processes.

The following chapter will describe the methodological processes in detail, including initial interviewing and analysis, theoretical sampling, selective coding, memoing, constant comparison, theoretical coding and sorting of the data. Chapter 4 will describe the implementation of the processes and theory development. This chapter will discuss its evolution and the rigid processes of gathering and analysing data to develop a theory grounded in the data. It will also discuss the Glaserian or
classic approach to grounded theory. For the researcher to underpin a philosophical and methodological position, this study involved reading literature, emphasising origins and methodological issues surrounding this approach (Glaser, 1967, 1978, 1992, 2002, 2005). The following section will highlight the background and motivation for adopting the research method.

3.2 Grounded Theory: background and motivation

Grounded theory (GT) is defined as simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis, creating codes and categories from the data, constant comparison (making comparisons during each stage of the investigation), and advancing theory development during data collection and analysis. Glaser and Strauss aim to move qualitative inquiry beyond descriptive studies into the realm of explanatory theoretical frameworks, providing abstract conceptual understandings of the studied phenomena. They urge grounded theorists to develop new theories rather than looking at the world through already existing ideas (Glaser, Strauss, 1967). Because of the nature of data collection and analysis, the development of theory using this methodology cannot be “completely refuted by more data or replaced by another theory” (Glaser, 1967, pg.4) as the theory is intimately linked to the data. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), it is destined to last even if it is revised or possibly modified in the future. A grounded theory uses experiences of real people facing problems and can be modified as situations, problems, and people change (Nathaniel and Andrews, 2007). According to Nathaniel and Andrews this adaptability is unique to the grounded theory method and allows theories to evolve and continue to be applicable even if situations change over time.

Glaser mentions examples of theories developed by some stalwarts in sociology, such as Weber’s theory of bureaucracy and Durkheim’s theory of suicide. Researchers will never try to better them, but they will try to modify them in some way or re-
formulate them. Grounded Theory “is an inductive, theory discovery methodology that allows the researcher to develop a theoretical account of the general features of a topic while simultaneously grounding the account in empirical observations or data” (Martin and Turner, 1986, pg.141). A grounded theory provides a detailed, rigorous, and systematic method of analysis, which provides the basis for reserving the researcher’s need to conceive preliminary hypotheses. Therefore, it provides the researcher with greater freedom to explore the research area and allow issues to emerge (Bryant, 2002, Glaser, 1978, 1992, 1998, 2002). The three essential elements of grounded theory are concepts, categories, and propositions as illustrated in table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grounded Theory Elements</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Concepts</td>
<td>Basic units of analysis from conceptualisation of data.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Higher-level than concepts. More abstract than concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Propositions</td>
<td>Relationships between concepts formed through constant comparisons.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Grounded theory elements adopted

According to Corbin and Strauss (1990), concepts are the basic units of analysis from the conceptualisation of data. Pandit (1996) argues that theories cannot be built with actual incidents or activities as observed or reported from ‘raw data’. The incidents, events, happenings are taken as, or analysed as, potential indicators of phenomena, which are thereby given conceptual labels (Pandit, 1996).

As described by Corbin and Strauss (1990), the second element of a grounded theory are categories. According to Corbin and Strauss, categories are higher in level and more abstract than the concepts they represent. They are generated by making comparisons and highlighting similarities between the categories to develop lower level concepts and described in greater detail in section 3.6.2.

The third element of a grounded theory are propositions. These propositions indicate generalised relationships between a category and its concepts and between dis-
crete categories (Pandit, 1996). Glaser and Strauss (1967) originally termed these as hypotheses. Nevertheless, as Whetten (1989) mentioned, propositions involve conceptual relationships, whereas hypotheses require measured relationships, and so propositions are a preferred term to describe this part of the process. Deductive hypotheses are measured relationships, whereas, in grounded theory, propositions are conceptual relationships. The grounded theory describes developing the elements above in three stages: open coding, selective coding, and theoretical coding. According to Jones and Alony (2011), these stages result in themes, sub-categories, and core categories. These results then guide the subsequent sampling of participants through theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is where new participants are sourced based on the results of previous data samples taken. New questions may be generated from an interview and tested on new participants to compare results and this process is explained in section 3.6.4 and in further detail when in method implementation in section 4.3.1.

The next stage is selective coding. According to Jones and Alony (2011), this stage results in dense, saturated core categories. Strauss and Corbin (1967) believe that grounded theory guides researchers in producing a conceptually dense theory. A dense theory has many conceptual relationships. They are embedded in a full context of descriptive and conceptual writing (Glaser and Strauss 1967, Strauss, 1987). The next step is the integration of the categories through sorting. The three key strategies of grounded theory are constant comparison, theoretical sampling, and theoretical coding. Comparison of categories and category integration is the method, and the product of that is the theory. This method provides a framework that allows an understanding of the phenomena being investigated and the basic social process of overcoming their concerns.

The experience in this research study using grounded theory was improved by approaching the data gathering through simultaneous coding and analysis from the start. The approach to line by line coding was in the generation of concepts to maintain a grounded theory. The aim once data gathering commenced was to con-
ceptualise rather than describe the concerns of the academics. Once the codes and categories emerged and with constant comparison to decipher relations between them, the move to theoretical coding and sorting seemed like a natural progression, albeit a timely one. One distinction that emerged in grounded theory was the dominant approach to data analysis which distinguishes the two approaches to grounded theory, classic or constructivist, and discussed in the next section.

3.3 Method epistemology

3.3.1 Classic versus constructive

Both Glaser andStraus developed the theory in 1967, but in subsequent years they parted ways. The method was further developed by two different schools of thought, Glaserian and Straussian. Anslem Strauss had another associate in this school, and that was Juliet Corbin in 1990, and later, another approach was suggested by Charmaz in 2006. What differentiates their views on the method lies in their epistemological stances, how they analyse the data, and how they unfold the participant’s experiences into the theory.

Following on from Glaser and Strauss’s work in 1967, the method was reformed and developed. Researchers were asking who develops the methodology but remains faithful to developing a theory (Mills, Bonner and Francis, 2006), and the emphasis on whether the grounded theory was constructivist or objectivist. Mills, Bonner, and Francis (2006) believe that GT exists in a methodological spiral. Researchers implement the method depending on their epistemological standpoint that includes the relationship between the researcher and the participant. Constructivists believe the researcher is the author of the reconstruction of experience or meanings. Researchers must choose the paradigm that is in line with their beliefs about nature and reality.

According to Mills et al. (2006), people are influenced by their history, culture, and how culture shapes their view of the world. Objectivists believe reality exists
independently of consciousness. In the discovery in 1967, Glaser used words like verification, hypothesis, and variables, but this does not make it objective. Constructivists reject the objectivist’s point of view of human knowledge and believe the world does not exist in some external world but that the subject’s interaction with the world creates it (Furlong, 2014). People who reject objectivism assume the relativist view (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), the belief that truth, reality, right and wrong is specific to societies or cultures. Researchers are part of the research process rather than objective observers, and their values should be taken into account by the readers (Bernstein, 1983). Bernstein believes, “constructivism emphasises the relationship between the researcher and the participant” (pg. 8).

Grounded theory seeks to discover issues and concern of the participants in the substantive area. They do this by collecting, analysing data, coding, sorting to generating a theory. At particular stages along the way, the researcher meets several departure points, highlighting how the method has been reformed or remodelled over time (Mills et al., 2006) and happens because of their ontological or epistemological beliefs. The researcher could side with Charmaz’s constructivist approach yet remain true to the method and stick with the coding paradigm of axial coding. Strauss and Corban (1994) are adamant that they do not believe in pre-existing reality and to think otherwise is positivism. It is a relativist ontological position, and it is far removed from Glaser’s point of view that the data emerges from real reality. However, research shows that Corbin and Strauss’s work is a mixture of positivism and constructivism in the way they recognise bias and how they remain objective when they talk about the relationship between researcher and participant (Mills et al., 2006). However, Glaser accepts the researcher’s philosophy regarding the research inquiry, but it must follow the technique religiously to be verified as a classic grounded theory (Furlong, 2014). This is a key statement that shapes the research study. The researcher approaches the study with an open mind and no preconceived ideas about the study. The aim is to do the method justice and in line with Glaser’s approach to the data. The challenge was to conceptualise rather than
describe what was happening in the data. The researcher’s stance could be viewed as a slight mixture of positivist and constructivist and this is explained in section 3.8.4. The interviewer and the participants were known to each other but following the method meticulously helped to overcome any preconceived bias or ideas that might have existed. Keeping an open mind to what was emerging in the data was maintained through reverting back to the data at all times for verification. To develop the theory correctly and allow the theory to emerge from the data, the coding paradigm’s importance became apparent and explained in the next section.

3.3.2 The importance of the coding paradigm

Another development of GT over the years and classified as more constructivist is using a coding paradigm. When the researcher analyses the data, they then code for categories at a low level. The researcher creates them from the data and labels them. The coding paradigm sensitises the researcher to particular ways in which categories may be linked to one another. At this point, different grounded theorists start to separate in their view of how coding at this stage should be approached. Strauss and Corbin, and Glaser were becoming separate in their beliefs about how this should be done. Strauss and Corbin (1990), Strauss (1987), Charmaz (2006) propose that the coding paradigm alerts the researcher to manifestations of process and change in the data. The researcher asks particular questions about the data. The questions are about the context in which the category is embedded and how participants manage that, and the consequences of social interactions. They refer to this as axial coding and differs from the glaserian approach of selective coding or theoretical coding. Glaser (1978, 1992) believe that using these paradigms takes the relevance of particular conditions such as process and change to the data. Glaser argues that any kind of paradigm should only be used if the data indicates it. Glaser discusses 18 (theoretical) codes, and there are many more in the social world that when the researcher is aware of these, it is obvious when they come into play when the low-level categories are created. The researcher can start to integrate them into
the developing theory. The data is the best source to indicate the relevance of these codes, and it will be visible when they start to manifest.

This research adopts a classical GT approach. Subsequently, the “theory” that will emerge is grounded in the data (Glaser, Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is a more exploratory inquiry method that allows the researcher to use their autonomy to develop a theory that describes patterns of behaviour. Therefore, this research inquiry will seek descriptions through field notes, observations, written personal accounts, detailed narratives, and interviews. This research aims to uncover academics’ concerns and lived experiences in higher education policy and observe behaviour patterns in overcoming these. The findings will provide a theoretical framework to inform policy. The data will be collected and analysed according to Glaserian grounded theory. The researchers’ lens will be used to code and analyse the data. Theoretical sampling, constant comparison, theoretical coding, and memoing will continue until a theory is developed. One final decision to be made is whether the study is going to be a substantive study or a formal one. This will be discussed in the next section

### 3.4 A substantive or a formal study?

Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest that substantive theory is the study of phenomena in one context or situation. A formal theory evolves from existing theory and the study of phenomena in various situations or settings. Glaser (1967) reports that a formal theory applied directly to substantive theory might force the data as there is a supply of concepts and hypotheses that one might use. By allowing these concepts and categories to emerge independently, the researcher becomes more faithful to the data. There are, in fact, two versions of grounded theory, the full-version and the abbreviated version. The full version is where data explores relationships through coding, establishes links between categories, and then returns to the field to collect further data. Data is progressively focused and informed by the emerging theory.
In this version, the researcher can draw on different data sources and use different data collection methods. The abbreviated version works with original data only, which would be the data gathered once the study started. The transcripts or other documents are analysed following the principles of grounded theory. So, in the data analysis, coding is carried out line by line and gives more depth of analysis and compensates for the loss of breadth in the research as it remains in the substantive area.

This study uses the abbreviated version of the method with line by line coding. The research is a substantive study on policy experiences in higher education. The theoretical sampling will lead to further interviews with academics in the field and drawing on policy books, policy theorists and social theorists will further compound the theory. Using this method allows for interpretation of the data and analysis to develop a theory or framework that can be used to inform policy in the future. The next section describes the methods adopted in greater detail.

3.5 Interpreting the data: methods and process

The following section outlines the core processes used in the grounded theory method. The sections following will describe each of these processes in detail. Figure 3.1 illustrates each stage of the grounded theory process and outcomes. The outcomes at each of these stages are described in detail section 4.5-4.10.

3.5.1 Open coding

Open coding is also known as initial coding, where descriptive labels are attached to instances of phenomena. These are very descriptive at this stage but are grounded in the data. The words created are representative of those used by the participants. Open coding is a process by which the categories are developed. Coding at this stage can be carried out line by line or word by word. Coding done on a line by line basis will give depth to the analysis. It breaks the interview up into discrete
Figure 3.1: The grounded theory process applied in the study

ideas on observed data (Jones and Alony, 1996). Categories coded at a low level of abstraction are very descriptive (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). As the categories begin to fill, the densest become known as core categories (Glaser, 1998). Through this process, the core category builds up to become the core focus of theoretical formation by developing a basic social process (Glaser, 1978). All data is included at this stage and allows the researcher to look for patterns that may lead to social processes, which may be of eventual interest (Jones and Alony, 1996). Open coding Glaserian style is done on pen and paper using field notes taken during interviews with the participants.

3.5.2 Concepts and categories

A necessary part of doing a grounded theory is being aware of concepts and categories. The researcher needs to be aware of their differences, their creation in the grounded theory process and the relationship between them. Since the conception
of the grounded theory method back in 1967 there have been many interpretations of these elements and their likeness and relationship and according to Gibson and Hartman (2013), they are different. Glaser and Strauss describe concepts as having two features (1967 pg.38-39), analytical and sensitising. Once created they are given a distinctive title by the researcher which is analytical. The second feature of the concept is that it is sensitising in its characteristics. The distinctive feature of the title is that it has meaning and paints a meaningful picture and sensitising in that it is relatable to others inside and outside the field under investigation. Corbin and Strauss (1990) describe them as the building blocks of a grounded theory and are created by comparing incidents, events and other indicators of a phenomenon (pg.74). They argue that incidents are labelled and grouped to form categories and concepts are repeatedly present or absent when comparing incidents to incidents. Glaser describes this process as the concept indicator model (1967, 1978, 2005), and is discussed in more detail in section 3.6.5. Concepts are generated using the concept indicator-model as well as carefully studying the data and naming the patterns distinctively ensuring they are sensitising. The indicators are the core elements for the development of the concepts. Concepts are linked to the data and generated from the data. Through the process of constantly comparing concept to concept, the categories are generated. Glaser describes a certain type of concept called a category, describing the essential relationship between data and the theory being the conceptual code. The code conceptualises the underlying pattern or a set of empirical indicators in the data. (Glaser 1978, pg.55) Categories and properties are concepts indicated by the data, not the data itself. Once a category is created, a change in the evidence that indicated it will not change or destroy it. They have a life apart from the evidence that gave rise to them (Glaser and Strauss 1967, pg.36).

Corbin and Strauss assert that through coding and through comparing concept to concept they earn the status as a category (pg.177). According to Gibson and Hartman (2013) concepts are the building blocks of categories which in turn develop more
general concepts. This highlights the relationships between them. Categorising can be described as the grouping together of these concepts. According to Gibson and Hartman there are two ways of looking at concepts and categories. One way is to combine them as a single entity or separate them and focus solely on the categories. By doing this, concepts become more prevalent and categorisation and conceptualisation become the basic processes in grounded theory (Gibson and Hartman, 2013). Concepts are developed from the data and over time produce categories. Dey (1999) argues that categories “group similar things together” (pg.2). By constantly comparing the concepts the categories are developed and are more abstract and described by Corbin and Strauss (1990), earn their status as a category. Strauss and Corbin assert that categories in a GT study have certain characteristics such as properties and dimensions, an assertion matched by Dey (1999), Charmaz (2006) and Birks and Mills (2011). Categories also have subcategories, (Strauss and Corbin 1990) that in turn have properties that need identification for conceptual depth and breadth (Gibson and Hartman, 2013) and discussed in the next section.

Properties and dimensions

Properties according to Strauss and Corbin (1990) are “characteristics of a category that define it and give it meaning” (pg.101). Dey (1999) defines properties as attributes, qualities and characteristics of the category. According to Dey properties are developed by studying how something interacts with its environment whereas categories are constructed. Day argues that when you undertake a GT study, you are involved in three different processes of analysis. The researcher will be constantly comparing concept to concept, classifying them into categories and then observing the interaction between the phenomena under investigation and their environment, which in time develops their properties. He also suggests that the researcher expects dimensions through the use of various scales. A dimension of a category is a measurable element, for example, length or breadth. They are a measurable range of values that may be related to the categories and the properties. The categories
are a particular type of concept and the properties are elements of these (Gibson and Hartman, 2013). Properties are part of how we model a process and how we classify it (Gibson and Hartman, 2013).

According to Glaser categories are a specific type of concept and he also talks about conceptual elaboration. As well as the meaningful picture concepts portray they are elaborated through carefully focused explorations of the field (Glaser, 1978). They form the basis for theoretical sampling and are the focus of theoretical integration. It is the specification and the limitation of categories that focus the GT researcher on where to go for more data. Sampling is not discussed concerning concepts but at a higher level of development and concerned with categories and is discussed further in section 3.6.4. and in further detail in section 4.3.1.

### 3.5.3 Comparative analysis

In grounded theory, the term comparative analysis, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), is a general method that uses the logic of comparison. According to Gibson and Hartman (2014) researchers using grounded theory should firstly understand the method as a process of building the theory. The building they describe comes from the constant comparison of the emerging data, memos and concepts. Their idea of ‘building’ involves demonstrating facts about the data that will generalise the theory and identify its boundaries (Gibson and Hartman, 2014). They further argue that the process emphasis is on being flexible and open to what is emerging in the data and generation of the theory is based on the facts emerging. The GT researcher is a human being and lives in the social world and can understand integration in social organisations. By continually comparing memo to memo, instance to instance, they can look and relate what is happening in the data. Throughout the process of data gathering, coding, sampling, and memoing, they are continually comparing memo to memo and category to category for comparisons. Sociologists believe that replications are the best means for validating facts (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The more comparisons, the more valid the data. Figure 3.2 depicts the analysis derived

Figure 3.2: Constant Comparison (derived from Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; 1992; 1998; 2001)

**Concept-indicator model**

Grounded theory is based on the concept indicator model and is a requirement where the concepts and properties of the concepts must earn their relevance in theory (Holton, 2007). The researcher must observe the similarities and differences between the indicators. They are always comparing to see if the data supports the developing theory (Glaser, 2005) and continues through open coding and selective coding. The researcher starts coding and analysing the comparison of incidents to incidents to generate concepts. The properties, degrees, and dimensions of the concepts are further explored. As the researcher continues, the concepts are further investigated and compared with more incidents. This constant comparison now promotes theory development that works and fits with the data. The theory is emerging from the data and is relevant and continues until data or theoretical saturation occurs. Saturation is based on the interchangeability of indicators. “While incidents are empirically different, they indicate the same concept, its properties and or its
hypothesised relationship to other categories and their properties” (Glaser, 1998, pg.141). Interviews are providing no new empirical indicators to the existing concepts or no new concepts are emerging.

3.5.4 Memoing

Throughout the process of data gathering and analysis, memos are recorded. Glaser refers to memoing as “the core stage in the process of generating theory, the bedrock of theory generation” (Glaser, 1978, pg.83). Memos are used to develop ideas, note-taking, and constant comparison. These ideas should develop freely, be stored centrally, and be sortable (Glaser, 1978). According to Charmaz (2006) memos compare data and explore ideas about the codes and direct further data gathering. Figure 3.2 illustrates the process whereby data collection, note-taking, coding, and memoing are iterative processes carried out on the data gathered. The outcomes of each interview are constantly compared for similarities. Memos record the relationships between them as they emerge through collecting, coding, and analysing the data. The memo writing is a record of the theory development. It commences from the first day of coding. It begins with defining the categories and labelling of categories and then looking at the relationship between them. The researcher is constantly comparing codes and instances. The memos are a record of the thought processes of the researcher during the analysis. Memos flow with total freedom (Glaser, 1998) as they are the researcher’s interpretation of the data, interpretation of the codes, and understanding of what is happening in the data. They can be a mix of text and visuals or drawings. There is no English grammar or sequencing requirements. They are very personal to the researcher, and there is no requirement for the researcher to share them (Glaser, 1998). The goal of memoing is to define the boundaries of the code, to which contexts are the code’s valid, for which situations, people, time, areas, interaction are they bound (Glaser, 1998). There are no ‘left out’ memos, according to Glaser. They will all integrate at some stage as they are multivariate in nature, having many variables that relate.
3.5.5 Theoretical sampling

Grounded theory describes developing the theory’s elements in stages that include open coding, memoing, theoretical sampling, and sorting. Theoretical sampling is where new participants are sourced based on the results of previous data samples taken. Further questions may be generated from an interview and tested on new participants to compare results. Glaser’s dictum is that ‘all is data’, and so this may lead to other sources of data gathering, including and not limited to books and journals. According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), theoretical sampling is driven by the emerging theory. The researcher must be open to new and emerging concepts in the data that direct them to new data sources that may be more participants or other sources. The researcher may be directed to new participants, but this is not necessary. They may seek different experiences from their existing participants (Strauss and Corbin, 1994, 1997). Sampling occurs to develop the emerging theory, and the sample size in grounded theory is irrelevant. Until saturation, the aim is to sample to develop the categories’ properties until no new properties emerge (Charmaz, 2006). The sampling criteria conducted in this research is outlined in section 4.3.1.

3.5.6 Selective coding

The second stage of coding, selective coding, is reached when core categories become apparent. A core category is developed through densification, which explains most of the variation, representing the participants’ major concern (Jones and Alony, 2011). The core category should be an issue upon which the basic social process is centred. It should relate meaningfully and easily to other categories. It should have clear and grabbing qualities (Glaser, 1978, Glaser and Holton, 2007). Selective coding allows the researcher to filter and code data deemed more relevant to the emerging concepts (Jones and Alony, 2011), as outlined in section 4.9, and only the most pertinent passages of a transcript are used and coded. Interview questions
are continuously reformulated to encompass the research’s new and more focused
direction (Jones and Alony, 2011).

3.5.7 Theoretical coding

The final stage of coding is known as theoretical coding. Theoretical coding occurs
when core categories have become saturated. Eventually, after data collection, a
point is reached where no new data results from additional data collection and is
known as data saturation when there are no new categories or issues of concern. The-
oretical coding examines these saturated categories and provides the researcher with
analytical criteria to develop conceptual relationships between categories and their
relevance to the literature (Glaser, 1992, 2005, Glaser and Kaplan 1996). As the
coding procedure before this phase worked to fracture the data and cluster them
according to abstract similarity, theoretical coding, along with sorting, knits the
fractured pieces back together again to conceptualise causal relationships between
the hypotheses derived through open and selective coding. “Theoretical codes give
integrative scope, broad pictures, and a new perspective and help the analyst main-
tain the conceptual level in writing about concepts and their interrelations” (Glaser
and Holton, 2007, p.9). A meaningful schema of interpretation of the causal re-
lationships is produced, linking the analysis’s conceptual outcomes. Glaser (1978,
1998, 2005) identifies 18 families of theoretical codes to identify what he calls “latent
patterns” (Glaser, 2005, pg.5).

The researcher starts to conceptualise how the substantive codes relate to each other
(Glaser, 2005). The researcher observes how they relate to each other, how they can
be interpreted together, how one may affect the other, and how they relate to each
other as hypotheses integrated into theory. Doing this allows the researcher to talk
about substantive categories and properties while thinking theoretically. Substan-
tive properties are the ones that have been generated through coding, and they
are based on what is evident in the data. They are based on several participants
feeling the same way. One talks theoretically of categories then moves out of the
substantive area into a more conceptual level as to why it was happening and to whom. Glaser talks about being open to the emergent and earned relevance of the theoretical codes (Glaser, 2005) and not forcing a theoretical code to fit the data. Stern (1980) describes theoretical coding as simply “applying a variety of analytical schemes to the data to enhance their abstraction” (pg.22). That is an appropriate definition of what theoretical codes are and the many theoretical codes used. Theoretical codes come from all fields and their theoretical perspectives, whether social psychology, sociology, philosophy, organisational theory, economics, political science, history, and many more. Staying open to these is very enriching for the grounded theory researcher. The more theoretical codes the researcher becomes aware of, the easier it is to stay open. Nevertheless, they have to have earned relevance in the theories and cannot be forced. That is the crucial thing to keep in mind at this stage. Theoretical coding involves applying a coding paradigm to the data and sensitising how the researcher relates how the categories are linked to one another. Theoretical sensitivity moves the researcher from descriptive to analytical. The researcher interacts at a deeper level with the data and asks questions about the data. Different versions of GT subscribe to different paradigms, as mentioned previously. Using glaserian coding paradigms or theoretical codes sensitises the researcher to how categories are linked. These codes are only used if there is a fit with the data that is presenting to the researcher. They allow the researcher to arrange the categories into a meaningful hierarchical order and how these were integrated is described in section 4.9.1 and the final integration is illustrated in section 7.4.

3.5.8 Theoretical saturation

The grounded theory process of sampling, theoretical coding, and comparison continues until saturation occurs. No new categories or properties of categories are emerging. Nothing new is emerging from the data that is adding to or compounding the theory. Concerning the theoretical saturation, it is the goal rather than the reality because it is possible to change the categories later to develop them further.
after the theory has been developed. By allowing this, according to Corbin and Strauss (1990) and Glaser and Strauss (1967), it draws attention to how grounded theory is always just a provisional method. According to Dey (1999) when theory generation is the aim it is important to be alert or open to emerging “perspectives, what will change and help develop the theory” (pg.117). Dey conveys that these perspectives can occur on the final day of the study or when the research thesis has been reviewed, so the published word is not the final one, but only “a pause in the never-ending process of generating theory” (pg.117).

### 3.5.9 Theoretical sorting

Sorting forces the connection between categories and properties of categories. As the integration of categories emerge, resorting occurs as they start to fit somewhat differently. The process of sorting the memos happens at a conceptual level. Sorting the memos results in the theory’s outline and how the different categories relate to each other. Memos are sorted in the order that describes the relationships between them. Drawing them out on paper or writing the relationships down and lining them together helps explain how each category or sub-category relates to the core category. This helps to develop the theoretical outline. While the researcher is sorting, they must decide if the category is a condition or a context. Is it a matter of degree or two dimensions? The researcher will memo all of the decisions and discoveries made during this phase, as this will be used to write up the theory. Theoretical sorting of memos is the key to theory generation for presentation to others eventually (Glaser, 1978).

The researcher keeps sorting, comparing and re-sorting. Constant comparison between categories happens, and as they integrate, the theory emerges. Memos integrate themselves. Everything fits somewhere (Glaser, 1998). It puts the splintered or separated data back together. The researcher is integrating the empirical data that is gathered through the study into the theory (Glaser, 1998). Writing the grounded theory requires the write up of the theoretical sorting of the memos (Glaser, 1978).
Relevant literature can be integrated into the theory while being sorted with memos, and depends on the researcher’s knowledge of the literature and familiarity with the literature in the researcher’s area of interest can allow some adequate completeness with the saturation of the core variable.

3.5.10 Basic social process and theoretical model

The final result of research using grounded theory as a qualitative analysis method is a model depicting the basic social process. A basic social process is a core category that has been developed through densification and is found to substantially represent a basic social process of the phenomenon under study (Jones and Alony, 2011). It is through the articulation and explanation of this basic social process that the explanatory theory emerges. A basic social processes must have “two or more clear emergent stages” (Glaser, 1978, p.97). Basic social processes should reflect and summarise the patterns of behaviour fundamental to the phenomena, taking into account the variables that work to alter the process. Basic social processes are not only durable but stable over time. They are also flexible enough to accommodate change over time, thus maintaining an interchangeable consistency in meaning, fit, and workability by adding new conditions and stages that account for the changing environment (Glaser, 1978).

A basic social process focuses only on those variables related to the core category and those necessary for “resolving the problematic nature of the pattern of behaviour to be accounted for” (Glaser, 1978, p.93). More than one core category may emerge from the research. If this is the case, the researcher selects one of the core categories to develop into a basic social process and subsequent theory. In this case, the selection is usually based on the core category, representing the participants’ primary concern. The remaining core categories are not developed further but can be reinstated in future studies. Thus, the basic social process is discovering human processes that surpass the typical research boundary of a ‘social unit’ by examining the social process occurring within that unit (Glaser, 1978). Studies revealing basic
The basic social process that emerged in this study is described in detail in section 4.12.

3.5.11 Theory generation

The theories that result from using a grounded theory methodology are formulated to explain, predict, and understand phenomena and, and in many cases, to challenge and extend existing knowledge within the limits of critical bounding assumptions (Abend, 2008 and Swanson, 2013). According to them the theoretical framework is the structure that can hold or support a theory of a research study. The theoretical framework introduces and describes the theory that explains why the research problem under study exists. In their initial research in 1967, Glaser and Strauss described grounded theory as a method of discovery. The theory that would be generated is grounded in the data. The categories are generated through coding and conceptualisation. The core category accounts for most of the ongoing behaviour (Glaser, 1998). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), the nature of collecting and analysing data using grounded theory methods of data gathering, coding, sampling, and analysis is an iterative process to the point of saturation and is where grounded theory’s strength lies. The theory that is generated this way is dense and completely grounded in the data. Once the theory is generated or even at the sorting phase, the researcher can start to review the literature to compound the theory. Reading the literature in a substantive area is traditionally carried out before the data gathering to gap fill or contribute to the substantive area’s knowledge. However, using a grounded theory methodology involves going into the field with no preconceived ideas. The researcher goes into the field to discover the participants’ core concerns. Having not read literature in the substantive area “is part of the empowerment they get from the process” (Glaser, 1998, pg.68). The literature review discusses the findings, and the literature is integrated into the theory to compound the theory further. The theory generated this way describes what is emerging in the data through the
3.6 Using grounded theory in the field: a reflection

This project adopts grounded theory as the key research method and starts with fieldwork in the substantive area of policy development in higher education. The researcher enters the field with an issue or concern, or question and takes it from there. The idea of generating a grounded theory from the data is liberating, but the process is challenging. There is a significant learning curve with understanding the method and following the process correctly. As a researcher using the process and observing initial codes developed, it is easy to slip into being more descriptive rather than conceptual. However, with adequate guidance, the ability to conceptualise improves considerably. Once the researcher conceptualises and talks theoretically about the data, the process becomes liberating and exciting. As with any research, some challenges arise, particularly with grounded theory, and these are discussed in the next section.

3.7 Challenges and opportunities with grounded theory and how they were resolved

Using the grounded theory method is not without issues and concerns. There is complexity surrounding the many writings on the method and its interpretation since its conception in 1967 with Glaser and Strauss’s original text. Due to the method’s complexity and personal experiences, the main areas of concern were the

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writings on the method, the rigorous processes used to develop the theory to finally, writing up a PhD thesis after theory development. The following sections outline those issues, and they were resolved.

### 3.7.1 Grounded theory literature

There is a certain amount of insecurity in using the method, but that dissipates through experience and reading. The books became a guide and were continuously referenced. Initial challenges are understanding the writings of Glaser and Strauss, which can be quite dense. Having a medical background helped but what was crucial were the writings of Glaser after 1967, where he gets more descriptive of the process after reviewing other researchers’ interpretations of the method. These writings provide clear discussions on the theoretical codes and sensitivity that helps to move from line by line coding to formulate a road map of where to go next in developing a framework for the theory. ² When undertaking a study using grounded theory, it is important to be comfortable with the text and clearly understand the processes. During the process, there are some concerns, but reverting to the text for verification helps. Doing a grounded theory study requires guidance from the core texts and experts in the field. Assistance from a community of researchers undertaking the method is greatly advised and discussed in the next section.

### 3.7.2 A grounded theory community

Finding a grounded theory community that understood the process and encouraged discussion on the method and where researchers could present where they were in the process was greatly appreciated. At certain points in the research, this communication was necessary. Becoming involved with a community of grounded theory researchers called 'the grounded theory institute' and attending regular world seminars helps. Discussions at these seminars founded a dedication to the method,

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which helped considerably. At certain junctures, a nudge in the right direction helped from the institute that Glaser had often frequented, but, unfortunately, we never met. These facilitators are experts in the method and were very clear on the process needed to recover from descriptive analysis to get back on track. Initial conversations and listening to others’ experiences of the method make it appear straightforward but not without some concerns about the process and the language used, such as sensitivity, constant comparison, theoretical sampling and theoretical coding. At these workshops, researchers can voice their concerns and share experiences. There is also a concern with ‘will I discover anything?’ but hearing others discuss the method at these seminars and conferences and after the successful development of a theory, the answer is always ‘yes’.

3.7.3 The grounded theory process

A significant experience of using grounded theory is being fixated with the process coupled with a fear of failing the method to being fascinated with the findings. However, there are milestones along the way. As a researcher using GT and observing initial codes, it is easy to slip into being more descriptive about what is happening in the data rather than conceptualising it. When initial coding commenced and line-by-line coding was carried out, what I tended to do was describe what was going on and the codes were more descriptions of what was happening in the data which results in over coding. For example, some of my initial codes were describing concerns like ‘a lack of consideration for policy’ or maybe “doing their own thing” when conceptualised is actually disconnecting. Another example is using the words ‘informal conversations’ and ‘voicing their concerns’ is in fact sharing knowledge. It was with the help of the various discussions at seminars that what is needed is to see ‘what is happening in the data’ and conceptualise it. The initial coding concern is not being conceptual or not picking up cues in the data that would have a knock-on effect with sampling. There is often concern over sourcing the right participants based on those cues and whether the right questions are being addressed or too many
questions are being asked. There is also the worry that the questions are insufficient to saturate the developing categories, but this dissipates over time. Being aware of theoretical codes helps to form the framework for further analysis. The theoretical code, the 6 C’s, allows for a structure of cause and context that provides a better vision of what is happening in the data and make it easier to ask questions about what is presented in the data. The theoretical coding of the 6 C’s is a signpost of where to go and what is to come. There is a driving force not to succumb to the data but to keep going and persevere with the process and allow time to sort the memos and theoretically code for further elaboration and development of the theory. There comes a sense of relief when the theory is written up, as the researcher can see everything coming together in a presentable format. Analysis continues, always asking, “what is happening in the data?” Constant sorting, coding and memoing start slow, and suddenly it can take off, especially around sorting and resorting. It was important at this stage to stop for fear of losing sight of what is happening in the data and is important. Going back to the data, the participants, the field notes and their voices help keep the process moving and help with verification. Once the write up of the memos and the theory commences, there was a natural draw to the literature. The theory was developed, and reading the literature helps to catch where the findings and the theory contribute. Literature helps identify the gaps and demonstrates where the theory and findings add to knowledge. There is a sense of achievement that the theory gives the participants a voice, and their concerns are relatable. However, there is still a milestone to overcome in presenting the findings of a GT study in a PhD thesis using the grounded theory method and discussed in the next section.
3.7.4 Writing up a PhD thesis using the grounded theory method

Traditional research methods involve the process of literature review, fieldwork, analysis, and discussion. There is a significant learning curve using GT from understanding the method to following the procedures correctly. As discussed in chapter one, conforming to the traditional structure of a PhD thesis adds that extra layer of complexity when adopting the method as part of the PhD study. The challenge is accepting that conformity produces a thesis in the correct format that qualifies for a doctoral degree. The research occurs independently to allow the development of a classic grounded theory. Presenting the findings and integrating them with the literature makes sense, but then there is a particular format for a thesis, and the GT findings need to be adapted to suit that. Presenting a significant review of literature in the field before the method and findings is not the process used in grounded theory. The researcher goes into the field with no preconceived ideas of what is happening and lets the issues unfold and move through the process of gathering and analysing, and let the theory emerge. It is then natural to turn to the literature to see where the theory integrates empirically and theoretically. The fear for the researcher is that having a literature review before they ‘go into the field’ may be perceived as not following the process correctly and ‘going to the literature too soon’. For conformity, they have to strategically place the literature in the correct format so the thesis’s presentation may appear otherwise. The thesis presentation this way feels like going against the grain of the method, but in fact, it produces a complete narrative that demonstrates accountability to the process and the study and a framework that tells a powerful and greater story for the reader. The data gathering and analysis will produce a theory grounded in the data, and the literature then tells a better story to situate the theory.
3.7.5 Epistemology and doing grounded theory

A commonly raised critique of the grounded theory method concerns its epistemological roots. It has been argued that grounded theory subscribes to positivist epistemology. Stanley and Wise (1990) argue that "as long as it does not address the question of what grounds grounded theory, the grounded theory method remains a form of positivism" (pg.152). For researchers in psychology, though, another shortcoming of grounded theory is its preoccupation with uncovering the social process, limiting its applicability to more phenomenological research questions. The original idea of grounded theory was that the theory would emerge from the data. It is an inductive methodology rather than a deductive one. One of the problems associated with induction is that it pays insufficient attention to the researcher’s role, which is assumed, but the data speaks for itself. Whatever emerges from the field depends on the observer’s position and the analyst’s interpretation of the data by naming the labels and producing the theory.

As Glaser (2001) argues, defining an epistemological assumption for grounded theory would damage the emergence of a theory that is the method’s purpose. He proposes that researchers using the method must decide how they wish to implement the methodology and that the researcher enters the field to discover the participant’s concerns. A necessary part of doing a grounded theory is that the developed theory is grounded within the data, which has been systematically collected and analysed. The grounded theory differs from other qualitative research methods because it provides meaning and understanding of the phenomenon under study and is also theory-generating (Glaser 1978). The role of the researcher in this study was to attend to the data to ensure that she was distanced enough not to impact the findings. Studying the various paradigms is throughout the research presented a world of thinking for her and where she might position herself and how she would conduct the research. She was aware of how she needed to gather, analyse, and interpret the findings. However, while studying the various paradigms, she felt that her views aligned with variations of some, yet she did not want to categorise herself into one in
particular. Taking elements of a positivist view, she is aware that there is a reality waiting to be discovered and that she and others can identify meaning in what is disclosed. Positivism looks at the discovery of knowledge as methods of 'careful observation' as described by Isaac Newton and not deduction (Ormston et al., 2014). Classic grounded theory is an inductive methodology that allows concepts and ideas to be discovered in the data or the participants’ voices using such ‘careful observation’ of the indicators presented. The researcher’s goal is to name those patterns and, through the process, develop a theory that explains what is happening in the data. The researcher needs to leave behind any preconceived ideas or bias especially being an insider that she may have. She needed to be open to what was emerging in the data. Being open means being objective to what is being discovered, and the world I was researching is or would be unaffected by her in her analysis. It is challenging at times, and the importance of rigorous data gathering and analysis helps to avoid that. As discussed in section 1.8, being an insider researching academic policy, which she knows about, being open to what is emerging that may not align with her experiences is significant. The experiences may be similar, and staying close to the participants’ accounts and coding the data line by line is necessary. However, similar to her, another researcher undertaking the research as an insider may have interpreted the findings differently. The participants’ concerns will be similar, but their interpretation and naming of the concepts would be from their perspectives. However, what is inevitable in a research study and especially being an insider are elements of being constructivist by nature. Piaget’s theory of constructivism asserts that people produce knowledge and meaning based upon their experiences. A researcher may draw on previous experiences and unknowingly impose that on the research. She believes what helps immensely in conducting GT research is the processes used, such as constant comparison, line by line coding and theoretical sampling that help to mitigate this. Also, the theoretical codes used have a natural fit and nothing is imposed on the data and the theory that emerges is grounded in the data gathered.
3.8 Summary

The methodological principles used are open coding, selective coding, theoretical sampling, memoing, constant comparison, theoretical coding and theoretical sorting. Open coding starts after the first interview, where the researcher codes for codes and categories. Once the core category becomes apparent selective coding commences. Selective coding involves relating the categories to other categories. During the data gathering process, theoretical sampling allows the researcher to source participants based on the emerging concepts and previous data samples. Part of the GT process is a comparative analysis using constant comparison. The researcher constantly compared memo to memo and category to category for comparisons. Part of comparative analysis uses a concept-indicator model. Degrees, dimensions and properties of concepts are further investigated and compared. These processes continue until theoretical saturation.

Memoing is note taking on the developing theory and allows exploration of ideas about codes and categories. It starts from day one of data gathering and analysis. The memos record the researchers’ thought processes. Once theoretical saturation occurs where no new categories or properties emerge, theoretical coding commences and involves the researcher examining saturated categories presented to them. The researcher develops conceptual relationships between the categories, and they should be aware of theoretical codes to bring the fractured concepts back together. Theoretical coding allows the researcher to maintain a conceptual level of thinking and to write up the theory. At this stage of the process, they start to develop a basic social and psychological process. This process summarises the patterns of behaviour fundamental to the phenomena. They consider variables that work to alter the process. Sorting the data happens at this stage and involves observing the data to determine if categories are conditions or context whilst recording decisions made. The process is ongoing until the researcher has a framework that fits and is modifiable and workable. The challenge for a researcher undertaking grounded theory is
to remain conceptual rather than descriptive. They also should remain true to the 
process and trust that the method and the theory that is developed explains how 
participants overcome their core concerns. The chapter that follows will present 
how the grounded theory processes outlined in this chapter of open-coding, sam-
pling, sorting, memoing and theoretical coding were applied to uncover the basic 
social processes in the theory.
Chapter 4

Implementation of the method - processes in theory development

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter will present in detail how the research design outlined in the previous chapter was implemented. A detailed description of preparation carried out during pre-data collection, the data collection methods used during the study and the processes used in theory development will be outlined. The fundamentals of grounded theory as described in chapter three influenced the research gathering and analysis. The participants involved in the study were academics. Participants’ issues and concerns around policy development are explored. A substantive theory on how academics process their main concerns’ was developed. The following section describes important initial decisions made before the research commenced.

4.2 Initial research considerations

4.2.1 Ethical

From the outset, key considerations were ethics, the setting for the interviews and the information provided to the participants to inform them of the study and what
it was about. (see appendix II) Table 4.1 illustrates the important elements that needed to be set up before data gathering.

The study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee, a sub-committee of the academic council at the Technological University Dublin, Blanchardstown Campus, formerly known as the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown. The data collected was stored on a personal password-protected PC. Each institute’s data was anonymised for cross-comparison for patterns of behaviour. Staff who agreed to one-to-one interviews and the focus group signed a consent form before any conversation took place (see appendix I). All contributions are anonymous. The aim was to observe patterns of behaviour to develop the theory.

Data analysis was carried out using a pen and paper and protected in a locked office at all times. In all elements of data collection, analysis, and dissemination of strict ethical institutional guidelines were upheld.

### 4.2.2 Research setting

The research took place across three institutes of technology in Dublin, Ireland. The participants’ population were academic staff members from across the three campuses and the recruitment of the participants is discussed in section 4.3. The

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Table 4.1: Key considerations before data gathering
interviews were conducted in the participant’s private office space or a room booked by the researcher. The timing of the meetings always worked around the participant’s timetable at a time that suited them. Interviews that took place over the academic holidays were usually on campus or in a quiet location suggested by the participants.

4.2.3 Participant information leaflet

Participants were contacted via email or phone or via a third party contact and asked if they would like to be involved in the study. Once the participants agreed to an interview, a participant information leaflet provided information about the research, including the aims and objectives. (see appendix II) It also informed them of the research methodology for data gathering and analysis. All recordings and information was stored securely, and all data stored on the participants was anonymised and strictly confidential.

4.3 Recruitment and Sampling

Classic grounded theory aims at generating a theory in a substantive area that highlights how the participants in the study overcome their core concerns. The participants in this study were academics across three institutes in Dublin that were in the process of coming together as one new entity to create the first technological university in Dublin. The research was carried out before creating the new technological university of its type in Dublin and Ireland. They were still working as three standalone organisations. The staff in these campuses would eventually become part of a very large institution, and it was at this time their policy perspective and experiences to date were significant. Hearing their voices and concerns at this point would inform practices around policy development and implementation in the future. The three campuses were institutes of technology that had similar structure and design, but it was the experiences of the staff within these three institutes and
the practices around policy that would be relevant to inform practices in the new university.

4.3.1 Theoretical sampling

Theoretical sampling occurs to ensure that the researcher collects a wide range of data that would include multiple perspectives on policy development within these institutions. The focus was on academic policy, and the participants were academics. The initial discussion with academics took place in a focus group. Data analysis commenced after this. The follow-up interviews were one-to-one interviews with academics across the three campuses, and the rationale for this is discussed in section 4.5.2. The interviews were conducted to allow the academics to voice their concerns through open-ended questions such as "tell me what are your experiences are on policy development in your institution?". Coding of the field notes and observations taken during the interviews took place after each interview. Theoretical Sampling, as described in section 3.5.5, focuses the researcher on where to go next to gather data to develop the categories presented during data analysis. Figure 4.1 illustrates the processes used in sampling and recruitment. Ethical approval was sought before any interviews took place, as discussed in section 4.2.1. The participants were provided with the consent form prior to the interview. The interview process was also described to them before the interview commenced. The researcher took field notes and observations during the interview. Interviews were also recorded for verification for the researcher if she missed anything in the notes. It also allowed for her to listen intently to academics. This was especially important as the researcher is an insider interviewing academics and as discussed in section 1.8, power, participation, and positionality need to be considered. There may have been concern over confidentiality and anonymity for the academics in the same position within the institution. The researcher guaranteed that all data on the participants would be stored confidentially and that pseudonyms would be used for identification purposes. As discussed in section 1.8 there were academics that were at a higher level interviewed and obviously
going into the interview its hard to fully know how a power dynamic would be perceived. However, those academics at a higher level demonstrated a willingness to participate and was heartening for the researcher. It alleviated any issues that may have been presented.

New participants were sourced based on previous data samples taken. Further questions were generated from interviews and tested on new participants to compare results. After the first couple of interviews, the researcher started to ask more theoretically focused questions. In general, academics had similar issues, and when asked the theoretically focused questions, they responded promptly. During the interviews, it was evident to the researcher that some policy developers at a higher level should be interviewed for their perspectives or feedback on policy issues. It was evident then that another group of academics needed to be interviewed, those at a higher level, senior lecturers with experience in policy development and particularly in the final phase of theory development. These academics had not resolved their concerns completely. It was discovered that they had similar issues but from a different perspective, and how they resolved them was evident in the final phase.
of the theory. Glaser's dictum is that "all is data," which leads to other sources of
data gathering, including and not limited to books and journals that helped in the
final phase of theory development where indicators in the data provided anything
new to the theory, theoretical saturation as described in section 3.5.8 was reached.

4.4 Data collection methods

4.4.1 Focus groups

Qualitative interviews operate with a model that knowledge is constructed rather
than straightforwardly excavated. Focus groups can help determine attitudes, opin-
ions, and experiences relative to a specific context and are relatively time and cost
efficient (Pearson and Vossler, 2016), which justified the cross-campus focus group
carried out in this research. According to Pearson and Vossler (2016), there are
limitations. These include a reduced opportunity for individuals to participate and
an increased likelihood of non-conformity in the group setting. However, in this
research, the participants were academics who drew on each other’s experiences.

A presentation was given at the start of the session to introduce the researcher
and the research aims and objectives. The researcher guided the group by asking
semi-structured questions on their experiences of policy within their institution and
the questions were addressed to each participant to allow their voices to be heard.
The environment for a focus group allowed them to recall their own experiences
through other participant’s narratives. Attending how individuals were commu-
nicating, noticing the subtleties of the group dynamic, and considering individual
demographic factors, allowed a deeper awareness of participant’s statements, which
was interesting.

The focus group allowed for the testing of the questions to be used in subsequent
one-to-one interviews. Data was gathered from the focus group to decipher the ques-
tions in the one-to-one meetings. Focusing on the concerns of the participants gave
some focus on what to ask in an interview. Staff were invited to attend the focus
group scheduled mid-semester, and six participants attended. The focus group verified pressing concerns amongst academics concerning policy and future strategies as the institutes expanded. The data from the focus group was included in the overall data analysis process.

Perceptions of the staff and their experiences were the focus of the study, so to get a more personal account of staff experiences, one-to-one interviews were adopted. This allowed participants to expand on their experiences, and a more honest assessment of them presented. Conducting the one-to-one interviews allowed an interactive discussion with participants, asking some questions, listening to them, gaining access to their accounts and articulations, and analysing their use of language and constructions of discourse. According to Seidman (2006), “at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people or the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience,” (pg. 15-16) which is the essence of a grounded theory study. To guide the interview process, theoretical sampling led to one-to-one interviews with one focus group participant and new research candidates. As the researcher does not go into the field with a specific hypothesis to test as theoretical sampling, the GT method violates the ideal of hypothesis testing. Field notes and memoing spawned further investigation through theoretical sampling that determined the research direction after each conversation. The direction of new data collection is determined not by a priori hypotheses but by ongoing interpretation of data and emerging conceptual categories (Suddaby, 2006). Theoretical sampling will be further discussed in section 4.7.

4.4.2 One to one interviews

The primary data collection method used were one-to-one interviews with academic staff. Understanding the meaning participants make of their experience was achieved by face-to-face interviews. This approach is not designed to predict or control that experience (Seidman, 2006) and allocating time to meet face-to-face with individual academics allowed this to happen naturally. The aim was to construct interviews
that would generate meaningful data. The meetings with academics secured a fairer and fuller representation of the interviewees’ perspective. The details considered in the decision to carry out one-to-one interviews looked at the research from the perspective of it being a collection of data that could be described as excavation that would then become a generation of data through the interview process, which could be viewed as construction. The interview process gave structure and purpose through open-ended questions. As the planning of the interview questions commenced, the big research questions presented, and possible sub-questions or prompts developed to allow the participant to expand on their answer. The questions were open, and the aim was to use the prompts when needed. Because hypotheses are not tested, the issue is not whether the researcher can generalise the findings of an interview study to a broader population. The researcher’s task is to “present the experience of the people being interviewed in compelling enough detail and with sufficient depth that those who read the study can connect to that experience, learn how it is constituted and deepen their understanding of the issues it reflects” (Seidman, 2006, pg.51).

4.4.3 Interview process

Grounded theory aims to identify the issues and the concerns of the participants and describes how they overcome them. One listens to the participant and observes what is being said as a concern or issue, which is brought into subsequent interviews. Writing preliminary analytical notes, called memos, continues after each interview. Intensive interviewing is more like an interpretive inquiry. The objective of the intensive interviewing was to deduce the participant’s interpretation or view of their experience. During the interviews, field notes were recorded, which documented the participants’ concerns and observations during the meetings. Coding and analysis occurred straight away, and issues and concerns were noted in the memos. Leads identified were pursued in subsequent interviews. Participants were eager to discuss their experiences and knowledge of the impact of policy in their day-to-day working
lives. They were very keen to talk about their lived experiences, and much data was acquired using this process of data collection. The interviews ended with the researcher asking the participants if they wished to ask any questions or make any further comments, which allowed for new social conversation afterwards and to express any additional concerns. The average interview lasted around 50 minutes, and a total of 17 one-to-one interviews took place.

4.4.4 Recording interviews

The approach adopted consisted of recording the interviews on a personal recording device. Field notes were taken during the interviews. Glaser (1998) advises that researchers use only field notes and not transcribe the interview. However, the interviews for this research were recorded for personal verification and allowed the researcher to listen to them once more to capture anything missed in the field notes. The field notes were updated with quotes, and it was the field notes that were coded, analysed and thoughts on them were memoed. Recordings were stored on an encrypted device in a secure folder. The field notes were used as the point of reference for the researcher for verification in the final phases of analysis and theory write up.

4.4.5 Computer technology

Once interviewing commenced, field notes were analysed and coded and memos recorded. NVIVO technology was considered as a repository to store the codes and categories as they emerged and memos. However, after starting the coding process, there was a sense that it hindered the GT process. Microsoft word, pen and paper were then adopted as tools for analysis. This method allowed the analysis to be more creative and let the thought processes flow more smoothly when writing the memos.
4.4.6 Participant population

A total of 23 participants took part in the study (see table 4.2). The participants in the focus group included one female and five male staff. They responded to an email sent to all staff invited to take part in the study. There was one senior academic present in the focus group. The participants in the one-to-one interviews included eight males and nine females. Participants were sourced based on theoretical sampling criteria and discussions during the interviews with participants. The academic positions included lecturers, senior lecturers, 1 head of school, and heads of departments. A profile of each participant has been stored for discussion and analysis. This profile is anonymous. Table 4.2 presents an overview of the participant population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant ID</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years at current position</th>
<th>Interview (minutes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Senior lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;5</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Senior lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Senior lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Head of dept</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Head of dept</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;5</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;5</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Head of Dept</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Senior lecturer</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Female</td>
<td>Senior lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16</td>
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<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P17</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Senior lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2: Participant Information
### 4.5 Building the theory from the ground up

The following section describes the development of the theory and highlights how the theory emerges from the initial interviews, coding for concepts, categorising concepts, searching for the core category through sorting the data to developing the theoretical framework.

#### 4.5.1 Open coding

Coding commenced once the interviews had started. Data gathering and analysis continued concurrently. Field notes were taken during the interviews. Memos were recorded and stored the thought processes of the researcher throughout data gathering and analysis and discussed further in section 4.7.

Initial coding was very descriptive as codes were gathered, and incidents were stored for each of these. Line by line coding was carried out at this stage. Codes and concepts are named on an incident by incident basis. The code conceptualises the underlying pattern or indicators within the data. Initial coding led the researcher to gather around 103 codes. (see appendix III) The objective was to uncover the concepts hidden in the 103 codes that resulted from being too descriptive in coding the data initially. The process of coding moved from an empirical to a conceptual stage. It moves from being descriptive to the conceptual grouping of the data into conceptual codes, which explains what is "happening in the data".

The conceptual codes are like descriptive codes, and incidents are the same. Confidence came with this and helped verify the codes developed through conceptual
sation. The conceptual codes were reduced to 31. (see appendix IV). These codes proved relevant in the investigation and were further analysed to determine fit and workability in theory. Glaser (1978) states that the essential relationship between data and theory is a conceptual code. The ideas were there through initial coding, but the challenge was to understand them as concepts. Open coding allows the analyst to see the direction to take in the study by theoretical sampling as described in section 4.3.1. Theoretical sampling continued, which resulted in more data being gathered through subsequent interviews. Rather than looking at the codes as descriptive with multiple instances, codes were more conceptual, also known as theoretical coding, and discussed further in section 4.10.

On further analysis, codes and categories of codes were developed. Substantive coding describes the data coding for as many categories as possible (Glaser, 1978) in a presented study. Codes for different incidents are also coded into as many categories as possible. The questions that needed to be addressed throughout the gathering and analysis of the data were:

1. What is the data a study of?

2. What category or property of a category is indicated?

3. What is happening in the data?

When a pattern of behaviour is evident in the data, the concept is named. The names are distinctive and generated by the researcher. Through the process of constantly comparing concept to concept, the categories are generated and as described in section 3.5.2 they earn their title as a category. Similar events were placed into categories. “Coding for concepts allows the researcher to transcend the empirical nature of the data while at the same time accounting for the processes within the data in a theoretically sensitive way” (Glaser, 1978, pg. 142). Once conceptualisation commences, incidents are no longer part of the process until the write up of the theory for illustration. Concepts are then categorised and named. The concept-indicator model described in section 3.5.3 involves coding for concepts with empirical
data or evidence to support the decision. Each category sums up ideas about the data and has empirical indicators associated with them. They earn their way into the theory. Keywords or phrases that the participants use in the study are analysed in the field notes and describe phenomena presented in the data and are then used to illustrate and support the concepts and categories created and presented in chapter five.

4.5.2 Memos

Throughout the process of data gathering and analysis, ideational memos were recorded. Glaser refers to memoing as ”the core stage in the process of generating a theory, the bedrock of theory generation” (Glaser, 1978, pg. 83). Memos are used to develop ideas, note-taking, and constant comparison. The researcher used pen and paper memos and was comfortable with diagrams to illustrate the thought processes during gathering and analysis. These would later be used for writing up the theory. Recording and transcribing the memos captured the researchers thought processes throughout the study and proved helpful for the write-up. The memos aimed to develop codes and ideas, and they were written freely and stored in piles that could be sorted. The codes conceptualise what is in the data, but the memos ”reveal and relate by theoretically coding the properties of the substantive codes” (Glaser, 1978, pg.84). They were mostly paragraphs of text and some diagrams and, as per Glasers’ advice, had some “conceptual elaboration” (Glaser, 1978, pg.84).

The memos were eventually written on small A6 notepaper and were always visual to the researcher for reviewing regularly and for discussion. Each memo had a title to state the category the memo was discussing. The date the memo was developed was also added to the top of the memo. Memos then generated new memos, but the link was noted. According to (Charmaz 2006), memos compare data, explore ideas about the codes, and direct further data gathering. A substantial bank of memos built up this way, and after some time, a point of saturation was reached, and at this point, as per Glaser (1998), sorting started as described in section 3.5.8, but until
then coding continued but with a specific purpose, to code for the core category and is described in the next section.

4.5.3 Selective coding: The search for the core category

Identification of the core

As described in the previous during the coding phase, the question addressed regularly was ‘what category does an incident indicate?’ The incident was then coded to that specific category, or a new category was conceived. Categories were generated through coding the data once the study commenced. According to Glaser (1967), emergent categories are the most relevant and the best fitted to the data. Categories and properties are concepts indicated by the data and not the data itself. Once a category or property was conceived, a change in the evidence indicating that behaviour will not necessarily alter, clarify, or destroy it (Glaser, 1967). The question asked was, ‘What is the participants’ main concern?’ and ‘how do they resolve that concern?’ The core category emerged through rigorous, constant comparison, sampling, comparison and sorting of memos. The core concern was evident early on in the study, which was implementing policy, but after 1 focus group (6 participants) and 17 interviews the core category was identified.

The core category

To examine the data more closely and to understand what is actually happening for the participants the conceptual codes (see appendix IV) are integrated with Glaser’s 6 C’s. This involves putting the concepts under the relevant headings of cause, context, condition, consequence, co-variance and contingent. Memos are recorded on decisions made at this stage as well as constant comparisons of concept to concept and category to category. The memos are sorted and resorted. Selective coding commences for emergence of the core through constant comparisons. In particular, this approach helps to identify the core category which explains the problem that
the study participants are dealing with and how they attempt to resolve that. The core category has the following characteristics:

1. Its centrality to all other categories
2. It is related more often to other categories
3. The implication for a formal theory
4. Variability, degrees, dimension, and types change through different conditions
5. It can be any theoretical code
6. It is the frequency often found in the data or environment

The core category represents the highest level concept and how that relates to all categories (Artinan, 2009). It also provides insight into phenomena and circumstances that shaped it and how human behaviour is patterned within social interactions (Vickers, 2016). This gives an overview of how they overcome their concerns. During the selective coding phase, the sub-core categories that relate to the core are analysed. A gerund represents the basic social psychological process (BSPP), and in this case was “personalising”. The basic social process (BSSP) or basic social psychological process is the theory and illustrates the phases that the participants go through to resolve their concerns. The gerund grounded theory aims to uncover the core category as it resolves the participants’ main concerns (Glaser, 1998). Gerund coding is a form of coding that uses gerunds (“-ing” words) to signal activity in the data. It is used to identify the characteristics of participants, settings, and other phenomena of interest. The core category identifies what is labelled as “personalising dissonance” which describes the behaviours of the academics as they navigate their concerns. The way they approach the policy is personal to them as its their decision ultimately in how it will be implemented. However, they have disagreement with certain aspects of it from its understanding to its objectives and so they have a personal dissonance with the policy that they need to overcome. Once the core
emerges, constant comparison and sorting of the memos continues for emergence of the sub-core categories and their properties. The categories that link closely to the core become concepts of the core or sub-core categories and are discussed in the next section.

4.5.4 Sub-core categories

During the constant comparison of concepts and categories the question asked of the codes and concepts were:

1. Is it a category or a property of a category?
2. What category or property of a category is indicated?
3. What is happening in the data?

Through the process of constant comparison and sorting three sub-core categories and properties begin to emerge i.e. resolving conflict, prioritising career and bridging gaps. The conceptual codes are the fragmented story and the sorting puts the story back together into related and interrelated pieces that allows the basic social and psychological process to emerge. The theory emerges from the relationships between conceptual codes, categories, and their properties. The core category names the overall process the participants use to overcome their concerns, the sub-core categories and properties describe how this is achieved. These layers highlight the density of the theory for example from the data and what emerges as the core category is personalising dissonance, a sub-core category of this is resolving conflict and a property of that is becoming aware. Becoming aware also has properties of firefighting, seeking support and escaping isolation. There are three sub-core categories with equal amounts of properties. These are described in detail in chapter five. Figure 4.2 highlights the relationship between the core, its sub-core categories and the properties using the sub-core category resolving conflict as an example.
Naming of concepts and categories continues and the next stage is when integration with Glaser’s 6 c’s commences. The level of abstraction lifts and theoretical coding helps to see the data from a different perspective and leads to further theoretical coding and theoretical sorting. In the next section an outline of how the conceptual codes are integrated with Glaser’s 6c’s categorisation.

4.5.5 Theoretical coding

The next part of the process is theoretical coding, and awareness of theoretical codes was fundamental to using grounded theory. Glaser mentions many theoretical codes. He also suggests “pet codes” (Glaser and Holton, 2005, Glaser, 2005) that many researchers may be drawn to, but he also insists that the researcher remains open to these codes but not force them. Being aware of these codes was vital, and it was enlightening when some of the codes fitted with the data. The code that matched early on is known as the 6 C’s (cause, context, condition, consequence,
covariance and contingency) (Glaser, 2005, 1998, 1978). The codes that related to this study were context, cause, condition, consequence and contingency. The idea was to code the data for substantive categories theoretically and look for models with the theoretical codes but not to be limited.

Theoretical codes can come from all fields and perspectives, including psychology, sociology, philosophy, and organisational theory. The purpose of theoretical coding is to stay open to any of these emerging through the data. They, however, were not forced on the data. They fitted naturally and worked. The possibilities of these codes were not infinite. They were grounded in the data. Through data sorting and constant comparison, the story came back together, and the integration of codes with the best fit occurred.

By comparing memo-to-memo and incident-to-incident, the codes helped relate what was happening in the data to the social world. As the memos and categories started to integrate, sorting and resorting occurred. By keeping an eye on the data and incidents to keep it grounded, there was an increased level of confidence that everything fitted, everything related to each other and clarified what Glaser says that “everything fits somewhere” (Glaser, 1998). Nothing was left out, and there was a place in the theory for everything, which is the multivariate nature of grounded theory (Glaser, 1998). Using and fitting these codes into the theory empowers the researcher to generate the theory and keep it conceptual (Glaser, 2005).

The theoretical code is the link between data and theory. The theoretical code conceptualises how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into the theory” (Glaser, 1978, pg.72). According to Glaser, they bring the story back together. It conceptualises the underlying pattern of a set of empirical indicators you have when you start coding. Initially, there are substantive codes and then theoretical codes. During analysis and constant comparison what became evident was data that was presenting had a nice fit for cause, context, consequences, conditions and contingencies. This is where the codes in figure 4.2 were categorised under these headings. Being aware of Glaser’s theoretical codes
helped this to happen and no codes were forced. In-vivo codes and concepts are the starting block of the data gathering and the theoretical codes are used when the level of abstraction has been raised. There is an awareness when doing a grounded theory study of the importance of theoretical codes and that one should set aside theoretical codes to let the theory emerge (Urquhart, 2012). Figure 4.3 represents the beginning of theoretical sorting, this framework guided the various stages in the sorting of memos which allowed the basic social processes to emerge i.e. the theory. As described in section 3.8.2 the 6 C’s was merely a signpost of where to go through sorting and constant comparison and what was to come. What is discovered in the analysis are patterns of behaviours that could be described as conditions, causes and consequences and degrees thereof i.e. causal consequence model (Glaser, 1978). The causal consequence model is also a process linked to the basic social and
psychological processes taking place in the study. As the data sorting continues, the question that is continuously asked is “what is their [academics] concern” (e.g. interpretation and implementation) and “what is causing it” (e.g. lack of knowledge and forced compliance), and “how are they resolving it” or “what are the patterns of behaviour” (e.g. prioritising career by being accountable). All of the theoretical codes highlighted in figure 5.1 could have been the core category but the most dominant one was the best fit. The most dominant pattern of behaviour in how they resolve their conflict is the core category of personalising dissonance. All the categories through sorting and constant comparison led back to the basic social process of personalising dissonance amongst the participants in order to overcome their issues. Glaser’s theoretical coding families describe patterns of behaviour. During the theoretical sorting of the data, more of Glaser’s theoretical codes that related to the core or sub-core category emerge. The behaviours observed in the data are further explored using Glaser’s theoretical codes of “ordering or elaboration”, “conceptual ordering”, “consensus family”, “interactive family”, “strategy family” and “degree and dimension family” and are described in detail in the next section.

**Documenting patterns of behaviour: theoretical codes**

The theoretical codes help to name the patterns of behaviour amongst the participants and allows observations on how actors behave in certain circumstances for example the ordering or elaboration family is about structure and culture, conceptual ordering is about the motivations of participants and consensus is about conflict.

Awareness of Glaser’s theoretical codes during analysis helps to gain perspectives on what is happening in the data and helps in the development of the framework and alignment of the developed categories and how they align with the categories and sub-categories that emerge in analysis is highlighted in section 5.8. Table 4.3 highlights how the concerns relate to the theoretical codes.
### Theoretical coding families and concerns observed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical coding families and concerns observed</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordering or elaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consensus family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interactive family</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree and dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conceptual ordering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: How concerns relate to theoretical codes

**Ordering or elaboration family**

This code relates to organisational structure and culture sub-core categories and helps to uncover patterns of behaviour in how they resolve those concerns. The participants feel that within their academic institutions there is an ordering or flow of influence or perceived power. The flow of power is from the top down. Management levels of the organisation hierarchy were influencers of policy, and are often referred to as being “at the top” while lecturers were “at the bottom” and as one participant describes “at the top, they say this is it, implement it” with policy. There is also a mention of policy being a bureaucratic process and that it “outweighed the practical when it came to policy development”. Participants within the study observe that the power appears to go from top down, it is highly bureaucratic and that organisational structure and culture impose this type of bureaucracy and has been uncovered by other researchers i.e. Glaser (1978). Figure 4.4 illustrates a triangle of experience that highlights the relationship between structure, culture and bureaucracy. This relates to the category of resolving conflict as it is at this phase where they attempt to resolve that conflict that they are sensing as a result of what they describe as a bureaucratic rather than a democratic policy experience. The first phase in the theory is how they resolve this conflict.
Figure 4.4: Relationship between structure, culture, bureaucracy and policy experiences

**Consensus family**

The consensus family is concerned with conflict that is felt amongst the academics with their concerns with academic policies. They feel that by doing their own thing and having little pressure to conform, there is no consequence to their actions and they continue to do this. The consequences are non-compliance and making decisions that will affect the students and stakeholders. Conflict is caused by policy that they cannot interpret or they do not agree with. They need to firstly resolve that conflict and tension and they then need to decide on implementation, the second phase in how they resolve their concerns through accountability and decision making.

**Interactive family**

The interactive family is concerned with rewards and motivation behaviours. Rewards lead to motivation to perform the behaviour. And “motivation to work leads
to seeking rewards” (Glaser, 1978, pg.18). The academics in prioritising their career are seeking rewards of accountability and integrity through compliant behaviour. In the second phase of the theory they are accountable to themselves and the students and for some they are maintaining academic integrity in how they approach these policy’s.

**Strategy family**

The strategy family is related to organisational structures and internal dynamics. The mechanisms within that structure result in the strategy or management of the actors within it. Academic organisations have a structure and a particular hierarchy of academic staff. Due to the nature of the research around policy and rules associated with them, this family provided a natural fit with what came through in data analysis. In the final phase of the theory academics were strategic in how they were participating in policy development to have their voices heard.

**Degree and dimension family**

The more the researcher studies a category, the more dimensions of the category start to emerge. Since there can be a variation in the variables associated with a theory, there can be degrees or dimensions within the theory (Glaser, 1978). Dimensions were pieced together through sorting and resorting and helped break down the notion into pieces. Only relevant degrees of the category are highlighted in the theory. Through constant sorting what was emerging were properties of the categories that were micro-processes occurring in how they resolved their concerns in each phase of the theory. These were the dimensions of the categories and are highlighted and described in figure 5.5 in the next chapter.

**Conceptual ordering**

There is a personal motivation for academics to implement the policy and engage with the policy. Conceptual ordering is related to the motivations around the social-
isation of people i.e. their motivations and how they behave in situations in which they are positioned. It also relates to institutional goals and values and personal motivations of the actors within the unit or organisation. At the top of the hierarchy are policy writers or influencers that are characterised by their distance from the lived experience in the classroom and may never have been in the classroom. They are often described as “not having had a piece of chalk in their hands for a long time”. They are perceived by the participants as a collective that reside above them imposing policy on them. At the bottom are academics or implementers. The academics interpret the policies developed. There must be a motivation to implement the policy. The policies highlight how certain actions are carried out, that rest on institutional goals and motivation. The conceptual orderings can be linked to the structural orderings or the strategy family concerning the flow of power. In conceptual ordering, as the orders go from the top down, they get more specific, whereas when the grievances go from the bottom up, they get less generalised (Glaser, 1978).

4.6 Integration through sorting

Sorting is the last phase of grounded theory and involves sorting the memos into piles. According to Glaser, it “challenges the researcher’s creativity” (Glaser, 1998, pg. 187). It also verifies all the work that had preceded it, such as coding, sampling, memoing, and saturation. Many memos were accumulated at this stage, placed on the floor, picked up, and compared. This process continued for multiple memos. The researcher had a private office that was secure at all times. The memos were compared and integrated as they related empirically. The process was methodical and verified the nothing would be left out teaching of Glaser. During this phase, some significant decisions were made. The memo piles would then be used to write and formalise the theory.
4.7 Process of theory generation

The core category had emerged at this stage, and the theory was emerging. The sorting led to the writing up of the theory and review of the literature. The sorting phase is how the researcher sorts how the theory was to be written up. The strategy of comparative analysis for generating theory puts a high emphasis on theory as a process. That is, theory as an ever-developing entity, not as a perfected product (Glaser, 1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that some researchers focus a lot on verifying the emerging theory, and they then become preoccupied with checking the emerging propositions to focus on testing the theory. Glaser believes that this blocks the researcher from generating a denser theory. The researcher’s main goal was to develop a new theory generated by gathering and analysing the data collected. The aim was not to provide a perfect description of the substantive area but to develop a theory that accounts for most of the behaviour in the area. The researcher begins with an area to study, and the “theory is allowed to emerge” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 23).

4.8 Summary

Using grounded theory, a theory rooted in the empirical data collected in the substantive area of policy in academia was generated. The generation began with collecting, coding, memoing, and sampling the data. Interviews were coded for categories and concepts and then memoed. Thought processes were recorded throughout collection and analysis by constant comparison of categories. By theoretical sampling, subsequent interviews led to the more theoretically focused inquiry. The coding started as substantive coding but lifted to a more conceptual level through the codes’ conceptualisation and further by theoretically coding. The memos recorded during this process became saturated after 1 focus group (6 participants) and 17 interviews, and the sorting of the memos commenced. Once saturation was reached
and the core category had emerged, sorting of the theory’s memos and write-up began. The write-up of the theory starts as the memos are brought together to form a coherent body of work (Glaser, 1998, 1978). The visual representation of the theory includes explanations of the core category and the sub-core categories and their relationships presented as a phased basic social process. The relevant category and the sub-categories are defined using the concept-indicator model and empirical data is used to support each of these. The key analytical points are supported by selected quotes from the participants i.e. the data. It is important to note that the quotes are used to illustrate but never substitute for analysis. Quotes from participants can illustrate the use of a particular category in a particular context. A grounded theory is always traceable to the data, and so examples are a way of ensuring that. During data gathering memos are recorded capturing the concepts and codes that emerge and the thought processes on the conceptual relationships between them. The writing up of the theory involves concept-to-concept relationships integrated into the theory and is normally a memo (Glaser, 1998). A lot of the time sorting and resorting is spent alone with no supervision and is described as “minus mentoring” (Glaser, 1998, pg.5). This is challenging yet enlightening as constant comparison of the memos and writing more memos allow for the emergence of new data. The power behind the method is evident and a trust in the emerging relevant theory experienced. The theory illustrates how academics navigate their concerns with policy in their institutes. The methodological approach discussed in this chapter gives structure and insight into the dissemination of the findings of the study that include the core concerns of the participants and the core elements of the theory and its phases and are discussed in the next chapter.
Chapter 5

Research findings

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter outlines the findings discovered following a substantive study of academic experiences of policy development and implementation within Irish higher education institutes. It will provide an in-depth description of the findings of the study, the theory, the core and sub-core categories that emerged in the study. The focus is on the core themes of the theory, including its main structure. Following the classic grounded theory approach of data gathering and analysis as outlined in the previous chapters, the theory of personalising dissonance emerged. This core category has three sub-core categories: resolving conflict, prioritising career and bridging gaps. The core concerns of the participants was implementation and interpretation of policy and the theory explains how academics overcome their concerns. Grounded theory is designed to produce a conceptually dense theory with many conceptual relationships (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Conceptualisation means naming the patterns of behaviours evident in the data and amongst the participants or “actors” within the study. The density of the theory is highlighted in table 5.2. This table illustrates the many dimensions of the categories and sub-categories and their properties. The study aims to discover the core concerns of the participants, and the theory explains how they overcome them. The following section provides
an overview of the core concerns of the participants.

5.2 The core concerns of the participants

The participants’ core concern in the study is how they respond to and implement policy within their institutions. The data reveals that the dominant concern for the academic community revolves around the ecosystem of policies. In particular, issues around interpretation, implementation, the policy’s objectives and disagreements with them. Implementation and interpretation are linked. They are not mutually exclusive and interdependent. The implementation issues suggest that the policy writers lack awareness of what is happening on the ground. The academics feel policies are misrepresenting what is happening at the level of implementation. The impact of the policy on the stakeholders is also a concern. The policy has an intended meaning and a particular purpose. Meaning can also be shared meaning amongst the academics in what they describe as “chats in the corridor” and policy intended meaning. The implementation can be described as the working meaning. There is a meaning gap when the intended meaning and the working meaning are different. The gap may be small between the intended and interpreted, but some gaps may be bigger, and then the issue is what causes or helps close the gaps. Understanding how these gaps emerge can help minimise them. There may be personal tension where the academic does not agree with the objectives of the policy and does not engage with it. The varied meaning causes frustration for the academics as they are aware that the policy is being implemented differently and sometimes at the student’s expense. Policy meaning can lead to a lack of interpretation, which can lead to non-compliance. The result is that the policy is not being implemented correctly. Interpretation revolves around the language, which is often not familiar to academics. The language used can be dense and cumbersome due to legal or statutory requirements. The academic’s knowledge and experience contribute to their understanding and ability to interpret and implement the policy. One can
lead to the other, and the density of the policy is a concern for them. They try to interpret the documents and find them frustrating. There is a process to go through to reach a level of personal harmony with their decisions. They need to seek clarity of meaning to help reduce the tension of the inability to interpret them. Then they realise that they may not represent what is happening in their day-to-day lives. Figure 5.1 illustrates the contributors to the policy meaning gap. The disconnect or gap is an issue for the academic as the wider the gap, the more disconnected and isolated they feel. Factors that affect the gaps are interpretation, forced compliance, and disagreement with the objectives of the policy and illustrated in table 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Policy meaning gap
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Cause</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>Academics do not understand what it is that they are to do as the language is formal and legalese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives of policy</td>
<td>Academics feel forced into implementing policies that they believe are not fit for purpose or are out of date.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced compliance</td>
<td>When academics do not agree with the objectives of the policy. They believe the outcomes will have a negative effect on the stakeholders once implemented.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1: Cause and concern factors that affect the policy gap

There is a set of varied meanings creating tension emanating from the policy, and this is the context for this work. For academics, the two dominant policies in the data are marks and standards and plagiarism. Tension is what is experienced amongst academics. The context is the ambience or feelings within the group of academics. The questions that guided this exploration are:

1. Under what conditions is policy tension felt?
2. What causes the feeling of tension?
3. Where is it felt?

If the policy is not implemented correctly, if an issue arises, the academic is held accountable, the policy has power. The policy is its own entity, a character in their experiences that is elusive and unknowable. The policy’s properties highlighted in the study include intended meaning, imbued or imposed power, legality, and density. The core concern is how academics deal with issues and concerns around the policy. The basic social psychological process describes how the participants resolve their concerns as they move through a situation. The basic social psychological process emerges as the core category (Glaser, 1996). The theory of personalising dissonance presents the core category as a resolution to the participants’ main concerns (Glaser 1998) and the processes used to overcome them and is described in the next section.
5.3 A basic social process to overcome concerns

A process contains a minimum of two clear emergent stages and requires that the stages differentiate and account for variations in the problematic behaviour pattern (Glaser, 1978). The proposed theory of personalising dissonance explains how academics respond to policy. The theory has three clear emergent phases of resolving conflict, prioritising career and bridging gaps. The phases or stages in the basic social process (BSP) have a beginning and an end. For example, the first phase is resolving conflict. After this phase, the academic has to decide how they will implement the policy. This is where they choose to implement it correctly or implement it flexibly. The transition from the first phase to the second phase is the critical juncture. What influences the decisions at the critical junctures are contingencies of education, time, experience, and career. They have a decision that will affect how they resolve their concerns in the second phase of prioritising careers. Figure 5.2 illustrates the phases in the basic social psychological process of personalising dissonance. Phases have a time dimension, a beginning, an end, and a duration.

Figure 5.2: Phases in the basic social psychological process of personalising dissonance
The implementation may also depend on institutional timing and demand of the policies enactment. The participants perceive these phases before they go through them, as they go through them and after they have gone through them. There is an awareness before the participant goes through the phase as it is built into the social structure, and the phases are perceivable by the actors after they have gone through them (Glaser, 1978). They comply, invoke, or engage depending on their interpretation or agreement with the policy. As there are phases in the process, the concerns can be resolved at any stage. The concerns could be resolved at the initial phase and then implemented the policy, or they may have issues with the policy’s objectives and need to move to the second phase and then onto the third phase.

Basic social processes are activated through units of social organisation. They are abstract of any specific unit structure and can vary in different units, and therefore modifiable and have fit and workability. Regardless of institutional structure, policies exist and personalising dissonance has fit and workability. The basic social psychological process and the basic social structural processes are very much intertwined as the institutions have developed policies that regulate them. Concerns relating to organisational structure and power are evident in policy development and affect the interpretation and implementation of policy. The academics feel a sense of imposed power from a top-down perspective. Those academics in more senior roles also feel this imposition. They also feel that a higher influencing force imposes on them even though they are in a more senior role. There is a battle with policy, and the bureaucracy involved contributes to inconsistencies in how people implement them. The basic social structural process is bureaucratisation (Glaser, 1978) within the institutions. The core category that emerged in this study is the basic social psychological process of personalising dissonance and is described in the next section.
5.4 The core category: personalising dissonance

The theory of personalising dissonance explains the challenges associated with the phenomena around policy behaviour often experienced but unexplained. Figure 5.3 illustrates the core category of personalising dissonance as a graphical model and illustrates how the core category and the sub-core categories relate to each other. It also highlights the links between the three phases in theory as described in section 5.2.1 above. They overcome their tensions and anxiety when they read the policy by personalising their disagreements. They reduce the levels of disagreement because academics feel that they are doing right by the students, and this reduces dissonance and increases the level of consonance in what they are doing. If the nature of the tension varies, their dissonance levels are either increased or reduced. The core category of personalising dissonance accounts for most of the variation in academic behaviour and how they process that. An example of personalising dissonance with policy starts when the academics need to locate, read, and implement a particular policy. They must source the policy or discover if such a policy exists. This can happen at their desk, or they may need to consult with a colleague. Discussions lead to explanations on how the policy should be implemented and sometimes with a better understanding of the policy or not. They then have to make a personal decision on how they will implement it. They need to interpret it to implement it. For the majority who read the policy, issues emerge when they cannot interpret the document. When a colleague asks another to explain a policy, there is shared meaning, which can help reduce the tension between the academic and policy. Tension, frustration, and a sense of isolation cause academics concern because they care about the students and are accountable for their actions.
The sub-core categories relate to the core and describe the phases in the basic social process as illustrated in figure 5.2. These are resolving conflict, prioritising careers, and bridging gaps. The properties are not hierarchical or linear but iterative and cyclical (Glaser, 1998).

### 5.5 The sub-core categories

The sub-core categories and their properties illustrate how they relate through the basic social process of resolving their concerns. Table 5.2 highlights the theory’s density and the sub-core categories and their properties and the sub-properties of them. The table was created in a memo during the sorts and resorts and writing of the theory. The writing of the theory is in the guise of a theoretical memo and a theoretical sort. It allows confidence in each category’s fit and relevance as well as the sub-core categories in the theory. The core category organises the other cate-
Table 5.2: Categories, sub-categories and properties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personalising Dissonance</th>
<th>Resolving Conflict</th>
<th>Prioritising Career</th>
<th>Bridging Gaps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becoming Aware</td>
<td>Being Accountable</td>
<td>Seizing Opportunity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firefighting</td>
<td>Planning Behaviour</td>
<td>Empowerment through</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking Support</td>
<td>Assessing Consequences</td>
<td>Progression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Escaping Isolation</td>
<td>Evaluating Outcomes</td>
<td>Participation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating Meaning</td>
<td>Making Fateful Decisions</td>
<td>Exerting Influence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Force of Power</td>
<td>Accepting Influence</td>
<td>Sharing Knowledge</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysing Discourse</td>
<td>Perceiving Outcomes</td>
<td>Inform Professional Practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Agreement</td>
<td>Protecting Stakeholder</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>Maintaining Integrity</td>
<td>Strengthening Academic Voices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forced Compliance</td>
<td>Sharing Knowledge</td>
<td>Speaking Out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement</td>
<td>Harmonizing Cognition</td>
<td>Gaining Autonomy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolving Dissonance</td>
<td>Increasing Consonance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Influences</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organisational Structure</td>
<td>Organisational Structure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2: Categories, sub-categories and properties

gories by continually resolving the core concern of the participants so all sub-core categories relate to the core and how they resolve their concern. Table 5.3 illustrates how the basic social process combined with the six c’s theoretical codes (as described in section 4.5.5) to help focus the theory and structure the theoretical framework. From the theoretical codes of the cause, context, condition, and consequence, the causes are policy power, discourse, forced compliance, bureaucracy, academic time design, and the consequences are disconnecting within the organisation, fateful decisions, and non-compliance. The following section highlights the sub-core category of resolving conflict, its properties and sub-properties.
Table 5.3: How the concepts and categories combine with the six c’s theoretical codes to focus the theory formation.

### 5.6 Sub-core category - Resolving conflict

The first phase in the theory of personalising dissonance is how the academics overcome their concerns with a policy through the process of resolving conflict. Conflict includes the following: a fight, battle, strife, controversy, a quarrel between parties, a discord of action, feeling or antagonism or opposition of interests or principles. In particular, the words “battle” and “fight” are used descriptively by participants to convey the feelings they have experienced with policy development and implementation in their respective institutions. As the academics tried to resolve their concerns through personalising dissonance, they attempt to resolve personal and professional conflicts that cause the tension and frustration they feel around a policy. Academics need to access a policy at certain times to resolve an issue or carry out a particular duty. Policy within academia governs how they carry out these duties. The most popular are school policies, exam boards, plagiarism and marks and standards.

The following sections will show the properties of the sub-core category resolving conflict. The quotes from the participants are “only used for illustration, and they are not the story and only support the concept” (Glaser, 1978, pg.134). The fact that they are being interviewed by an academic and the sensitive nature of some of
the responses the quotes are for illustration and no cross-referencing is conducted to maintain anonymity and confidentially of participants. However, pseudonyms and a participant ID are used to illustrate the range of participants contributions in the study. The following sections will use process diagrams to illustrate the sub-core categories, properties and sub-properties thereof. Figure 5.4 illustrates the sub-core category of resolving conflict and its properties.

![Diagram]

Figure 5.4: Personalising dissonance - resolving conflict

Academics feel conflict when presented with policies that they disagree with or do not understand. The conflict is also felt by the power behind the policy and the consequences of not implementing it correctly. The tensions arise when they are not aware of certain policies that need to be implemented. Academics also feel that they do not agree with some of the policies that they believe are outdated or do not reflect what is “happening on the ground”. When a policy is needed, the academic sources the document, reads it and interprets its implementation depending on the academics’ awareness of a policy. If the academic is unaware of a policy, they tend to deal with the situation to the best of their ability. If they are aware, there is a policy, several things can happen that include interpreting it themselves or asking a colleague for assistance. Interpretation and implementation were the main con-
tributors to conflict and tension. Conflict is around conformity and nonconformity of the policy and according to Glaser conflict involves the homogeneity of cultural elements (Glaser, 1978). He also argues that people tend to do their own thing with no pressure to conform when there are no glaring consequences (Glaser, 1978). The academics are aware that there are consequences if the policy is not implemented correctly. However, these consequences would only occur if an issue arose and the situation was brought to senior management’s attention or those they are accountable to. They work in isolation and make personal decisions on how to interpret and implement the documents. Academics find it hard to interpret the documents because of the document’s language or discourse. They find them very formal and legal which results in shared and varied interpretations. Policy comes from a place of power within the organisation.

“What I would say is that most policy, especially academic, comes from a position of power. It is always down to the power of discourse behind the policy. They [writers of policy] will typically seek to get the best policy for the institution, but they will use mechanisms that are not as democratic as they seem” (Peter, p10)

At times, there is a sense of firefighting with policy to develop, interpret, and implement it. The conflict causes tensions, frustrations, and alienation and is not without consequence. These consequences are non-compliance and increased emotional dissonances amongst the academics. They are aware that unless an issue arises, there are no consequences for non-compliance, resulting in them doing their own thing regarding implementing a policy. Academics are aware that there are no overarching considerations into how the policies are implemented and are tackled locally in a very informal manner. The policy is developed as a “guide” or “rule-book”. However, academics feel that they are only there as a “stick to beat you with” if something goes wrong. Sometimes academics do not agree with the policies as they do not reflect what is happening at the coalface or their day to day lives. They are presented as legal documents that have to be implemented regardless of
interpretation or agreement. If no issue arises, there are no glaring consequences if they did not enact them correctly. Policy and policy action came under scrutiny at the exam boards or college boards. They are aware of the power, and they reduce tension by doing what they feel is best for the students that increases their level of concord or harmony. The academics justify what they are doing as they believe it is for the benefit of the students. They make their disagreements with it personal to them. The academics speak very passionately about their positions, and their concerns are always centered around the students. The main causes for their concerns are awareness, interpretation of policy, shared and varied interpretation of policy, and the power behind the policy. They reduce their disagreement levels to reach a level of conformity and personal empowerment through firefighting and negotiating meaning and are discussed in the next section.
5.6.1 Resolving conflict - becoming aware

Firefighting is the practice of reacting to urgent problems as they arise instead of planning for the future. There is tremendous pressure on the academics to know the institutional policies. There is also tremendous pressure if a policy does not exist, and one needs to be created quickly and implemented quickly. How do they know which ones are important, and how do they know which ones to be aware of? Many staff are unaware of the documents, and unless they are educated in policy, they wait until an issue presents. Then they need to be aware of the policies.

“Most policies come about when we encounter problems. We are more or less trying to firefight when a problem is encountered” (Luke, p11)

Academics do not read the documents, but they are obliged to implement a particular policy in a particular way. If the policy does not exist, it will be hastily developed and will have to be implemented quickly.
“And like I said sometimes I think we’re not as forward thinking as we could be. That’s sometimes we wait until an issue arises and then after the event, realise we don’t have a policy for that and then we develop it..I find it a little frustrating” (John, p9)

If they are unaware of a policy, they need to become aware reasonably quickly. If a policy does not exist, then there is a sense of firefighting to develop the policy. These policies are imposed onto the academics to implement in a short time-frame and creates further tension for the academics as they have to decide on the implementation of them. The academics feel isolated and alienated from the policies within their institutions and find it hard to interpret the documents due to the legality of the language. They work in isolation a lot of the time and reading policy documents happens behind closed doors.

“They have been screened by someone who has a law background. That probably leads to the alienation of the process” (Conor, p17)

Geographic location also separates the academics, and they feel isolated within their institute with other cohorts because of that. This separation also happens on campuses in similar geographical locations were different schools on the same campuses also treat and interpret policy differently.

“As we currently are located on different campuses, we are separate in many ways. That also applies to policy” (Conor, p17)

For the academic to become more aware of a policy, they need to move outside their office and tend to ask a colleague. They could ask their manager or whomever they are accountable to, but it is felt that this would highlight a lack of knowledge if they did.

“When staff approach [a manager] looking for help with the policy, they [academics]can be nervous as it shows that they do not know about it and that they could have been here for years and are not aware how the policies are to be implemented” (Peter, p10)
The academics feel more comfortable asking a colleague for advice on a policy or assistance with its interpretation. They create a collective agreement on the policy by asking a colleague, which helps reduce personal tension or confusion. Those interpersonal interactions help in reducing conflict. These informal conversations are a way of discovering if a policy exists and how it might be implemented. One academic in particular describes this as “chats in the corridor,” or another describes the process as “taking someone for a cup of tea”. They become aware of policy from a colleague’s perspective, but ultimately they are the implementers of it. The responsibility falls on their shoulders and how it will be implemented is their decision.

“Policies implemented properly are sometimes treated as a luxury.” You are just firefighting in survival mode. . . when you are in survival mode you don’t make much improvement” (Brian, p6)

However, there are concerns as some academics implement the document as per the advice of a third party without ever reading the document hence the reason there is a feeling that the policies are redundant and useless as one participant states.

“They are dry and dusty and stored in isolation within the institutes” (Mary, p8)

This watering down of policy is also a concern for academics who are aware of this. It is also a concern for the non-engagers as they are not engaging as they have no faith in the policy to start with.

“What we do is we come up with a watered-down ambiguous approach, and it allows for interpretations that cause conflict. So the language becomes ambiguous” (Matthew, p2)

The core concern is implementing a policy that they feel is not representative of what is happening or challenging to understand. Decisions have to be made to either be aware of the policies or not, and they make concerted efforts to become aware of the policies when needed. They feel a force of power and obligation to know the
documents, and to reduce the tensions felt, they reduce their dissonance and foster an awareness to know the policy when they need to.

“Why is it poorly implemented? Because people are not aware of it. It has been poorly written, but the ramifications such as workload, professional standing or relationship with a student are affected” (Peter, p10)

Additional factors that affect awareness are time and culture. When it comes to becoming aware of the policy, time is an issue. It takes time to become aware and it takes time to implement a policy. Implementation is also time-consuming. Academic time design is an issue. The academics have an already full timetable, so making it a priority to become aware of policy takes more time from an already busy schedule.

“It’s written in a sense to be legally precise. but it is time-consuming to read” (Gearoid, p21)

Academics could make time to become aware, but this depends on several factors such as knowledge, experience, and academic integrity. In order to become aware, they have to give the process time. Many policies are not well implemented and this comes down to the individual not making themselves aware of cultural issues around the policy. If there was no education around policy or staff were not good at making others aware, then a culture of poor encouragement around implementation develops. Different schools also implement policy differently, and this culture continues. Academics personalised their disagreements with policy to become aware of how they feel about them to reduce the level of dissonance they have with policy, and helps reduce pressure to become aware of the policies in the future. Becoming aware of the policy is the first stage in resolving conflict with policy, but the academic still has to resolve discourse and forced compliance. In the next stage of resolving conflict, the academic negotiates meaning in the documents to regain power over their decisions.
5.6.2 Resolving conflict - negotiating meaning

Tension and frustration occurs during the policy document’s interpretation for many academics. Policy documents within the institutions are guidelines to assist the academics to carry out specific duties or as a response to a particular issue, and some are used more than others. Registrars and department managers may be academics but there are concerns over how long they have been out of the “system” or distanced from the space where the policies written are enacted. This is the opinion of the academics at the lower levels. The academics who move to senior roles also feel this and they believe that when they move to a senior position they have a voice to make a change and contribute. There is a sense from some participants that specific policies are developed with no input from the academics who are implementing them.

“I would say the policy at higher levels seemed haphazard. Stakeholder selection seemed like a tick boxing exercise. It did not necessarily generate a policy that made sense to those who have to implement it. They are always something that is outside in rather than inside out” (Martina, p20)

They are developed and stored in a document management system within the in-
stitutions and are expected to be implemented by the academics. The policies are developed with intended meaning. They are legal documents, and the issue is that they can be challenging to interpret.

“There are always situations where you would ask, “God, does this mean that?” Alternatively, “Does this mean this?” It can be hard to interpret” (Laura, p19)

There are many concerns over the legalese used in the documents, which is viewed as difficult to understand and apply. “Dense” or “cumbersome” are used to describe the documents’ readability and are challenging to implement. Some feel they are also hard to access.

“Dense to access. Their day-to-day implementation is quite difficult.”

“The idea of referring to documents as codes is difficult” (Mary, p8)

“They are a bit cumbersome to actually look at” (Patrick, p12)

The density of the policy is an issue. The academics feel that policy writers are disconnected from what is happening on the ground and that the policies do not represent reality. They feel that policy can be very formal and that it is a legal document and leads to a sense of isolation. Policy becomes alien to the academic and increases their level of conflict with it. The academics work in a policy driven institution where policy governs how they respond to specific issues. Pressure to conform to top-level management is also a cause for concern for them. Academics are presented with legal documents that have to be implemented regardless of how the academics interpret it or their level of agreement with it.

“Recently, a course board wished to change a policy, and it was discussed that it was not possible, as there was a policy that existed and it should be adhered to. The problem was that the policy was not understood or was not doing the job it was meant to do; therefore, on the ground level or at the coal face, it was not working” (Paula, p18)
The idea that policy is formal arises as an issue, especially as one moves up through the organisation’s structure. Academics’ attitudes change the higher up the organisation they are positioned. Movement up the chain of authority makes policy more formal. Those in more senior positions understand this reality. There is a feeling that clear English concepts are lost. There is a feeling that the people who are writing these documents are trying to cover themselves with legalese.

“I would find policy documents difficult to follow. I was involved with a plagiarism document, and I had to read it multiple times to understand it. I appreciate it needs to be legally tied, and sometimes being legally tied, it can be hard to understand” (Jane, p7)

The power of policy and the power in the discourse results in the academics feeling the pressure. They feel the pressure from above, yet there are no immediate consequences for not complying. Nevertheless, the tensions are not going away as they know there is a threat of reprimand if an issue arises. A property of policy is the formal nature of the policy as well as the discourse. Policy discourse is the communication of thoughts or words through writing or conversation. In this discussion and relation to this theory, it is both. The discourse around policy is the writer’s discourse or knowledge of the subjects of analysis. Policy communicates what has to be done to resolve an issue or a course of action. Communication takes place with colleagues and non-verbally in a document stored for access by academics. The document’s language is perceived as legal and from a place of power. The academics feel that gives the policy writers dominance over them in how the document is verbalised. The policy discourse problem is that the academics are empowered to work in a policy-driven environment or institute, but they feel they have no freedom to challenge it. There is a feeling that it is the law, and that it cannot not be changed. Academics work around the policy if they feel a disconnect between what is in the policy and what is happening on the ground. The academic policy is exploited to benefit the student, so there is deliberate non-compliance.
“An example of this is plagiarism policy it is the black-and-whiteness of a policy document that has to be legally binding. Practice on the ground when dealing with students who are human beings and the shades of grey that come with the disconnect that is happening on the ground” (Jane, p7)

The academics who are implementing the policies are making decisions on implementation. Some decisions have to be made within specific timeframes, time they feel they did not have. However, they make the decisions by implementing policies they do not understand with added pressure from management.

“It is frustrating because at the top they say, this is it, implement it. They do not know what is happening in my discipline. They just say it is mandatory” (Michael, p16)

Interpretation takes on many nuances in different interviews. Some find the language of the documents complicated, and others find the materials to be very dense. There is also a link between complying and interpreting policy. If the academic cannot understand the document, then that leads to a degree of non-compliance also.

“I have found problems with a policy document that I have found very complicated, and it is not being implemented correctly by the lecturers” and “I suppose that people are doing their own thing when it comes to policy” (Michael, p16)

There is something in the design of the policies themselves that may be lacking if people have difficulty interpreting them.

“I find policy documents very dense, and I work in academia, and I find them difficult to read” (Mary, p8)

The way that policy is interpreted can be measured in the meaning of the policy. If academics write a policy for academics, there is increased understanding, whereas if someone outside of academia writes it, there is some level of misinterpretation.
“Admin always develops policy, and they are not widely disseminated and not understood consistently and difficult to implement by the academics” (Mary, p8)

Interpretation and understanding are different across different schools. There is an issue with the discourse within the policies and that the varied meaning results in non-compliance for some.

“The plagiarism doc is a huge issue. They are interpreted depending on the cases that come in front of you; you do not get consistency of interpretation across the board” (Karen, p22)

Shared meaning results in agreement on what the policy means and for some proper compliance. There is disagreement on the policy and the effect its implementation will have on academic integrity, as discussed in section 5.5.3, and the students.

“I read policies, and they are legalese, and they are open to interpretation. How you interpret a certain power buff can determine which way you go. we as a school might interpret it one way, and another school might interpret it another way and implement it differently. We are still reading the same PDF, but interpreting it differently” (Conor, p17)

What presents as a shared and varied meaning results from seeking the support of a colleague or superior termed “chats in the corridor” that helps reduce the level of tension or frustrations they may have. The varied meanings causes inconsistencies in how the policy is being interpreted and implemented and causes further issues and concerns for them and increases their level of personal dissonance. These varied meanings result in non-compliance.

“I mentioned indirect and direct access to policies as well, so most people will ask a colleague, “What would you do? However, then it is a case of Chinese whispers. Somebody is going to give you incorrect information, and that is going to affect what is going to happen to the student at the end as well” (Conor, p17)
The academics then negotiate alone with the policy, and many factors affect how they respond to it. They interpret it personally, and they decide on what they believe is the right one for them and their students.

“My interpretation of the document was it suggested to do it one way, it never stated how not to do it, that is what I did, and I profoundly believe what I did was fair” (Tadgh, p1)

They know the consequences of misinterpretation are non-compliance that affects the students and that their decisions are fateful ones. By seeking a colleague’s support, they reduce their dissonance levels, and where there are inconsistencies, they make a collective agreement. Where there is a collective agreement, the tensions and frustrations are reduced. The negotiation in isolation is where they personalise their issues and make the decision on implementation.

“Whenever policy that is vague, or ambiguous, or interpreted in multiple ways, it was usually interpreted in a way that suits the case at hand” (Peter, p10)

Another factor that causes concern for the academic is when they have to read and interpret the policies. It is evident from participant interviews that the implicit time design with policy shapes what people do. Consideration to understand the policy’s implementation is essential and that perhaps the constraints of implementing the policies include the time they are given to do so. It would take time to become aware and interpret the document to implement it promptly. They have a very full timetable during the academic year.

“There is an exponential increase in the amount of documentation that you have to fill out, and again, that is frustration on top of the already heavy workload” (Michael, p16)

Some participants feel that it is an extra-curricular activity that has no impact on their time table. They need to take the time to read and interpret the document
and seek support, even if it is a quick chat in the corridor. Once the academic interprets the document and becomes aware and negotiates the document’s context, some factors affect what they do next. These include content, education, academic integrity, and forced compliance that they must address. What helps them overcome their tensions is analysis of the discourse and through collective agreement with colleagues they negotiate the consequences themselves. The following section describes how a sense of empowerment is achieved in order to further resolve the conflict from forced compliance.

5.6.3 Resolving conflict - empowerment

Academics feel dictated to when presented with a policy that they do not necessarily understand or see a benefit in. They decide how they will implement the policy based on their belief in the policy and its effect. The reason they do this is there are no immediate consequences for their actions. The academics work in isolation, and many of their decisions are made in isolation. Unless an event occurs that brings their decisions into the limelight, they will continue to do what they usually do that
may not reflect what is implied in the document. Nevertheless, by not conforming, there is conflict. Where there are disagreements, there are tensions and frustrations that cause an increase in personal dissonance. There is much non-compliance at the ground level where academics use their discretion to resolve issues. They find the policies awkward and time-consuming to implement, but they feel that they are implementing them flexibly by not implementing them correctly. So invoking rather than implementing is their defence. Where power is enforced on academics, there are consequences. These can be anticipated or unanticipated but forced compliance has consequences on the implementation of the policy. Some academics do what they always do and implement as they feel fit or appropriate. They believe what they do is to benefit the student, but it is non-compliance regardless. This leads to a culture of non-compliance as academics converse with each other through shared or varied agreement that leads to further non-compliance and redundant purposeless policies. As one participant describes them, “dry and dusty policies.”

“These policies exist and maybe a little bit isolated or over on the database, and the day-to-day realities do not reflect the policy. . . . you are left with dry and dusty policies, and you have policies that are being interpreted in a completely different way” (Mary, p8)

The consequences are the disconnects between the policies and what is being implemented. It causes a disconnect within the organisational structure, as discussed in the next section on how the gaps are bridged. If a policy is not implemented correctly, and the academic continues to do as they do, there are consequences. They are aware that if it is discovered, they will be held accountable.

“Unless there was an issue, and someone asks if there was a policy on that, or at such a time the policy is broken or something happens that is against a policy, then the policy is produced and highlighted as a form of reprimanding or correction tool” (Peter, p10)

They are also aware that if nothing happens to bring non-compliance to the fore,
there are no consequences.

“People will do it whatever way they want, there is no penalty” (Justin, p14)

The academics are aware that policy comes from what they perceive as powerful, yet they tend not to read them. When they are faced with implementing a policy that they first cannot decipher or agree with, they have to contend with a feeling of forced compliance. There is much frustration felt by the academic concerning this forcing as conflict then sets in. A feeling of a policy being imposed onto the academic is a cause for concern amongst the academics.

“I feel that policy is something that is done onto you rather than you doing the development of policy” (Michael, p16)

Consequently, academics will read the policy because they feel the need to but not because they want to.

“I will read the policy because I have to and not out of a sense of obligation” (Michael, p16)

The imposition and forced compliance causes conflict for academics. They feel that it is a battle, and they have no chance of winning. They describe locations that become battlegrounds, such as college boards where heads of schools and academics preside over policy. Most notably, exam boards where marks and standards would be applied. Different campuses or schools are seen as opponents in the battle and increases their dissonances with the policy.

“Sometimes, a policy is seen as a badge of achievement, especially across campuses with different cultures” (Peter, p10)

The development of policy is just another task that needs to be completed and working in isolation can be empowering but with policy they are not free to make changes.
“I am wary of policies that do not have democratic representation in
terms of their creation. There is a difference between empowerment
and emancipation. As employees, we are empowered to work in a sys-
tem governed by policy, but we are not emancipated to change or chal-
lenge” (Peter, p10)

Power, culture and organisational structure contribute to disconnects that increase
the academics’ level of isolation. The reference to the organisational structure within
the organisation is also a cause for concern. Forced compliance accounts for most of
the concerns. The sense of imposed power from the top down is viewed as a “stick to
beat you with” if anything goes wrong or policy is not implemented correctly. Those
who deliberately non-comply or are non-compliant due to incorrect interpretation
of the document, and if there is an issue, feel the policy’s wrath. So, there is a clear
sense of dictatorship and bureaucracy that affects how the participants work.

“Policy is only ever employed as a stick to beat you with. If you slip up
as an academic, then the policy becomes extremely important” (Michael,
p16)

Their disagreements and inconsistencies in how the policy is developed and imple-
mented causes them to have great personal dissonance, but they negotiate with
that. They decide on policy implementation that is personal to them. Their level of
agreement with all or parts of the policy determines their response. They make it
personal in terms of implementation and its effect on the stakeholders who are the
students and academics. Nevertheless, there is still a sense of forced compliance. If
they do not concede and implement it, then they could be in trouble. So the forced
compliance with the threat of some punishment increases personal dissonance. They
know they should comply, but they may disagree with the policy and believe that
its implementation will unduly affect the stakeholders or the students. As policy is
generally approached in isolation, academics face it in different ways. Other factors
affect their decisions, such as education, experience, academic integrity, and where
they are situated in the organisational structure. The academic is not always totally non-compliant and this resolves dissonances felt as they believe they are invoking the policy to get the best outcome for students. In the organisational structure that is perceived as top-down forced compliance, they gain empowerment through negotiating compliance. They negotiate parts of it, which they feel could have negative connotations for the student.

“It would have been awkward and time-consuming to implement the actual policy, but by not implementing the policy properly, I am implementing it flexibly, but I think I am implementing it thoroughly” (Gearoid, p21)

They take what works best for the student from the policy and implement that. They argue that they are more flexible than non-compliant, and this reduces the tension and personal disagreement. There is a level of non-compliance, explicit or implicit, that causes other gaps in the organisational structure that need to be addressed.

“Policies are one thing. Implementing them is another thing. There are some standard operating procedures, but do we adhere to them? I do not know. I suppose I would say that people are doing their own thing when it comes to policy” (Caroline, p13)

It is evident that the academics do their own thing, and they feel little pressure to conform as they believe they are fair to their students. However, power is apparent, but the sense of empowerment from doing what is best for the students helps them to overcome that. However, this behaviour creates a gap or disconnect between what is written in the policy and what is implemented. There is a personal conflict within the academic community. There is an emotional dissonance felt here amongst the academics, but they are doing what they feel is right, and it allows them to continue what they are doing and resolve the dissonance felt. It empowers them.
“Sometimes, I use my own discretion to resolve stuff. It would have been awkward and time-consuming to implement the actual policy. I may not be implementing it properly but I am implementing it thoroughly” (Peter, p10)

Academics find policy too rigid and too well defined. They are deliberately exploited to suit the case at hand or the students in general. They are implemented for the benefit of the students. Whatever dissonances the academic has with a policy, they overcome them by implementing the policies regardless of whether it is invoked or correctly applied. The academics are under pressure to conform to policy, and they know the power behind policy and the forced nature. They know they are exposed if they are non-compliant. The problem is that certain policies are not working at the coalface. According to academics, the policies are non-purposeful and do not represent their day-to-day lives. Academics have a big issue working with policies that are not representative of what is going on. Tensions increase, and this causes conflict.

“It is a box-ticking exercise, and I feel that it serves no worthwhile purpose. It is for management to see and for them to be covered. That is the system. Consultation is a wonderful thing, but the right moment is never here” (Michael, p16)

When it comes to power and constraint, this seems to reduce when there is a culture with a less formal attitude to policy. Some institutions are a ‘little looser’ perhaps when it comes to implementing a policy. Conflicts are reduced when there is a more relaxed culture. There is a correlation between politics and policy and particularly with institutional size and design. In larger institutions, the culture is more political. Policy possibly needs to be more effective in order to sanction these larger entities.

“As we become a larger institution, I fear we will become more political, and policy will be used as a political tool. Academic council will become a political battleground” (Peter, p10)
The academics feel tensions from forced compliance. They reduce this by engaging with the policy and negotiating to do best for the students, but a non-political culture also assisted. They tend to find a situation for implementation that does not involve official sanction. Academics feel that policy is a box-ticking exercise and that they cannot change that. They look at negotiating with the policy. For them it is about taking responsibility for their choices, taking the time to read and interpret the document and this allows them to take ownership of their decisions. These decisions are compounded by an already maxed-out workload, and their time is limited, and implementing a policy needs to be more straightforward.

“You have your day job to do, but a certain time we have no time to get involved with the following of policy. . . . . . the emphasis of our employments is teaching, and we are given the maximum amount of hours teaching as they possibly can which leaves very little room for getting involved at these kind of policies afterward or taking ownership”
(Brian, p6)

Academics do not feel it is their place to question policy. There is always a sense of being in survival mode. They feel policy interpretation is an issue, and if a policy is not clear on how it should be implemented, the student will lose out. They cannot question this, so they make decisions to gain empowerment and allow them to decide how they do their job. Academics increase their level of agreement or consonance with academic policy by prioritising their career regardless of the consequences. They keep their level of dissonances to a minimum as they prioritise their career and maintain academic integrity. These are the next steps in the basic psychological processes in resolving their issues with policy and will be discussed in the next section.


5.7 Sub-core category - Prioritising career

The second phase in the theory of personalising dissonance is how the academics overcome their concerns with a policy through the process of prioritising career. It is at this point that they have to make a decision on how they will implement the policy. They are faced with a dilemma: implement it correctly or implement it flexibly. Through the process of prioritising their career they make the decision that they believe to be the correct one or the fairest one. They justify the decisions they make at this juncture as both resolve their concerns and allows them to reach a level of harmony with it. The academics prioritise their careers by becoming accountable for anything that has an effect on the students. They are presented with policy that needs to be implemented and they will have to make a decision on that. Other issues also affect how they approach the implementation of the policy. These include knowledge of policy, academic experience, and the consequences of their decisions. When faced with a policy that they do not understand or disagree with and feel has no relevance, the academics decide how they will address it. These decisions are based on awareness, knowledge, experiences, position, and academic integrity. What motivates the academic to implement the policy is either career and their relationship with the students and what they believe is the best outcome for the student and themselves. However, every decision or action they take has a consequence. Implementing the policy correctly helps improve academic integrity. It is seen as a reward for those more career-oriented academics or those whose career path is to move up the institute’s hierarchy. Figure 5.8 illustrates how they help to personalise dissonances through prioritising their career.
5.7.1 Prioritising career - being Accountable

Academics become aware of policy, negotiate the policy’s meaning, and resolve their conflicts and concerns by personalising dissonances with policy. They believe they are making fateful decisions for the students. Being accountable is related to the academics' planned behaviours and how they plan their approach to policy by predicting the outcomes of each decision they make. Figure 5.9 illustrates the sub-processes in how they become accountable in prioritising their career. The outcomes are consequences and rewards for compliance. Moreover, non-compliance affects them personally and professionally. Accountability is where the academics feel a sense of obligation to justify what they do, they are responsible, and they are answerable for their actions. Nevertheless, there is an issue around the academic feeling that they are not obliged to read the policies. There is no one telling them to read them, but if they do not read them and an issue arose, they are forced to make themselves aware, and they are answerable. For every action an academic makes, there is a significant outcome either negative or positive. Concerning theoretical coding, these are consequences. There are some planning or considerations in how they behave. They consider the outcomes of their behaviour personally and professionally, and personal beliefs shape their behaviour in what they do for the students and them-
selves. There is power behind policy as well as a necessity to be aware of the policy and to implement it correctly. The outcomes of implementation affect the stakeholders (students and academics). There is planned behaviour with personal career and stakeholder involvement.

Another factor that influences behaviour is organisational culture and structure. Academics make decisions on policy and then at exam boards or other academic boards their decisions are directed or judged by someone higher up in the organisational structure who has more power than them. Their behaviours are influenced by events at these boards, some decisions are made that go against their beliefs. There is also a culture of a policy being developed due to an event occurring where there is a lack of policy, this causes concern also. These reactionary policies and current policies that are not working for the students or staff result in non-compliance.

“I also have a concern about accountability. There’s no culture for that at the moment. My usual policy is finding them and then getting a summary and so that is following policy” (Mark, p3)

Structure and culture affect how the policy is being interpreted and implemented.
The size of the institute is also a factor.

“When you are trying to get harmonisation between people who have always done it one way, that will be a challenge. . . you have three different cultures and different ideologies, or three different perspectives. the problem is they are all in opposition in the background” (Laura, p19)

There is a culture of policy implementation decisions being taken away from the academic or a decision being made at a college or exam board that is non-compliant with policy and affects their behaviour and how they react. This forced policy affects their behaviour. They are aware of what could happen to the student as a result of the way the policy is implemented and its effect on their integrity. Some readily are non-compliant because they feel the policy is non-purposeful.

“There is two sides, the college and the rule book. A policy where a student can progress carrying is failing the students. So this policy not working for the students’ either” (Karen, p22)

These issues are institutional concerns rather than personal and are made at the management level and writer level and out of their control. Gaps between what is written in the policy and what is implemented occurs where bureaucracy out-weighs their beliefs. The academics’ voices are not being heard. Their planned behaviours focus on the policy purpose and its outcomes on the students. Those that apply the policies correctly are compliant and career orientated. Their planned behaviour is a strategic career move. They feel accountable for their institution and their career. There is consideration to be accountable to themselves, their institution, and the students. In regards to the planning of behaviour, one must first interpret the policy. At this part of the process they have resolved conflict to reach the point where they are now ready to implement it or plan how they will implement it. Before they plan their behaviour, they assess the outcomes. They evaluate possible outcomes after the policy has been implemented. They evaluate these based on previous experiences
of policy implementation. Some feel that evaluation should happen more often and that it should be a combined effort.

“Some people can be quite opinionated when it comes to evaluation of policy, and you need to be careful whom you are or have sitting around that table” (Paula, p18)

All of this planning behaviour, assessing the outcomes of their behaviour, and evaluating their behaviour indicate that academics become accountable for their actions based on outcomes and behaviours and maintaining academic integrity. The planning of the behaviour is around their beliefs, and what they are doing and what they believe they are doing is right. If it is a personal belief, their behaviour is influenced by it. They also plan their behaviour around positive and negative outcomes from previous policy implementation. What are the outcomes of previous compliance and non-compliance with policy.

“So you know, the policy is there. It needs to be in a language that everyone can understand so that people can ... they need to know where it is first of all. . . even how to read it, how to understand it, maybe learn from policies that are there now and considering that this one really wasn’t implemented we need to figure this out, why it wasn’t, interpreted” (Cora, p15)

Academics feel there is a reward if they are aware and comply and implement policy correctly because it has an effect on their career.

“I made it my business to, to study all of the national policy documents inside out and so like, you know, I will keep myself up to date with that, and now with the position, I am in now, and I would keep myself up-skilled all of the time. I put much work into that” (Paula, p18)

For others, they invoke the policy to best suit the student. Being aware of consequences and being accountable is how academics resolve their issue with the interpretation and implementation of policy within their organisations. Academic
confidence in their decisions’ expected outcomes formed the behaviour patterns in resolving their policy concerns. With policy passion and academic integrity, some academics believe that their occupation is a vocational one and that their whole purpose is to be there for the students. There is much passion in discussing how policies are developed and implemented and how they affect the students. This informs their behaviour and how they are accountable. Being accountable through planning behaviour and evaluating the outcomes of their behaviour, academics consider career and position within the institution in the construction of intentions to comply with the policies. Hazelkorn (2018) mentions that concepts of accountability and transparency have taken center stage in public and policy discourse and that there is “an emphasis on being responsive and answerable as well as being straightforward and truthful for one’s actions” (pg.427). Their aim in resolving the concern of policy implementation in the theory of personalising dissonance involves being accountable for their actions that allows them to make the right decision and is discussed in the next section.

5.7.2 Prioritising career - making fateful decisions

When faced with the policy, academics are often overwhelmed with concerns on interpretation and implementation. Through the process of personalising dissonance, they overcome their concerns. They resolve personal conflicts they have with policies and make them personal. They make their position within the organisation and their career, where they make policy, its development and implementation a priority. Figure 5.10 illustrates the sub-processes in how they make fateful decisions in prioritising their career. For every decision an academic makes, there is a consequence. From the perspective of policy, they first decide on interpretation and the ability to implement it. The objectives of the policy are also a concern that results in conflict. They resolve their concerns by becoming aware, negotiating, collective agreement and they gain empowerment through all those processes when they personalise their dissonances with policy. They need to make decisions on how to implement or re-
spond to policy and every decision has a consequence. As discussed, academics feel forced compliance relating to the power behind policy. They are aware of the consequences of non-compliance on their career. There is knowing and believing that non-compliance is wrong, but some still engage in that behaviour.

“The problem at the moment is not everyone knows the policy documents. They need to point you in the direction of what to do. But staff that do their own policies, well that’s non-policy. So compliance is a massive issue” (Conor, p17)

The academics seek support from colleagues when there is less awareness and knowledge of policy. They prioritise their career by making a shared decision with a colleague that best suits them and the student. These shared decisions allow them to accept influence from their trusted colleagues and decide how they should address the policy. There is conflict around people doing their own thing and there is a concern amongst academics with others behaviour with policy.

“When you have policies that do not address how it is going to be implemented across the board you can expect some level of inadequacy with
the implementation of policy. Every academic is an individual with their own mind” (Luke, p11)

These varied decisions around policy increase the tension. They are concerned about this inconsistency in implementation that results in policy tension.

“Often the intention behind a policy is well-meaning. It’s not always implemented that way, if implemented it all. Quite an amount of plagiarism policy for example, that takes place in the institution, is tackled locally by academics in a very informal and not very rigorous manner. Why? It’s poorly written or ramifications such as workload, professional standing or relationship with a student can be affected” (Peter, p10)

If the decision to implement the policy is agreed on with a colleague, they feel they are doing what is best. By sharing decisions and knowledge, the tension is reduced. Table 5.4 illustrates the tensions and the effects of shared and varied decisions. This leads to a sense of conformity, alternatively, and increased levels of personal consonance. The academics make decisions based on perceptions of what the outcomes will be. If they implement the policy regardless of their disagreement, they accept the influence of power and authority to implement it correctly. They believe what they were doing is right as they believe they are prioritising their career. Furthermore, they may have to implement a policy that does not work for the student, but they do so because they know the policy is there, it is a rule, and they want to be seen to be doing what was right.

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Table 5.4: Tensions with varied and shared decisions
“Policy is to support and do a self-check to see that academics are doing their job correctly. They are a tool for support... academics should know it and they should keep themselves informed about those policies” (Paula, p18)

Even in the event of an outcome being a negative one, they feel it is in the student’s best interest and in some way it is protecting them. The academics aim to do their best for the students by educating and teaching them to achieve the desired graduate outcomes. Fateful decisions are made mostly at exam and college boards where the outcomes affect the student. They perceive what they are doing is the best outcome as it is how the policy stated it. This could be passing a student or failing a student at an exam board. These fateful decisions have an impact on the stakeholders and the students. However, some policies do not work for the students, and the staff are aware of that.

“A policy where the students can progress carrying credits is failing the students” (Gearoid, p21)

Some of the academics feel these policies are not working or non-purposeful. Consequently, this creates concerns for the academics because they want to do the best for the students as well as being a good academic, they want to be fair and be transparent and comply. Regardless of the sources of influence, there are fateful and non-fateful decisions. Either way every decision that they make will have a consequence. An outcome of a decision on how a policy is implemented that has a negative outcome for a student could be a positive for the academic. They will be seen as being compliant. If they approach the policy from a more lenient perspective, the outcome for the student will be positive but negative from a compliance perspective for the academic. This is the dilemma they face but they justify their choices to maintain academic integrity that is part of the process of how they overcame their concerns and will be discussed further in the next section.
5.7.3 Prioritising career - maintaining integrity

The participants’ main concern in this study is how they respond to and implement academic policy within their institutions. They are presented with policies that they may or may not be aware of, may or may not have agreement with or are forced to implement. The tensions and frustrations that result from this leads to an increased level of personal dissonance for academics. The inconsistencies in how the policy is implemented within the institute is also a great concern for them. How they resolve this is through personalising their dissonances they have through prioritising their career by maintaining integrity. Figure 5.11 illustrates the sub-processes in how they maintain integrity in prioritising their career. Integrity

![Diagram](image)

Figure 5.11: Prioritising career - maintaining integrity

is adherence to moral and ethical principles especially truth-telling, honesty and fairness (McFall, 1987). Morality is based on the fundamentals of correct conduct. Academic integrity ensures that the academic is honest and withholds strong ethical practices and honesty within their field. Integrity is a personal trait that can exert a powerful influence in any setting. Any threat to integrity may be potentially harmful to academics and students. Policy discourse is primarily legalese yet the academics make personal choices on implementing them. The academics’ choices determine how they maintain their integrity when implementing policy as every decision or
choice they make has a consequence. Their decisions have another dimension to them based on knowledge of policy or lack thereof and knowledge sharing amongst the academics. The academics’ experience, the time within the organisation, and knowledge of policy also determines how they approach implementation. A lack of knowledge and the length of time they are in an academic position has an impact on their decisions. There are references to their career paths and work-life balance made by the academic’s that policy’s impact is related to where one is in their career or teaching. Figure 5.12 illustrates the career path and how it relates to knowledge sharing.

Figure 5.12: Career knowledge continuum

“With regards to organisational culture and structure, my concern is my work-life balance and my career path” (Paula, p18)

For instance, an academic with a 20-year career has more policy experience through knowledge shared and acquired knowledge. However, they could share policy knowledge they have acquired thus maintaining ethical and moral principles and practices.

“The head of the department was not familiar with the policy either. At the moment, we are in opposing standards. If you work with them, there is a shared understanding. This is the way we should be looking at this” (Mark, p3)
Often, references to non-compliance are about a lack of knowledge or awareness of the policy’s existence. Policy knowledge is a familiarity gained by sight, experience, or education of how policy should be implemented.

“Policies do not allow you to use your initiative. Interpretation for younger academics is difficult as well. There should be training for them” (Karen, p22)

When academics enter their academic career they may have had no experience of policy. What causes tension is when a policy is needed, and they are unaware of them particularly at exam boards or other college boards. They then need to ask a colleague for advice.

“There are lots of policies that are not well implemented. This comes down to a couple of things. One, the individual is not making themselves aware, or two, cultural issues around the policy” (Peter, p10)

The issue with knowledge and policy is that staff are not necessarily aware of the policies when they start at the institutions. If they become aware, some are generally not good at reading them. There is a feeling that they are thrown in at the deep end when it comes to policy. There is a feeling of a lack of education around them, their existence, and their implementation. The inexperienced academic possibly has less interest in policy or less engagement with policy. Policies exist, there is some familiarity, but the knowledge is not intentionally being shared. The new academic staff are less interested or aware of policy. Until an event occurs, and they are presented with or imposed upon with a policy knowledge sharing becomes essential for them. Over time and with experience gained and knowledge acquired through experiences or knowledge sharing, the academics become more aware of policy meaning and power. As argued previously, social communication reduces dissonances. Those with more knowledge and academic experiences are more likely to implement policy correctly to maintain integrity and prioritise their careers. Some are more flexible in their implementation but believe they are maintaining a level of
integrity as they are putting the students first. This increases their consonance with policy enactment. With that level of academic clarity, they are prioritising their position as academics in the institution. So knowledge sharing reduces the level of dissonance around policy implementation and helps the academic reach a level of harmony. Through the processing of knowing what they are doing to benefit their career or the outcomes for the students helps them resolve their concerns. They are harmonising cognition. The academics concern with policy implementation focuses on how it will ultimately affect them [academic] and the students. There is a sense that they are being dictated to and that they are forced to implement policies that have a negative effect on the students. The academics understood that there are rules and regulations, but they are affected by them when they are very regimental. If implementation affects the students, there is tension. They feel they have no voice to change these policies. The decisions they make directly affect their integrity as academics and their students, so they feel that any disagreement with the policy will cause an issue. Even in the presence of forced-compliance or power, the academics make choices. They make personal and professional choices that best suit them and the student’s or stakeholders. The choices are either to inform their academic career or for the stakeholder’s benefit.

“I had to direct a student in what to do and how to make a complaint. . . The policy had to be presented to the student and this frustrated the student and that was the only way to resolve the issue” (Karen, p22)

This allows the academic to have control and reduce the tensions felt. The academic is neutral when faced with a policy, and they make decisions to move to a level of conformity to reduce the disagreement felt.

Compliance for conformity increases levels of consonance for them and allows them to reach a level of harmony in the belief that they maintain integrity and allows them to prioritise their careers. Policy enactment allows them to conform to the policy and organisation’s beliefs to benefit their career.
“you should be looking at your CV and saying should I want to progress in my future career . . . what am I going to show that I contributed to at school or college or institution level” (Paula, p18)

There is personal and professional dissonance that could also be described as public and private as illustrated in figure 5.13. What the academics do in public at times goes against how they feel privately thus increasing personal tension. This is particularly evident when power is exerted through forced compliance.

“We are all adults and expected to implement them correctly. We learned a lot through chats in the corridor on how to implement policy, it’s the black-and-whiteness of a policy document that has to be legally binding, and the practice on the ground when dealing with students who are human beings, sometimes the answer is ignoring policy and hope that you are doing things right” (Jane, p7)

It is about the disagreement with the policy, yet they implement it even though they know that it is disadvantageous to the student or negatively affects them. It is a fateful decision. There is public compliance without a personal acceptance that can lead to tensions and frustrations and an increased level of dissonance. They want acknowledgement for doing the right thing even if their public behaviour does not match their personal belief. They reach a level of personal harmony with their decisions. They harmonise what they are doing by believing that they are implementing the policy to best suit the student.
“Let’s just keep doing what we were doing”

Cognitive dissonance is where an academic makes a decision but is also aware of an alternative option. There are choices, to comply or not. What about the academics who disagree with the policy yet comply with the policy against their beliefs? They are reducing their levels of consonance and increasing dissonance, thus reducing their cognitive dissonance. There is no consistency between what they know is right and what they do, but they increase their personal consonance by believing what they do is fair. They reach a level of conformity or harmony.

“The plagiarism doc is a huge issue. They are interpreted depending on the cases that come in front of you; you do not get a consistency of interpretation” (Karen, p22)

Academic integrity means being honest with strong ethical and moral practices. A robust and ethical practice could be the academic sharing knowledge. The academic accepts the knowledge, interprets it, and does the right thing by the student or by themselves. Sharing knowledge allows them to negotiate the policy so that they can decide on implementation. The decision will have benefits and consequences, but that will reduce personal dissonances and maintain academic integrity. This, in turn, will allow them to prioritise their career. By accepting and sharing the knowledge, they reach a level of harmony with knowing what they do is moral and fair. Academic integrity is ensuring that the academic is honest and withholds a robust and ethical practice. The result of non-ethical practices is problematic for professional relationships. The academic wants to maintain good relationships within the institutions and sharing knowledge bridges these gaps or disconnects between top-level management or policy writers and the academics and stakeholders. Sharing knowledge works both ways and helps when there are tensions and conflicts. What causes tensions with policy is the interpretation, implementation and objectives of the policy. Sharing knowledge can also help to reduce the implementation gaps or disconnects, which speeds up resolving the problem and is discussed further in the
next section.

## 5.8 Sub-core category - Bridging gaps

The challenge for academics is reaching a level of harmony with the policy. Academics will make themselves aware of the policy because they see it as a legitimate career choice. By becoming aware of these policies and implementing them as they are written, reduces the disconnect within the organisation and tensions caused from a fear of non-compliance. They may not feel obliged to do this, but they do it as a sense of duty. Academics view policy as a constraint. They feel they are too rigid or too well defined. As a result, they are deliberately exploited which results in non-compliance. This is justified as it is perceived to benefit the students. Academics either agree or disagree with the policy. The decisions are personal but also based on their levels of knowledge of the policy, time in the institution, and experience. What also affects their decisions are education, career, and position. From a management perspective those academics that have more senior roles such as senior lecturers and heads of departments, they have issues pre and some post their new positions. They have problems with process and some have problems with their voices not being heard in policy development. They are still the middle men in the process as there

![Figure 5.14: Personalising dissonance - bridging Gaps](image)
are those higher in the system that have more control. Academics that move into senior management positions believe that getting involved with policy gives them a voice to air their concerns with how policy is implemented. They resolve their issues in the third phase of the theory by getting involved in the development of policy. The higher up in the organisation they are, the more political they become. They also have more time to become aware of the policy and its implications. The level of agreement or disagreement affects the gaps and disconnects that are happening between the top-level management and the lower levels of the organisational structures illustrated in figure 5.15.

![Institutional hierarchical diagram](image)

Figure 5.15: Institutional hierarchical diagram

This is where the academics position themselves where they feel powerless. “In practice, you are talking about certain people in the room who have got way more power than everyone else”. They therefore have more influence on it, and are making biased decisions at times. The academics feel that the institutional structure is causing the gaps and disconnects that causes concerns and tensions for them. Furthermore, they position themselves and the students as the final stakeholders in the structure. If the gap is small, they have a higher level of consonance and conformity, agreement with policy, and a lower level of disagreement. However, when the
gap is large, there is a higher level of tension and disagreement. When academics move within the organisations to a higher academic position they hold a wealth of policy implementation experience. They are not obliged to get involved with policy development, but they do so as they are passionate about it. Doing this bridges the gap and gives the academics their voices that are lost in the disconnect, which helps resolve their disagreements. In the final phase of the theory the academics resolve their concerns by seizing opportunity, exerting influence and strengthening their voices that help bridge these gaps and are discussed in the next section.

5.8.1 Bridging gaps - seizing opportunity

According to academics, many policies are ill-considered during the actual development stage, leading to a deliberate lack of interest. Some academics said that there was:

“No passion for the policy discussions at the academic council and policies that are put through are not given enough consideration” (Martina, p20)

Apart from the development of policies, there is also inconsistencies amongst the
academics in how they are implemented. There is a passion from an academic perspective in how policies are developed and how they will affect them. They believe that there is a lack of attention to policy development and academics find this quite frustrating as they are the implementers of academic policy.

“I feel there is a disconnect between what is in the policy document and what is happening on the ground. And therefore, on the ground level, at the coal face, it’s not working.” (Mary, p8)

How academic policy is developed is a significant concern as well as interpretation. According to Glaser (1978), if two core concerns emerge in the data, one is left for a separate study, a second grounded theory, or subsumed into the developing theory. Through writing the concepts, constant comparison, and multiple sorts through to write up the theory, what is evident is that academics who have a more senior position had concerns with policy and were now in a position to rectify their issues with them. They were eager to get involved in policy development. They had progressed to a higher position within the institute. They had moved up the organisational structure and used this opportunity to get involved with policy development. However, they still refer to those in a higher position who are also involved with writing policy as having power over them. These academics are high achievers who also have an issue with policy and resolve their concerns by voicing their concerns where they might be heard.

“If you never change anything, you are always going to have that kind of firefighting in survival mode” (James, p5)

They believe they could bring something to the table concerning the development of policy. Policy development has a relevant place in the theory by being integral in bridging gaps between what is written and what is practiced. Academics who are determined to get involved in the writing of policy have a passion for policy. They believe there is no passion for policy at the top, and policy is put through academic
boards without adequate consideration. They feel there is not much consideration into the development of policies, which causes concern.

“Somebody has to come in, I think, policy by policy and say ‘this is how we are going to implement this policy or add this policy or whatever.’ It all goes back to ownership” (James, p5)

The problem with policy development is that academics find it hard to implement and interpret them. There are tensions and frustrations around that, and how the academics resolve this is through participation in the process of policy development.

“You should be looking at your CV and saying should I want to progress in my future career. I am going to show that I contributed at school or college or institution level and that’s why it is important to contribute to these policies” (Paula, p18)

As discussed, some academics are compliant with the policy on the ground to prioritise their career. Those academics who progress in the system move up a position in their career and have a wealth of knowledge that they can share. They are also aware of what is happening around non-compliance and interpretation issues and concerns.

“Yeah, you have to be careful with policies, you have to approach development from the point of view that this is a supportive policy, to help you do your job better” (Brian, p6)

Some academics who progress in their career to a more senior role, for example, senior lecturer or head of a department, are eager to get involved in policy development. They are willing to get involved with policies that are not working. There is evidence of a continued knowledge sharing and through this knowledge sharing, there is a belief that gaps within the structure reduce. These academics are contributors to bridging the gap between the source of the conflict and the conflicted.
“I would get involved. I am wary of writing policies that do not have democratic representation in terms of their creation” (Peter, p10)

By participating in the development and bringing their experiences to the table, they emancipate themselves and regain their power.

“As employees, we are empowered to work in a system governed by policy, but we are not emancipated to change or challenge, that is, if you have a group of staff who want to change policy” (Peter, p10)

Forced compliance and interpretation issues increase the tensions and the level of dissonance. They increase the gap between the ground level, where the academics situate themselves and the higher-level management or policy writers. By progressing and advancing, they use their position to influence policy development and use the opportunity to exert an influence that contributes to bridging the gaps that non-purposeful policies shape.

### 5.8.2 Bridging gaps - exerting influence

![Diagram](image)

Figure 5.17: Bridging gaps - exerting influence

Academics that progress to a higher position in the institute are in a position with added power, and that position is more formal. The academics that are in those
positions have a passion for policy and get involved in policy development. They have experienced issues with policy. They bring acquired knowledge to the institution’s top echelons to have academic voices heard and be involved in developing and evaluating policy. The higher the position, the more influence they could leverage. The process of sharing knowledge is contributing to bridging the gaps.

“For me as a chair, is still being at the coal face, but also being able to sit at the round table [top develop a policy]. You are aware. . . you go up in the chain, or you stay where you are” (Conor, p17)

Moving up within an institution means attitudes are more formal with more authority. The heads of the departments and similar influencers at higher levels are aware of policy issues and are aware of the importance of compliance for staff and students. Academic positions inform policy awareness. Furthermore, academics at the lower end of the organisational structure do not feel encouraged to be aware. However, if they need training or professional development, it is available to them.

“But, people are very unsure about how to implement the policies, and they look for guidance from a manager asking. “What are the rules? Am I breaking any rules?” There was a gap, I suppose. A gap in operations, to a certain extent because school level can be entirely operational, as opposed to policy level” (Peter, p10)

There is an awareness of making time for staff training on a professional development level, even though making the time to do this is also an issue. Making time to get involved with professional development is on the heads of department to keep academics up to date on policy and practice.

“What, I am hearing, because I think this is of huge importance in terms of going back to solving some of the problems and driving accountability because we all know things are going on that should not be going on, and people are not being held to account, and, from my experience,
you can hold to account in a professional way to having this PDP’s in place” (Tadgh, p1)

Within the institutions, staff have what is known as personal and professional development (PDP) training to get educated and up-to-date in various fields. The head of the department sanctions this, but it takes time, and they are supposed to happen once a year. Management have to make time to implement these for all academics, but academics can also request training if needed. The concern is that academics themselves feel powerless when it comes to making time to improve.

“I think most people would throw their hands up and say ‘I have done a bad job here,’ I would love the opportunity to do better. I do not know how to do better. I would love someone to tell me to, but I do not have time to find out how to do better, you know” (Brian, p6)

“This is to support them as it is here to promote and do a self-check to see that they are doing their job correctly. They are a tool for support. I have been reading and fed into policy documents for a long time. You have to engage with staff development” (Paula, p18)

The practices of knowledge acquisition help in bridging the institutional gap or disconnect that policy causes. This professional development practice allows the academics to further their knowledge sharing practices, exert influence on policy, and bridge the gaps.

“So, if you took the same sort of view. Let us say, for example, a senior person appointed in the college whose responsible for the teaching and learning process or the assessment process, and that that person could act as the evangelist for improvement around that and enthuse people about it, and get people bought into it, and then start driving improvement” (Tadgh, p1)
“Everyone is busy, but if you can explain the importance of it and why we have to have it and do we have to stand over it. I would have put much time into policy it was about guidance to progress the student. It is a working document that people can contribute to” (Paula, p18)

The students are also posited at the bottom of the organisational structure. Involving students who are also stakeholders is beyond the remit of this research but will be discussed in the recommendations section of this thesis as a future discussion on the comparison of staff and student perspectives on policy development. Academics struggle with organisational structure, which creates a divide between the writers of the policies and the implementers. Academics move to become influencers, and they get their voices heard. They do this by sharing the knowledge they have acquired on the ground. Through the processes of movement and exerting influence, they strengthen their voices that they perceived to be lost in the disconnect and closes the gaps.

“When you are trying to get harmonisation between people who have always done it one way, that is a challenge. What is important is that everyone has an opportunity to have their voice heard. I say to get people to talk about current problems instead of current strengths when developing the policies. It is the rule of change management, allowing people the opportunity to talk” (Laura, p19)
5.8.3 Bridging gaps - strengthening voices

What is evident and is addressed in how they resolve conflict is that there is forced compliance and a sense of bureaucracy and power that influences how the academics respond to policy. The organisational structure and the position of the actors within the study are discussed. It is mentioned alongside power and forced compliance within the organisation and illustrates the basic social structural process that predisposes the psychological processes in how the actors navigate policy tensions to overcome them. Academics think that policy comes from a position of power. The organisational structure is viewed as a catalyst to this as they discuss top-down structures and institutional size and power.

“In practice, you’re really talking about certain people in the room who have got way more power than everyone else and therefore more influence on it[policy development]” (Aisling, p4)

A core concern is power and policy discourse and that the mechanisms to produce policies are not as democratic as they should be.

“That Policy was very much a window dressing event. It was complicated, compiled, and sent back. Often the originators of policies will
send it to a higher place within the institution, and then it disappears into a black hole. I found that frustrating” (Peter, p10)

Overall academics describe policy as a window dressing event or as a tick-boxing exercise, and sometimes there for the show with no real purpose. Non-purposeful policies exist and academics sense is that they are forced into implementation of them.

“I very much believe it is a political environment and political struggle, who owns contributes or develops. I get the shivers when I hear it that, though, as it is a box-ticking process. I have witnessed some of these consultations, and some people’s views are not taken on board”(Peter, p10)

The academics considerations focus on the outcomes of their decisions on the way they implement the policy. They believe non-compliance is a bargain between the [non-purposeful] policy and what they believe to be right.

“Policy is not being implemented correctly. It has been put through by someone who knew their math but not the process. I spoke up [at an exam board] even though it was not a good thing to be popular for doing that”(Gearoid, p21)

Furthermore, academics believe that the writers hold power, and that power is felt when something happens, and the policy needed to be put into practice. In the event it is not, it is then used as a punishment tool. The policy is the punishment as it can be held against them if not used correctly. A consequence of this bureaucratic power is sensed disconnect and lost voice. Speaking up at these boards for the students’ benefit, they attempt to get their voices out there and be heard but they believe it is not in their best interest to do so.

“I have quite strong relationships with people in registration, and I make it my business to know people as that is how you get things done. We
are not trying to play the system or go outside policy and procedures.

We are just trying to support the student” (Paula, p18)

What causes the academics’ tension is how they were empowered to implement the policy but were not free to make changes to the policy. They believe they have no freedom of speech on how these policies are being developed, and their views are not taken on board. By getting involved in the development of policy, though, they can contribute. Academics make decisions when faced with a policy that needs to be implemented. They engage and implement it or invoke it as they see fit and this helps them to reduce personal dissonance regardless of non-compliance. This type of behaviour increases the gap. Disagreement with policy creates disconnects in the organisational structure, a gap between college boards and academics. Academics sense that they are not represented on these boards and that further compounds the disconnect. They feel that they have no voice or their voices are not being listened to.

“What we do is we come up with a watered-down ambiguous approach, and it allows for interpretations that causes conflict. We need to adhere to the policy. If that document becomes diluted down, then the disconnect will get worse” (Matthew, p2)

Personal emotional dissonance reinforce the gap to remain, whereas a negotiation or making implementation decisions reduces it. Academics who get involved with policy have a voice and can contribute and help to change them to reduce the disconnect. This contribution reduces dissonance as they are actively involved in the development of them. Speaking out and getting involved in the development helps to reduce the disconnect by resolving the stakeholders’ issues that cause the tension in the first place. By moving within the organisational structure and to a higher position, they claim back the power they feel they do not have and are acquiring autonomy in policy involvement.

“Sometimes bureaucracy forgets the practical. Loudest voices are always
heard” (Karen, p21)

Some have more experience than others and get involved. They use their position of power and knowledge to influence policy development. At the bottom of the organisational structure, the academics feel powerless, and they feel have have no voice.

“I got the impression that my voice was not being heard because it was not a mainstream voice. What is important is that everyone has an opportunity to have their voice heard” (Michael, p16)

They have no voice for themselves or students when it comes to policy. Part of that movement within the organisation allows them to become more policy orientated. It gives them a voice that allows them to reconcile their concerns. It is their voice that emanates from personal experiences.

“I would get involved with policy development if all of my criticisms were addressed. It’s normally who shouts the loudest when it comes to policy” (Karen, p22)

According to one participant, “writers of policy had been out of the system a long time” and are less aware of what was happening on the ground. The academics who moved up or progress want to have their voices heard. They want to become influencers of policy. They have the desire and the passion to get involved. Some academics believe their career is vocational and some are very student centered. Nevertheless, at college boards where they represent the students and themselves, policy becomes a political battleground.

“There is a standoff between the head or heads of the department and lecturers, and if these standoffs go ahead, then the head normally wins, or the heads of department normally wins. He had the power at exam boards that were very formalistic” (Gearoid, p21)
There is passion around policy and working in isolated environments where the students are the stakeholders. There are concerns about their lost voices. The students’ voices are lost in turn. There is a feeling that they are at the bottom of the institutional hierarchy, and they are isolated and not being heard. Their voices are lost when it comes to the outcomes of policy on the students and themselves. The lost voices contribute to the disconnect between actors within the institutions. They feel that at some college boards their voices are not being heard.

“Policy lies behind student experience on the ground. It is a cart before the horse scenario. The ultimate stakeholders should be the students. We should hear their voice concerning policy development. We could and should engage with students more” (John, p9)

There is a disconnect between the communication from the top of the organisational structure to the bottom. By invoking the policy for the benefit of the student, the academic contributes to bridging the disconnect.

“I would have adhered to the policy to placement and postgraduate student’s applications but in terms of implementation, sometimes the issue for me is the student’s voice is not heard” (John, p9)

By continuing to do what they do to survive policy per se, academics build the bridges between the stakeholders and the writers at the top. Their actions on policy are influenced by the outcomes on students.

“I remember having the most enraging moment in an exam board for me. I had done something with student’s results the previous year and the year before that. I had announced it and said it out loud at the exam board. So, the next year, the same thing came up again, and I would do the same thing. Furthermore, someone said, “No, you cannot do that?” . . . .my interpretation of it was the document was suggesting a thing you can do. I could still have done what I was doing, which I profoundly believe was a very fair thing” (Tadgh, p1)
There is no culture of encouraging the correct implementation of policy within the institutes. The academics either make themselves aware or are made aware through some event occurring that needs policy intervention. When there are no consequences and a culture of no consequences, they can reach a level of dissonance through their decision to invoke, comply or not comply. However, academics do what they have to, to resolve conflict, prioritise their careers, and help to contribute to bridging policy gaps within the organisation. Some academics are openly policy-driven and put themselves in a position to influence the development.

“I am unashamedly policy-driven, and I do think we need policies, you do not want to be making decisions without having the back-up of a policy. The policy is there to protect and to guide” (Laura, p19)

Within the organisational structure, some academics seek opportunity through mobility within the organisation. Furthermore, by influencing policy, they regain their voice. They acquire opportunities to exert influence, and that allows them to reclaim their voice.

“My experiences of top-down with policy development where it affects your day-to-day life is If you engage people and say,” Let us design this the best we can,” it can take time, it can be arduous, but you will come out with something that people can buy into and feel that their voices can be heard” (Mary, p8)

In order to contribute to policies time is a factor. The academics have an already busy schedule, and to put a concerted effort into policy, they have to put in the time to do this.

“The emphasis of our employments is teaching, and we are given the maximum amount of hours teaching as they possibly can, and that is how they equate our workload. Effectively it is how many hours you teach, which leaves very little room for getting involved at these kinds of policies afterward, or taking ownership” (Brian, p9)
“If you want good policies you need to give them time. Concerning the development of policy I can show that I contributed at a school level, at a college level and at an institute level” (Paula, p18)

Everything they do is a move towards bridging gaps to reach a level of harmony. Not only are they bridging a knowledge gap, but they are also bridging the gaps in the organisational unit by speaking out, and by speaking out, they regain autonomy. According to Glaser “while dimensions divide up the whole, types indicate a variation in the whole, based on a combination of categories” (Glaser, 1978. Pg.75). During the data gathering process and through coding and constant sorting that involved constant comparison and sorting of the concepts and categories, there is an apparent emergence of an actor type or academic type and how they fit in at certain parts of the process. These are described and discussed in the next section.

5.9 A typology of academic emerges

Academics have similar underlying issues and concerns and an awareness of others’ issues and concerns with policy development and interpretation. However, in personalising dissonance, some are overcoming their concerns at different phases in the process. There are three different types of academics or actors within the organisation. There are ‘engagers, ‘invokers’, and the ‘closed aways’. Some engage in implementing correctly, some engage but can sway between implementing or invoking, and some are closed away and keep to themselves and ‘do their own thing’. Each of these actors resolve their concerns at some stage. Figure 5.19 illustrates the types of academics and their positions in an organisational hierarchical structure.

Table 5.5 provides an overview of the phases in the theory and illustrates the systematic classification of types of actors according to commonalities in how they overcome their concerns and their integration in the phases in the process of personalising dissonance theory.
5.9.1 Engagers

These engagers are academics that at some stage attempt to move up within the organisation if they have not already, and they are very enthusiastic about getting involved and contributing to policy. They comply with the policy as they know policy, have experience and academic integrity.

“You are aware [of policy] . . . You still commit to your students but at some point, you go up in the chain”

Negative consequences are few for the engagers as they tend to be significantly policy aware. They do implement the policy as it is written and deal with any issues later on. Every decision they make with policy is because they are high achievers. They have a passion for policy and they have a passion for the correct outcome of implementation. In theory, they are face issues just like everyone else, but they seem to be academics that are proactive and get straight in and got involved. They resolve concerns efficiently. Given their position, they are more likely to resolve concerns in the latter stages of bridging gaps and are actively involved in policy development.

5.9.2 Invokers

The invokers selectively implement policy to the best of their ability and for the best outcome for the students’ even if it is considered non-compliant. They are aware of
Table 5.5: Academic typology classification table

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non-compliance and that at some stage that the power of the policy could be used against them. However, they reduce their dissonances with policy by implementing it flexibly. The invokers go that step forward and are career-orientated, making a fateful decision that has a better outcome for the students and themselves. They do not get involved in development of policy as their priority is their position as a teacher. They feel that they have no time to get involved in development as they already have a full timetable.

“The emphasis of our employments is teaching, and we are given the maximum amount of hours teaching as they possibly can, and that is how they equate our workload. Effectively it is how many hours you teach, which leaves very little room for getting involved at these kinds of policies afterward, or taking ownership”

Some invokers get involved with policy but struggle or had a bad experience.
“I felt as I contributed and read to the ones that were relevant to me and as my name was on the committee I was expected to attend. I struggled with that. It took much time”

It is also likely that they are not necessarily aware of some policies. They would have to ask a colleague or a senior for advice on interpreting and implementing particular policies. They have to make themselves aware.

“I would consider myself with teaching and assessment orientated. If I advocate for teaching and learning, I cannot quote it [the teaching and learning Policy]. What does that say about the rest of the staff?”

A participant said they would not be inclined to get involved in the future but only if it was a strategic career move.

“I would get involved with policy development in a new institution if it complimented my job; otherwise, I would not be interested”

5.9.3 Closed aways

The closed aways are unlikely to get caught unless an incident occurs and they then become exposed. The closed aways and the invokers believe they maintain academic integrity by considering the students as they are the stakeholders, even in non-compliance. The closed aways are also unlikely to get involved in the development of policy.

“In my head, maybe Policy and politics go hand in hand. I do not want to go down the political route. I am not comfortable in that space at all. I read policies, and they are legalese, and they are open to interpretation. How you interpret a certain power buff can determine which way you go, and everything. We are still reading the same PDF, but interpreting it differently”
“I teach my class, and I go home. If I run into a problem, then I have to find a policy that solves that problem or ask somebody that knows about that Policy, or whatever it might be. Moreover, any other times, realistically, in my day to day work, I do not look at policies”

There are individual academics who are also more research-focused, and so policy development is not a priority. They could either be an invoker or a closed away as they prioritise research in their career.

“Policy is there, but your day-to-day life is not governed by it unless something goes wrong. My experience with the policies that I have been involved with has been negative, as it is not friendly towards my area or Discipline[research]”

Time is a factor for invokers and closed aways when it comes to getting involved with policy development. Even if they want to, they would need to make time to do so.

“I put in more time than I should to my job at the moment, and in the past, the idea of me looking, or deliberately looking to put in more time for policy development is not going to happen. Students are my priority. There are no thanks for the extra work that you do, and yet your current jobs suffer”

Regardless of the type of academic that emerges in the research, what is obvious is they all have concerns and issues with how they and others respond to policy and the power of policy. They also exert passion around policy issues and are very vocal in reiterating their experiences. Some deal with power in isolation but manage to overcome that for personal reasons that also include the students. Some overcome their issues through doing what is was right for their career and what they feel is the best outcome. Some are obviously more policy-driven and move to a position to develop policy and by doing this they bridge the gaps or disconnect caused by their voices not being heard.
5.10 How Glaser’s theoretical codes aligned with the theory

Awareness of Glaser’s theoretical codes during the process of analysis helps to gain perspectives on what is happening in the data and helps in the development of the framework and alignment of the categories. Table 5.6 illustrates how Glaser’s codes align with the categories and the process. The strategy, consensus, interactive, conceptual, ordering and dimensions families relate to what is happening in the data as described in section 4.5.5. Through continuous sorting and re-sorting more dimensions of the categories can emerge. Dimensions are pieced together through sorting and resorting and help break down the notion into pieces. The theoretical codes that relate or have a best fit to resolving conflict is the strategy family and consensus family. The consensus family is concerned with conflict that is felt amongst the academics with their concerns with academic policies. Regarding policy in academia and organisational structure, policymakers or influencers are at the top and are perceived to have power. There are the stakeholders at the bottom of the organisational structure that agree or disagree with their policies. There are inconsistencies and issues with implementation as a result. Issues that navigate the organisational structure will be discussed in the chapter 6’s discussion on organisational structure. Concerning theoretical codes, what best suits this category is the

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Table 5.6: Glaser’s theoretical codes integrated with personalising dissonance theory
strategy family. Glaser (1978) argues that people strategy people but mechanisms also strategy people. The mechanisms here are the forced compliance of policy and the discourse that causes the participants to feel imposed with policy and forced into implementation. The consequences of that are tensions and frustrations and increased levels of dissonance amongst the participants that needs to be resolved. The theoretical code that has the best fit for how academics prioritise their career is the interactive family. According to Glaser (1978) “rewards lead to motivation to do the rewarded behaviour, but also motivation to work leads to seeking rewards” (pg.76). The rewards are accountability and academic integrity, but there is a sense of reward for academics who work to maintain relationships with colleagues and students alike. The theoretical code that has the best fit to bridging gaps is the ordering or elaboration family. The temporal flow of policy power was from the top down with implementers at the bottom. The power is felt by the academics and results in tensions and frustrations around the interpretation and implementation of policy. The order or flow of decisions is top-down, and is evident in the findings. It is assumed that the flow of influence and power within organisations is down the structure (Glaser,1978). These orderings are linked to conceptual orderings as “people derive motivation for acts from the values of the larger unit” (pg.78). The values and culture also affect how they act within the unit. The flow is down, and they get more conceptual and specific as one moves down the structure and the grievances at the bottom get glossy as they go back up the structure. The grievances around policy felt by the academics is that they have no voice.

5.11 Summary

The aim of the research is to develop a substantive theory that highlights how academics overcome their concerns with policy in Irish higher education. The academics’ core concern is interpreting and implementing policy documents developed within their institutions. The academics negotiate the policies, and several factors
result in their decisions on the implementation of the policies. They feel tension, frustration, and isolation. The causes are varied meanings, time, forced compliance, democracy, and bureaucracy within the organisation. Power and powerlessness are also a concern as academics do not feel they can or have the right to change the policies and this creates gaps or disconnects in the organisational structure. A lack of awareness and knowledge also contributes to the feeling of isolation. There is a sense of battling and firefighting with policy and imbued power behind the policy. The consequences of this are fateful decisions that affect the staff and the students. It also results in a culture of non-compliance and doing what they do regardless of the consequences. The policy’s varied meaning results in a disconnect between what is written in the policy and what is happening on the ground. There is a feeling that voices are not being heard. Another concern is academics do what they want to as there are no immediate consequences until something goes wrong. The academic negotiates the policy and decides what they will do based on their personal beliefs, experience, level of personal dissonance or disagreement, and level of personal consonance or agreement. Academics believe they are making fateful decisions for the students, their career and integrity. Compliance for conformity increases the levels of consonance for them and allows them to reach a level of harmony in the belief that they are maintaining integrity. Academics become aware of the policy, negotiate the policy’s meaning, resolve their conflicts and help resolve their concerns by personalising their dissonance with policy. This allows them to prioritise their career in order to overcome concerns with the policy within their institutions. Policy enactment allows them to conform to the policy and organisation’s beliefs to benefit their career. There are many references to academics doing their own thing when it comes to how they approach policy within their institutions. Studying this concept in the analysis of the participants’ spoken word and conceptualising the codes that emerge becomes an integral part of the theory of personalising dissonance. They are doing their own thing, but that involves many nuances that help them resolve their disagreements or concerns. These include resolving conflict, negotiating the
meanings of policy, collective agreement with colleagues, and making decisions that affect their career and academic integrity and their students’ integrity and helps bridge the gaps in the institutions caused by the policy. There is a typology of actor emerging in the research described as ‘engager’, ‘invoker’, and a ‘closed away’. Through analysis of properties to the person, the academic can be further described. Career, level of education, and awareness have an impact on their policy experiences. Academic experiences and education influence how the academic engages with the policy. It ultimately affects their relationship with the student. What meanders throughout and what also affects their experiences is time and organisational culture. Academics feel that with an already over-loaded timetable and other areas of interest, such as research, they find little time to read and interpret the dense policy documents. Furthermore, they have little or no time to get involved with policy development. This chapter introduces the theory and a detailed discussion of each category and a detailed examination of these relationships. Emerging theoretical formations are created and explored. All codes and categories are analysed, sorted, and re-sorted through writing and sorting to develop the integrated theory finally. What emerges through resorting was the original fractured concepts naturally linking back together to form the theory. Sorting and re-sorting are very time-consuming, yet when all the sorting informs the theory, the process provides a new level of confidence for the researcher that the theory is grounded. The theory’s write-up aims to make theoretical deductions about the relationships between the categories, the sub-core categories, and properties. The author is very cognisant of writing about the concepts and their links and not about people. The indicators or statements used by the participants are used for illustration to support the concept being discussed. This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the relationship between the categories merging, and the theoretical formations are explored in detail. The next chapter discusses the primary literature that informs the theory and where the theory contributes to knowledge.
Chapter 6

Discussion of the findings

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to investigate the lived experiences and perspectives of the academic community on policy development and implementation in Irish higher education. The objectives of the research were to understand the processes in policy development and develop a theoretical framework to inform policy development. The method for gathering and analysing the data was grounded theory. The contribution to knowledge is a theory that explains the patterns of behaviours that academics use to overcome their concerns with policy. This review of literature will focus on the key elements of the theory and how they compare or contrast to the literature on social psychology. It will describe what is happening for the academics in terms of behaviours such as dissonance, power, making decisions and participation. The emphasis will be the gaps in the literature on behaviours around policy and practice that have not been the focus of policy sociologists or researchers as discussed in chapter two. This review will focus specifically on behaviours that relate to how the academics experience policy and the patterns of behaviours used to overcome their concerns. The chapter focuses on literature relevant to the core category and the sub-core categories and the different phases in the theory presented in chapter five. It is important in GT research to ensure that the literature is relevant to discovered
core and sub-core categories.
The theory of personalising dissonance and related processes i.e. resolving conflict, prioritising career and bridging gaps explains how academics navigate through the world of academia by negotiating policies and addressing related issues. During the write up of the memos and the theory, literature relevant to the emergent categories and properties is reviewed. To “sharpen awareness” and build the framework sensitising concepts are used (Gynnild, 2012). Sensitivity in grounded theory is awareness of issues outside of the substantive study and this is advised throughout the study (Glaser, 1968). The literature review at this point plays a role in discovering important variables relevant to each category and it allows the “synthesising and gaining of new perspectives and relating ideas and the theory to other applications” (Hart, 2018, p.26). Effective theoretical coding and sorting is enhanced by theoretical sensitivity (Glaser, 1968, Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Part of this process is where the literature is reviewed for theories that may be relevant to the emerging theory and noted in the theory’s write up in chapter five and this follow-up discussion. As Morse (2001) asserts, “literature should not be overlooked but rather noted and used for comparison with emerging categories” (pg.9). He argues that without a theoretical connection to draw on, researchers may “succumb to the data” (pg.9) without the ability to imagine or position their study or findings within the existing body of theory literature. Knowledge of various theories allow for different perspectives or ideas about the categories to emerge. Therefore, the theoretical framework and the literature are intrinsically linked. There is no doubt that the role of existing theory in grounded theory differs from traditional research approaches. However, this does not suggest that a grounded theory’s generation continues to isolate existing theory. Each of the phases of resolving conflict, prioritising career and bridging gaps will be discussed under theoretical literature that relates to the behaviours of the academics in the study. The core theories that relate are power, planned behaviour, decision and dissonance theory and participation as illustrated in table 6.1.
Behaviours such as discretion and game playing tactics similar to those of the street level bureaucrats as described in chapter two by Lipsky (1980) and Elmore (1979) were evident. Other behaviours such as integrity, accountability, participation and knowledge sharing in how they resolved their concerns were also identified. The key elements of the different phases of the theory and their implications for research and knowledge especially social psychological behaviours relating to policy concerns and how they overcome them will be discussed. The literature on behaviours that influence how they resolve conflict in the first phase of the basic social process of personalising dissonance is discussed in this section.

### 6.2 Phase 1: Personalising dissonance - resolving conflict

The sub-core category of resolving conflict has three sub-processes in the first phase of how the academics resolve their concerns. These are becoming aware, negotiating meaning and empowerment. The research indicates that academics face conflict when they were unaware of a certain policy. They need to become aware of the policy. There is a sense of firefighting at times for certain policies to be developed and then implemented by the staff. Academics work in isolation a lot of the time.
and in order to resolve initial tensions they need to become aware of those polices. They then need to address the policy and this is where conflict and tensions arise again. This is the concern for them. According to participants in this study, policy language is very legalese, and they find it very hard to interpret, which causes conflict. Policy language is constructed by the writers of the policy within the institutions. Negotiation of policy objectives and goals by conversing with a colleague in the “chats in the corridor” helps make sense of the policy. Through collective agreement, they are able to approach implementation of the policy to overcome the conflict that they feel with the policy. The first phase in the theory of personalising dissonance involves resolving conflict. Conflict is caused by interpretation, implementation and the objectives of the policies. Power and bureaucracy felt amongst the academics around policy development also causes a conflict for them. They resolve the conflict in this phase through becoming aware, negotiating meaning and empowerment. Each of these have properties that illustrate how they achieve them.

Figure 6.1: How concerns were resolved in the first phase: resolving conflict

as described in table 5.5. The following sections highlight the literature around con-
flict and power that causes the tension and how the academics approach and deal with these as they resolve their concerns through personalising dissonance.

6.2.1 Why does policy conflict exist

Policy conflict exists for academics when they are faced with a policy that they cannot interpret, cannot implement or they disagree with the objectives of the policy. Academics interpret the policies differently and this also leads to conflict. Such differences can arise regarding either the professed goals or the activities used for implementation (Matland, 1995). For conflict to occur there must be interdependence of actors and an incompatibility of objectives (Dahrendorf 1958). Conflict or policy conflict happens as a result of the academic’s lack of awareness or knowledge of a policy. They find them difficult to understand or disagree with the outcomes and objectives. If the academic is unaware of a policy, they tend to deal with the situation as best they can. If they are aware that there is a policy several things can happen that include interpreting it themselves or asking a colleague for help. Interpretation and implementation are the main contributors to conflict and tension for the academic. There is also a power dynamic felt amongst the academics and if they do not implement the policy correctly, they could be reprimanded. This power dynamic contributes to the conflict. Organisational structure also contributes to this conflict as there is a sense of forced compliance from power exerted from the top-down.

Deutsch (1963) argues that conflict exists whenever incompatible activities occur. This is where policy implementation activities are inconsistent with the policy writers’ expectations. Concerning the current study, policy writers expect the policy implementers to implement policies correctly and agree with the them. Conflict is a situation where A fully understands what is expected of him and rejects the line of conduct that B requires (Rex, 1981). However, what was discovered were concerns with the policies, they are unable to implement them correctly or they have issues
with their objectives, and so there is conflict.

Vaaland and Hakansson (2003) explore organisational conflict in particular with complex projects within the organisation. An interesting fact they uncover on organisational conflict is that conflict is a functional and dysfunctional commodity within an organisation. Dysfunctional, meaning there is conflict, and there are consequences. The consequences and tensions amongst academics lead to non-compliance. As a functional commodity, however, it can allow for growth. What can happen is the non-compliance and miss-interpretation adjusts the policy over time to make a better policy with clearer and more successful objectives. Hakansson and Vaaland (2003) believe there is felt conflict that can lead to another type of conflict, manifest conflict. The first one is the personalisation of conflict, the type of conflict that the academics feel. They had very personal grievances with policy implementation because they work in isolation and are expected to implement them even if they feel grievances or they did not understand what they have to do. They describe this as manifest conflict. They describe this behaviour as being in the actor’s mind, and there may be some punishment where the conflict is involved. They argue then that some conflicts can reach a satisfactory solution without escalating into a manifest. This behaviour is obvious with policy and the conflict felt by the academic.

Some policies are inevitably controversial, and it is not possible to adjust them to avoid conflict Matland (1995). The fact that conflict results from different actor’s perspectives it can be difficult to enforce implementation. According to Matland, the level of policy conflict has several important effects, and policy conflict affects the process of implementation. When the conflict level is low, access and implementation are easy, and when levels of conflict are high, how issues are resolved changes. The methods Matland discussed in conflict resolution are persuasion, problem-solving which are most common at the low level of the organisation, bargaining and coercion are most common at higher levels. The academics in the current study believe
that these tensions and frustrations result from a bureaucratic environment rather than a democratic one. They refer to the writers at the top as not being aware of what was happening on the ground. They feel that policies are not representative and imposed on the academics and they are expected to implement them even if they did not agree with their objectives or goals. There was a sense of forced compliance to conform to policy even if they did not tie in with their ideologies or experiences. They believed the process was more bureaucratic than democratic this caused conflict for them.

Conflict has the ingredients for developing into a negative pattern (Vaaland and Hakansson, 2003). They believe that conflict is a social phenomenon and is completely determined by circumstances where conflict occurs and has a direct correlation between the participants and their experiences and expectations. The actor’s perceptions are crucial in addressing the situation as a conflict (Vaaland and Hakansson, 2003). The academics in this study describe addressing policy as a battle. Vaaland and Hakansson also look at conflict and sources of conflict based on the power construct. This study’s dispute then arises through the relationship between the situation that causes the conflict i.e. the power behind the policy, policy implementation, previous policy implementation experiences, and expectations.

Gaski (1984) carried out 18 empirical studies on conflict and claims a connection between power and conflict and the different types of power. Dallinger and Hample (1989) began a research program that observes individuals’ tendencies to personalise conflict. They introduce the concept of taking conflict personally (TCP). Self-defence is a priority, leading to impulses for fight or flight, competition or withdrawal. When people feel pressure, they are more likely to consider the conflict as being essentially personal as did the academics in the current study and through the theory of personalising dissonance they attempt to resolve that. The following section will describe how power affects academic behaviours and associated literature.
6.2.2 How power affects the behaviours of academics in resolving conflict

As described in chapter two and in relation to Weber’s theory of bureaucracy policy is perceived to govern academics within the institutions. They are aware of bureaucracy and power yet exist in what is seen as a kind of harmony but a conflicted harmony. The contemporary theorist who comes closest to Weberian work is Michel Foucault, the French theorist. Weber and Foucault argue that the core of analysis or the heart of analysing organisational structure and culture are narratives on power. Foucault is not concerned with the bureaucracy that Weber identifies but more so on organisation design and its aspects of power rules, values and discretion. Foucault defines power as:

“In thinking of the mechanisms of power, I am thinking ... of its capillary form of existence, the point where power reaches into the very grain of individuals touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives” (Foucault, 1980, p. 39).

Foucault believes that the performance of each worker is strategically measured. Each individual becomes a cog in the machine with a need or a want to become a bigger cog. Weber describes this as a passion for a bureaucracy that could drive a person to despair (Weber, 1946). In his writings entitled Discipline and Punish in 1966, Foucault argues that power is a technique that achieves strategic effects through discipline. He looks at resistance and methods of provoking resistance and that a threat of discipline encourages resistance and is consistent with the current study and how the academics react to institutional policies. There is a feeling of power and bureaucracy concerning the policies and that if they do not implement them or implement them incorrectly, they will be punished. As a result of forced
compliance, there is a sense of resistance, and what they describe as doing what they would normally do or implementing it in their own way, in how they resolve this conflict. Foucault maintains that resistance merely serves as a necessity underpinning the discipline that provokes it (Clegg, 1994). The opposition is a necessity. It becomes a “target against which discipline may justify its necessity under its lack of unlimited power” (pg. 156). Foucault observes the relations between knowledge, power, and human subjects. Knowledge sharing, power harmonisation and increasing consonance through empowerment helps academics resolve conflict. Foucault believes that power is an action, which does not act directly and immediately on others but on their actions. The power is directed on the actions of the objects involved in the power struggle.

According to Foucault, “power incites or it seduces, and it makes easier or more difficult to the extreme, it constraints or forbids absolutely” (1983, pg. 220). Foucault believes that power is something that’s exercised and not possessed (Foucault, 1983). If the power is not exercised, they do not gain power if there is no act. If they do not implement it or react to the policy, then they do not have control. Nevertheless, this conflicts with the common-sense usage of the English term of what power is “the capacity or ability to direct or influence others’ behaviour or the course of events” (wictionary.com). Academics sense power, they are aware of power, but unless something goes wrong, power is not exercised, which is a chance they take. However, they do feel conflicted with some policies and expected to implement them. The influence is felt, not from the policy itself but the ‘top’ of the organisation. Conflict between what Foucault says is power and what power is defined as merely a result of a translation issue and that the French language of “pouvoir” and “puissance” are both commonly translated as power. However, Foucault (1983) believes that power exists when it is put into action. Throughout Foucault’s analysis, what is power’ is left open to inquiry and correlates to what is happening with the academics and what they feel and what they perceive power to be. Foucault encourages that view
to look at power as ‘powers’ rather than power (Foucault, 1983).

Michael Gallagher, a research associate in the school of clinical sciences at the University of Edinburgh, wrote an article in 2008 about power and participation with children. It correlates to the current research study concerning governance and participation amongst academics with policy issues and implementation. Gallagher (2008) states in his research on child participation that the power that a teacher exercises over her pupils is not the same as the power that those pupils “exercise to resist the teacher’s demands” (pg.398) compared to Foucault’s claim that power does not exist. It does but in different ways for different people and particularly the participants in this study. They feel that the policy has power and that power is from the top of the organisation where the policy writers reside. Nevertheless, the ability that they feel is different from the power that they have. The power from above is ‘powers’ to reprimand, and the power from below is ‘power’ to resist or overcome. Data presented in this study indicates the participants feelings of powerlessness is something they have to overcome. It is personal power that they have at their level and in their positions. In negotiating the meaning of the polices through analysing the discourse of the policy and through collective agreement with others they are overcoming that power conflict and is described in the next section.

6.2.3 Resolving conflict: negotiating meaning

Negotiating meaning through analysing discourses and collective agreement

Personal negotiation amongst academics occurs once they become aware and are reading the policy. They are trying to interpret polices that are written in a legal way and they feel tension as they find them difficult to interpret. They also at times disagree with the objectives of the policies and this adds further tension and conflict for them. The discourses around policy increases the tension they feel. They are aware of possible reprimands or consequences if not implemented correctly. They
also feel these policies are imposed or forced on them. They have to make a decision on how they will respond to such policies. Collective agreement helps them make decisions but they ultimately use their discretion. Literature on power and conflict and methods used by actors in how they respond to such policies show how actors use discretion and self-interest to overcome their concerns, behaviours that are clearly evident in how academics are overcoming their concerns also. They are attempting to overcome that feeling of powerlessness. This is personal power that they have at their level and in their positions. Foucault argues that “power is everywhere” (1968, pg.93) Moreover, it is not limited to some central body such as state or institution or within an academic institution’s hierarchical structure. Foucault quotes, “Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here nor there. Never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation” (Foucault, 1980, pg. 98).

Foucault stresses that power cannot be viewed as something which flows from the top down in a hierarchy as he describes the bourgeoisie to the proletariat, and so on. Gallagher (2008) mentions that these networks structures are powerful and have powerful practices that dominate governments and higher orders [organisations] but only powerful because many people implement them. Foucault argues that power is intentional, and an exercise of power is always calculated to satisfy a series of aims and objectives. It does not mean that it “results from the choice or decision of an individual subject” (Foucault, 1968, pg. 95).

Foucault in Discipline and Punish shows that in prisons, criminals can participate in society, but it does not make them more manageable. In other words, in the analysis of power, those involved’ conscious intentions are largely irrelevant simply because the rationality of control is not to be found in the minds of those who exercise it but in its effect. As it is written, the policy may not be where power is rather in
its impact on the individual and how the academics act upon that. Foucault insists “instead of case studying the power at the point where its intention is, if it has one, is completely invested in its real and effective practices. What is needed is the study of power and “its external visage at the point where it has a direct and immediate relationship with that which we can provisionally call its object, its target, its field of application, where it installs itself and produces real effects” Foucault (1980, pg. 96) Should the focus be on the policy-makers, stakeholders or the implementers where power is a concern? Researchers investigating participation could gain important insights by looking at the effect of participatory initiatives rather than at the professed intentions of the people involved in designing those initiatives (Gallagher, 2008), which could be the policy-makers within academic settings. Academics participate in policy development as they want to progress to a situation where they could influence and have their voices heard. They move from ‘power’ or possibly a personal power, to a position with ‘powers’ to resolve conflict. In the first phase of resolving conflict, however, participation is engagement in the process of reading and attempting implementation of the policy.

In contrast to Weber, Foucault looks at the power from a slightly different view. Foucault looks at it from a discourse perspective, whereas Weber looks at it from the individual perspective and the individual within the bureaucratic organisation. Foucault’s theory of how people react to governance can be predicted or predictable. This view could apply to how the academics approached a written policy in a legal language that implies a power to conform with it as it was viewed as a set of rules and regulations. It is possible to assume that conflict is predicted, and writers predict this conflict and see it as subtle coercion or influence and power and the findings indicate this.

Discourse is described as an expression in words, either speech or writing. (wictionary.com) Weber concentrates on discipline associated with bureaucracy and
there are links in both their works to control. Foucault looks at disciplinary power and control and resistance in the workplace and this relates to the current research and policy power that is felt by the academics. These theorists argue that this knowledge and the practices resulting from this are natural workplace disciplines. In relating this to policy, knowledge accumulated in the workplace will allow for variations in the policy over time, which is normal. In his works entitled “Power and Knowledge”, Foucault (1980) argues that power should not be understood solely in the negative terms of repression or constraint. In Discipline and Punish, Foucault (1969) insists that “we must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it “excludes,” it “represses,” it “censors,” it “abstracts,” it “masks,” it “conceals.” In fact, power produces, it produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth, the individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production” (Foucault, 1969, pg. 194). In terms of academic policy and the interpretations and various implementations of policy that perhaps do not meet the actual written policy’s goals and objectives or a version of it, and maybe produced knowledge and this knowledge is shared and could develop a more robust and better policy. In their attempt to resolve their issues with policy interpretation and even conflict, the academics attempt to overcome that by participating in policy development or engaging with the policy. So, as a result of power, there is some good to come out of it over time. Foucault is particularly interested in professional discourses that limit and define, and normalise the situations or contexts in which they are situated. Moreover, a policy is described as a written contract of insurance. Specific policies make specific accounts of what people should do, can do and must do (Clegg 1986).

Moore and Clark (2016) also talk about discourse and how language and its metaphors and the choice of words used within a policy, especially in public policy, can be a way of manipulation. They also mention policy’s language, its role in compliance and “its acceptance is a survival strategy” (pg. 5). Evidence shows that language
or discourse causes tension for the academics. They do not understand the text or they do not agree with it and feel forced into implementation. Concerning policy, Linley and Joseph (2004) discuss how critical discourse analysis within education policy may allow for the study of everyday interactions. It could be viewed more realistically through the works of power theorists such as Foucault. The combination of cognitive and linguistic theories is suitable when discussing power, interpretation and discourse analysis. It compliments Van Dijk’s (2008) approach to critical discourse analysis, where he combines cognitive theories with linguistic, social theories. Moore and Clarke (2016) also talk about desire and effect and describe desire as the feeling of wanting to be a better person or a better person in the eyes of others. They observe this relationship between discourse, desire and effect, and especially with policy. Policy presented can “be understood as depending upon effect and desire for a successful implementation, not least its implementation by those who find it most troublesome” (pg.14). Desire then is how policy becomes owned by individuals, and in correlation to the current study, there is a passion around the policy and it is owned by them and is personal. Findings in the second phase indicate that there is a ‘desire’ to do right by those affected by the implementation of the policy i.e the students or their career. They had a desire for accountability and integrity. Moore and Clarke’s belief is if the policy is presented correctly and understood, then the impact and desire for its implementation would correlate. They believe that teachers desire is to implement it correctly, not at least those who find it most troublesome. Through the workings of affect and desire, the policy becomes owned by the individuals even if they disagree. Moore and Clark suggest that teachers align their passions with what they want to be as teachers and the desires are embedded in the policy’s discourse. Moore and Clarke conclude that it is easier to be compliant through the power of discourse, desire, and its effect. They believe that compliance is more of a necessity rather than an option. Through compliance and tension reduction there is a sense of regaining the power that is lost through initial tension and conflict felt and is described in the next section.
6.2.4 Resolving conflict: empowerment

Empowerment through forced compliance and engagement to reduce dissonance

Engagement with the objectives of policies is key to academics resolving their disagreements. They have to engage with the policy and this allows them to reduce the dissonances they feel with them. The aim is to reach a level of harmony to reduce the tension. The participants in this study engage with it in various ways, ranging from following the process to rejecting it outright. To gain empowerment they have to accept the sense of forced compliance. Forced compliance leads them to use processes such as discretion and self-interest to address the policy.

Foucault (1968) examines how power operates and uses metaphors of conflict and warfare, particularly strategies and tactics. These are in-vivo terms that the participants in this study use such as war, battles, power struggles and conflict. Gallagher (2008) examines these metaphors in his studies on the participatory process. He believes they are helpful when studying participation as the participatory process operates as part of a strategy and that “balances views or increases their diversity, and does it build conflict or consensus, amplify, protest, or seek to amputate it?” (pg. 398). The academics at the micro-level overcome tension and frustrations they feel are due to policy. They use the metaphors of war and battles, and they also resolve their issues through negotiation and agreement. Discretion plays a key role in labour process theory, where managers hire labour-power for the number of days that they are required. People engage and ultimately retain discretion over themselves, what they do and how they do it. The potential source of resistance resides in this embodiment of labour power. It realistically maintains the same status quo in more recent times as part-time labour workers working technically for themselves that retain that power. In effect, they are not bound by contractual agreements. Management is forever seeking new strategies and tactics to deflect
discretion (Clegg, 1994), giving them back their inescapable power. The choice then gets limited through what Foucault calls disciplinary practice. These practices include surveillance, professional self-regulation, a standardised reporting scheme, and client reports that all serve as practice rules. Even using discretionary techniques to resist power, these limitations exist.

Academics demonstrated discretion in their negotiation tactics to negotiate with themselves and others in how they approach implementation. Through collective agreement, they increase consonance with the policy and gain back their power. In order to reach a level of conformity, they need to reduce the level of dissonance. What they are in fact doing is what Lowell (2012) describes as self-justification. They justify what they are doing. Hoggart (2004) suggests that “it is only when we are afraid of conflict that the troubles begin” concerning the internal and external conflict (pg.84). They are doing what benefits the students is innovative. They justify what they did for their career. The theory presented is how they personalised dissonances as they had a passion for their students’ education and career, so the conflict is personal. Academics are using discretionary power.

Discretionary power is representative of the resistance of the implementers to what is imposed on them through policy and what they feel is to control their actions (Erasmus and Gilson, 2008). Academics used discretionary power to regain the strength lost in the conflict, which would coincide with Weber’s and Foucault’s definition of power. The implementers are “bureaucratic subordinates” managed by coercion as reflected in accountability rules and internalised formal authority from the enforcement perspective (Erasmus and Gilson, 2008). The implementers accept this as part of being responsible. Policy implementers are agents or actors contracted by the hierarchy and managed by that power in the form of incentives for compliance or the threat of being sanctioned (Erasmus and Gilson, 2008). Academics feel that there is a threat of such sanctions for non-compliance or incorrect implementation.
Working in isolation and making their own decisions may be seen as a disadvantage, however, it gives them the ability to make choices themselves as well as collective agreement with colleagues if needed. They regain autonomy and empowerment by making these choices. On the other hand, though and in line with Weaver’s (2009) ideology on target compliance and the strategies that the target audiences use to cope, they were aware of sanctions of non-compliance and yet they still are inclined to respond as they see fit that may not be compliance.

Moore (2006) believes that actors are compelled to make one set of feelings less important by wanting to be popular and that losing popularity, and be offensive are not an option. Academics do what they do for the students’ benefit, even if it is non-compliant and for personal benefit to survive within the institution. It is more of a survival mechanism than a popularity one.

Moore (2004, 2006, 2016) is concerned with why teachers do what they do concerning policy rather than their ideological beliefs. He studies the emotional understanding of compliance and resistance. He argues that the individual’s sense of identity is critical in how they “experience and understand their social system, situations, interactions, and events, including those in their public lives” (Moore, 2004 pg.501.) In order to understand policy and the effects of policy practice, the focus should be on the boundaries between the agency and structure (Moore, 2004). Teachers are constantly positioning and re-positioning themselves concerning the practicalities of their daily lives and the demands on them personally (Ball ,1993). Academics feel forced into implementing policies that they are not comfortable with yet after collective agreement with colleagues on a policy that they do not agree with, they engage. This allows them to feel personal harmony with what they decide to do.

He describes it as a mixture of pragmatism, social determinism and often hidden desires. He believes that the strengths and desires that tip teachers into implementing policies that they are not comfortable with is often under-acknowledged, and so participation or the want to engage could be described as a desire to achieve a sense of harmony amidst the conflict. However, participation has the potential for compliance and non-compliance, which this study describes. There is a relationship between the two entities and can vary according to the relationship’s nature and the actors involved, the structures or the resources available where these relationships occur. The conflict that is felt as a result of the power results in either compliance or non-compliance. Furthermore, academics overcome the sense of forced compliance by participation or engagement with the policy that gives them back their power.

Giddens (1969) conceptualises the idea of power relations and social systems as relations of autonomy independence. The connections are always two ways. However, a subordinate actor may be in a relationship and the involvement in the relationship gives him or her a certain amount of power over the other. So the truth is, the policy writers and the implementers, the fact that they are in a relationship, there is a social relationship between them gives them a certain amount of power over the other. However, the organisations’ subordinates can convert whatever resources they possess and control the systems’ conditions. He does not imply that social life can be reduced to power struggles, important and chronic as such battles may be. Conflict and power are not logically but continuously associated (Giddens, 1969) and is evident in the current study. The academics are in relationships, albeit subordinate relationships, or feel they are, with the macro-level writers. Nevertheless, they have certain autonomy and power to resolve their concerns within these structures and this can be seen as the relationship between conflict and power. They are associated (Giddens, 1969) and perhaps inevitable. In considering the exercise of power in modern societies, Foucault (1969) asks the question of whether power is exercised between groups and between individuals in the community. He draws
Individuals resolve conflict through self-preservation and talk about the struggle between ideology and desire, and that “desire always wins” (Billig, 1996 pg.146). Billig believes passion stems from the want to be popular, for acceptance, for personal and institutional equilibrium. Participants in the current study are accepting through necessity the policy even with the forced compliance they feel. They reach a level of consonance by reducing dissonance felt through engaging and collective agreement with the policy. According to Billig, “it is as if people find themselves inhabiting normative structure that is more powerful than their individual feelings and to which they have to conform for interaction to proceed and avoid disagreement” (p.146).

The idea of dissonance-induced self-justification and this type of behaviour within organisations can lead to immoral behaviour (Lowell, 2012). This immoral behaviour is non-compliance with policy or rules and regulation within academic institutes. Lowell discusses free choice concerning dissonance and immoral behaviour. Lowell looks at the strategies used to reduce dissonance. These strategies include rationalisation, self-affirmation and self-justification can be described as free choice. He believes that Festinger’s cognitive dissonance concept provides several ways to look at how some behave immorally and why they continue to do so. Festinger and similar researchers observes similar self-justification methods that provide immoral behaviour or non-compliance. It is difficult to describe academic behaviour as immoral as they believe they are doing the right thing by themselves or their students. Lowell notes that considerable literature views the organisation as a “potentially corrupting institution and a source of acute levels of moral dissonance” (pg.1). All theories of dissonance highlight and assume a psychological need for consistency and consonance and “the need is so strong that dissonance operates much like any human drive like hunger and fear and the emotion felt is human nature, that reduces
it” (Sears et al., 1991, pg. 156) If dissonance is felt there is a natural drive to reduce it. However, Lowell believes that what should also be considered when discussing dissonance is the belief that dissonance results in self-justification. Self-justification can cause motives and attitudes to change as a person seeks to defend their dissonant behaviour (Lowell, 2012). This behaviour was evident amongst the academics in how they justified their responses to policy as doing right by the students.

Leon Festinger and James Carlsmith (1959) conducted work on the cognitive consequence of forced compliance. They look at forced compliance and how the actors respond to being forced to perform some behaviour. They believe that if an actor is forced into behaviours they disagree with, the private opinion will move to be in line with the forced behaviour. Concerning academics that do not agree with an imposed policy and what the study reveals is that they can comply for professional integrity or professionalism or comply but they have to be happy with that decision to reduce dissonance. Insufficient justification or induced compliance creates cognitive dissonance by having participants justify similarly a position with which they disagree (Festinger and Carlsmith, 1959) or, in the case of participants in this research, non-compliance of policy.

Festinger (1956) observes the presence of dissonance and how the dissonance can be reduced, especially when dissonance results from forced compliance and the extent of the threatened punishment or promised reward has been sufficient to elicit the compliant behaviour. Dissonance is present only as long as the person involved maintains his initial private opinions or belief. Following forced compliance, a person can change their private opinion, the “dissonance may disappear entirely” (pg. 94). Festinger proposes that inconsistency among beliefs or behaviours causes an uncomfortable psychological tension (i.e. a theory of cognitive dissonance), leading people to change one of the inconsistent elements to reduce the dissonance or to add consonant elements to restore consonance. What is occurring for the academics is
how they find policies difficult to interpret and implement, and in some instances, they disagree with their objectives. They feel they are not fit for the purpose they were developed for. They believe their objectives are inconsistent with what is being implemented in practice. When there is forced compliance and a threat of punishment they engage to reduce tension. They make decisions on how they will approach implementation by negotiating with the policy objectives. They overcome emotional dissonances and this helps them increase their harmony or consonance with the policy process.

The findings of the study reveal that in resolving conflict, they also negotiate policy with colleagues and subsequently engage with the policy in a better frame of mind. Cognitive dissonance in negotiation, a co-authored paper by Bendersky and Curhan in 2009, talks about a free choice method, similar to Lowell (2012). They argued that free choice induces cognitive dissonance by forcing the participants to choose, albeit difficult. Choices between two equally attractive options reduce dissonance (Brehm, 1956). Brehm finds that choices among options considered equally attractive to reduce dissonance could apply in the case of forced compliance. What happens is they reduce the value of choice not taken and increase the value of the choice that they make. Academics feel that if they disagree with the policy, it is normally because of the outcome of its implementation. They are faced with compliance with a less favorable outcome or non-compliance that would be against policy but would have possibly a better outcome for the stakeholder. Dissonance is alleviated mostly by inflating the value for the selected option for choices among options considered equally unattractive (Brehm, 1956). This applies to the implementation of the policy. Participants reduce cognitive dissonance that arises from freely choosing one option over another, inflating their preference for the selected option and devaluing the unselected option. Elliot and Devine (1994) determine that psychological discomfort is alleviated for subjects by the act of revising their preferences to be more consistent with the opposite choice they had just been asked
to make. They are faced with policies that need to be implemented, and they make these decisions that increase personal harmony or consonance and reduce discomfort.

Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance examines the effects of forced compliance theory. Normally, the incentives and motivations resulting from forced compliance reduce the pressure and dissonance levels felt. When people feel they have been forced into doing something that they do not believe is right they manifest ways of reducing dissonance. Festinger argues that public compliance without an accompanying change in the private opinion or belief will occur when compliance is brought about, mainly through the exertion of a threat of punishment for non-compliance. Academics feel that if they do not comply with the policy, that they will be threatened or reprimanded for not implementing it. Festinger (1956) also argues that compliance is brought about mainly as a special reward for complying. This instance correlates to how academics overcome their concerns by resolving conflict. They may comply for the sake of compliance but the tensions still exist. Forced compliance that results in compliance alone does not resolve the conflict for some.

Dissonance is alleviated when people revise their attitudes to be more consistent with their behaviour. Bobocel and Meyer (1994) separate the effects of choice and justification on commitment and self-justification of the cognitive dissonance framework, they point out that previous research to theirs confuses choice and public justification. Their experiment tests the effects of choice, private justification, and public justification separately on deciding to change or continue a previously chosen course of action. The effect of escalation commitment that both private and public justification significantly increase the escalation of commitment to the same extent suggests that choice and justification made differently induce cognitive dissonance. In comparison to Bendersky and Curhan they examine the effects of choice and justification, not on escalation commitment, but preference inflation. They argue that dissonance theory is perhaps the most extensively researched psychology the-
ory, and that no studies have compared to it. Very few studies have compared the dissonance inducing effects of choice and justification within a single research study (Ross and Ward, 1995). The current study examines how academics resolve their dissonances with policies they do not agree with or understand. There is evidence that dissonant behaviour can lead to innovation caused by the tension that creates it. A person could migrate from self-denial about their actions to the desire to change them (Tompkins and Lawley, 2009). Tomkins and Lawley describe this tension as creative tension. They suggest the need to reduce dissonance that can cause immoral behaviour and produce creative tension leading to innovation. There is no mention amongst academics that non-compliance of policy is particularly innovative but flexible implementation or implementing it for the best outcome for the students in many ways is innovative. They make choices on implementation that reflect their integrity towards their students and themselves as academics. They make choices that they are happy with and believe are the right decisions to make even if they are not in line with the objectives of the policy.

According to Gallagher (2008) allowing a human being or a person to govern herself equips her to become independent and no longer obligated to imposed regulations. There is no reason the power felt will be harmonious with the power of forced control. As Simons (1995) believes, “our subjective capacities include those of resisting the power that has made us what we are” (1995, pg.4). Focusing on the participants in the current study and how they resolve their conflict by becoming aware of the policy and engaging with it through negotiating and collective agreement, there is a sense of empowerment. They comply, they engage, they increase their consonance or harmony with what they are doing. The actors in the current study feel the power from the top through imposed policies imposed on them. They negotiate and bargain with policy implementation. This could be viewed as part of the discretionary process, where they use discretion to become aware of the policy, seek support and then negotiate it. Academics get back their power by engaging with the process
in a manner that suits them this can have negative consequences. However, they believe that they are doing what is right given the time constraints and given the organisation’s culture to allow them to use their discretion.

In his discussion on conflict, Billig (1996) mentions that people are predisposed to regulate their feelings to fit in with situational norms, and the damaging effect conflict can have. Billig argues that people resolve conflict through a fantasy of an ideal self and that they have a desire for harmony, and that desire will always win and is similar to Moore’s ideology in his writings on desire in how professional practice and passion are linked. This study highlights that passion is very evident in how academics resolve their concerns through conflict resolution and then through prioritising careers, consideration of the stakeholders and the passion to develop policy and have their experiences shared. Academics believe that this conflict and the tension could be managed by being professional, what they believe is professionalism, implementing and being compliant. Academics have power because they are professional. That power is constrained by the series of relationships they have with others to whom they are accountable, their managers, and department heads. Implementation is essentially about co-producing shared results (Moore, 2006). The academics in the current study achieve empowerment through compliance and engagement due to a collective agreement with the policy. This is achieved regardless of policy objectives for a more favourable outcome for the participants or the policy’s beneficiaries. By personalising their disagreements with policy, by making the process more about gaining empowerment through its implementation, they reach a level of harmony. They gain autonomy and empowerment by implementation and shared collective agreement on the implementation.

Some participants resolve their conflict at that stage but there is a juncture where the resolve needs to move to a second phase where they make decisions on implementation that affect them and their students. They make decisions on implementation that focuses on the outcomes of them. These decisions involve accountability and
integrity. The next phase of the theory of personalising dissonance is prioritising career and the literature on behaviours that influence this are discussed in the next section.

6.3 Phase 2: Personalising dissonance-prioritising career

The second phase in the theory of personalising dissonance is called prioritising career. In this phase the academics assess the consequences and outcomes of how they will respond to the implementation of policies. There is still some unresolved tension for some and they reach a critical juncture in how they overcame their concerns. They are aware of their career and being accountable for their actions. They are cognisant of the effect of how the policies are implemented, either correctly or incorrectly. In the second phase of the theory they prioritise their career through accountability, making fateful decisions and maintaining their integrity. The sub-

![Diagram](image)

Figure 6.2: How concerns were resolved in the second phase: prioritising career
core category of prioritising career has three sub-processes in the second phase of how the academics resolve their concerns. These are being accountable, making fateful decisions and maintaining integrity. The literature on behaviours that describe how they prioritise their career in the second phase of personalising dissonance is discussed in the next section.

6.3.1 Prioritising career: being accountable

Being accountable through planning behaviours, assessing and evaluating outcomes

When discussing street-level discretion, if leaders influence subordinates’ actions within institutions, democracy does not (Kaufman and Couzens, 1963). They believe that changing those in authority’s positions could change the actions of thousands of employees. Teachers are neither a blank slate onto which policymakers could impose new mandates or are they immune to the pressure of consequences of accountability (Sewell, 1992). What the findings reveal is that academics feel that they are within a bureaucratic system rather than a democratic one. The power exerted causes them to feel conflicted and they need to resolve this. Part of that resolve is becoming accountable, so they have to become responsible for their actions. They have to stand up and do what is right by them, by their acts, by the institution, by their career all by being accountable to the policy.

According to Aristotle (34BC-322BC), goodness and morality do not come from outside the person. They do not arise from society’s cultural sources or rules, but human beings’ potentials. Aristotle claims virtues do not happen naturally and that they are acquired through habit, and it is up to the individual to realise his or her full potential. Strengths and virtues can be and must be cultivated. Their development and realisation are the routes to happiness and well-being (Linley and Joseph, 2004). The Aristotelian model claims that fulfilling human nature results
in well-being and an element of this could be viewed as relationships, according to Linley and Joseph. Social relationships and human social motivation from Freud to contemporary socio-biologists and from Goffman to game theorists argue that humans are social individuals and that “social relationships are instrumental in the satisfaction of individual desires” (Fiske, 1992, pg.689). Academics have a social relationship with their colleagues and students. There is a sense of a desire to do right by each of those. Evidence indicates consideration for these relationships when they are planning their behaviours or how they respond to policy.

There are intentions behind behaviour, such as compliance, which can be an obligatory moral duty. Academics have to comply with a policy because they are professionals. They have a moral obligation to adhere to the procedures, rules and regulations because these are rules and regulations within the institution and there is a possible fear of sanction. Furthermore, what is obvious, is that they feel they would be reprimanded for not implementing the policies. To increase the level of personal consonance they have with the guidelines, they make decisions based on personal beliefs and to be accountable for their actions. In their study, Lewis and Hardy (2015) focus on teacher’s responses to mandates for high stakes testing and examine teacher’s subjectivity’s under conditions like pressure. They find that academic practices amongst teachers puts them under pressure and that power drives them to meet institutional norms and this in turn eliminates the necessity of one’s personal belief. In contrast though academics personal beliefs play a big part in how they overcome their concerns with the policy. They believe that by implementing the policy correctly they are maintaining integrity and when implementing it flexibly they are protecting the stakeholders.

Dunn (2003) examines accountability and democratic theory in higher education. He describes accountability as an important factor especially in higher education over the past half-century and focuses on its relation to democratic theory and
democratic governance. He believes there has been much attention given to accountability and issues of bureaucracy. He argues that a policy should be responsive to the public's needs and general preferences and expectations. Policy must be for actors who are defined by accountability (Dunn, 2003). At its most basic means, accountability is to be answerable for the actions and behaviours of people (Harmon 1995). Palmer and Rangel (2011) study accountability and policy implementation and teacher decision-making. They study how teachers have to reconcile with their pre-existing knowledge and beliefs to implement the policy. So they have to look at this through formal and informal means. According to Palmer and Rangel (2011) agency is limited by formal and informal structural constraints. Academics have to balance the pressures of accountability and what they believe is best for the students. They believe that being accountable is doing what they have to do and what is right by being compliant and making those decisions. The academics within the current study are accountable to students when considering the decisions of the stakeholders. Still, they are also responsible for their institutions when they are considering their career. By prioritising their positions as academics, they are being accountable, engaging with the policy, and making fateful decisions for the students and themselves. However, they see this as maintaining their academic integrity. The patterns of behaviour evident are attempts to maintain integrity and remain accountable to themselves and the institution.

Gofen (2015) describes a problem for compliance models that ignore the role of emotions and social norms or reduces them to their utilitarian aspects. He argues that behaviour is rational if it improves one's welfare or self-interest. Behaviour models that look at positive and negative and choice of cost-benefit calculus results from errors (Braithwaite, 1995). Gofen argues that consequences versus the appropriateness of an action do not take human motivation and the complexity of human reason into consideration. Gofen believes that self-interest can crowd out duty or trust and describes how academics prioritise their career, but they do this because
of commitment. They prioritise their job over decisions regarding the stakeholder and could be viewed as self-interest, but there is still a desire to do right by the institution and what they believe is right for the students. This desire they feel in the decisions they make is emotional. According to Makkai and Braithwaite (1994), emotions can also interact with calculative logic in counter-intuitive ways. They believe that emotions can also take over.

Van Lange (2000) believes that self-interest is embodied in the pursuit of pleasure, reinforcement and in the ability to satisfy one’s needs such as behaviour, learning and decision-making” (pg. 299). People have one goal for their own actions and in social relationships and that is consideration for themselves (Nafstad, 2002). It appears that academics are enacting what Van Lange (2000) describes as self-interest when they firstly resolve the conflict they feel with the policy and initial decision-making. These confirm Nafstads’ view that one considers oneself fundamentally in one’s actions. Once they have collective agreement with colleagues or a better understanding of the policy they reach a level of empowerment. All the motivations are to reach a level of conformity with what they are doing. At this stage of the process the aim is to resolve that initial personal conflict that they feel and reduce the level of dissonance.

In an interesting discussion, Etienne (2011) mentions the implementers’ capacity and competence or ignorance in their understanding of the rules of the regulations they are presented with. According to Etienne, compliance theorists focus on planned behaviour rather than automatic behaviour. When it comes to policy implementation, the action is planned because there is a certain time frame between the time they are presented with the policy and the time they have to implement it. Academics also mention that this time-frame is limited because of an already full academic timetable. Etienne notes a goal-orientated approach, which is clear in how the academics prioritise their careers. They have a goal that is a precursor to the behaviour
that is planned concerning compliance or non-compliance of policy. Etienne (2011) believes that this approach has several unresolved problems, including the fact that actors may have simultaneous goals. This is what is happening in how they prioritise their career and believe that implementing the policy is for the students’ welfare even if it may have been a negative outcome. There is an element of self-interest and relates to other theorists who write about self-interest, including Foucault. Zizek (1989) draws on two kinds of identification, the symbolic and the imaginary. The desire then is to be the best teacher, and the concerns with symbolic identification are how one perceives themselves in the order in which one operates. It could be the academic wanting to be good in others’ eyes.

Academics use discretion when resolving conflict with policies they have concerns about. Some were aware that policy is there for a reason and they must adhere to its aims and objectives. They assess the consequences on the students and themselves and evaluate the outcomes of their decisions. They are strategic in their planning and implementation. They are cognisant of their positions and want to be policy compliant. Different people experience and respond to the same system’s policies differently (Moore, 2006). Rather than look at the actual responses, he is more interested in where they come from and from a more psycho-analytical perspective. He looks at why they do what they do and at the locus of the investigation and the order of the structures within them. Moore believes what is missing from these accounts is desire, which he believes is fundamental when observing human experiences similar to Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan’s works. Moore examines the element of desire and how it operates concerning professional practice and experience and plays a major part in how respondents act within their institutions and identify themselves. Similar to the current study, what is observed and what is evident is passion in behaviours. There is a passion for how they speak about their profession and how they react to policies, objectives and outcomes. Moore describes this as desire, whereas the word passion in the current study could also mean a strong,
powerful emotion (Wiki dictionary). Either way, the academics feel strongly about policy.

In his work on the theory of planned behaviour, Icek Ajzen (1991) examines organisational behaviour and the human decision process and looks at achievements related to locus of control. The locus in the current study is the academic institution. Ajzen (1991) argues that a single behaviour is always related to some type of influence and many factors influence a particular type of behaviour. Ajzen, in his theory of planned behaviour, is more concerned with the general characteristics and the personality traits of the implementer and how that affects behaviour. His theory is only really a framework that predicts and explains human behaviour in specific contexts. Ajzen describes this theory of planned behaviour as an extension of an original theory of reasoned action, which is an individual’s intention to perform a given behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). The factors that affect their behaviour depends on the individual’s level of wanting to carry out the behaviour. The strength in the intention to engage in the behaviour is, the more likely its performance. Concerning academics, the stronger their intention to comply with the policy to be accountable for their career, the more likely the intention to perform the behaviour will happen. It is more likely that they will comply if they have a strong desire to engage with it and implement the goals and objectives. The reasonable action theory that Ajzen based his behavioural theory on is where there is a real passion for engaging in a behaviour. The level of performance of that particular behaviour will occur (Ajzen, 1991). If the academic chooses to comply, they will comply. Furthermore, they have power and passion for complying, which is similar to wanting to do their best. The academics who comply for accountability are still thinking of their students in a different context. Even if the implementation may negatively affect the stakeholder, it is probably the best outcome for them. This may involve implementing the policy flexibly. One factor that may influence their decision is that of control and obligation to carry out the behaviour and face a decision to perform or not,
built with a desire to carry out the behaviour they have the control. There might also be some degree of non-motivational factors that may affect their behaviour, such as time, skills or others. In the current study, what does affect the motivation to perform is the time it would take as a lot of them felt that they did not have time to implement the policy. Nevertheless, for the academics who were prioritising their career, they want to carry out the behaviour. They have the desire to comply and implement the policy. Moreover, in doing that, they are accountable, and they maintain academic integrity. There are other factors, but they still perform the behaviour, and this, according to Ajzen is where the intentions influenced performance.

According to Ajzen (1991), specific behavioural patterns and behavioural control are different from Rotter’s (1966) locus of control. Behavioural management and locus of control are separate and behavioural control examines the ease or the difficulty of performing the individual’s task. The academics who are prioritising their career in the theory of personalising dissonance do not find this difficult. The ones who are very much into being accountable and prioritising their career believe that what they are doing is right. They use the mechanism of collective agreement through consultation with colleagues if needed. There are concerns over some of the aspects of the objectives being unclear or clarity not being clear but this resolves through collective agreement. In the theory of planned behaviour, the person with the high perceived behavioural control has a stronger intention to carry out the task or learn how to carry it out. They have a stronger inclination to do that (Ajzen, 1991). It could be said that the academics during the process of policy implementation were aware of accountability and have levels of perceived behavioural control and that they plan their behaviours from the outset. It is their personal preference after all. Ajzens’ theory of planned behaviour performance is linked with intentions, and that intention and perceived behavioural control will influence the performance of the behaviour. Nevertheless, several conditions must be met. These conditions include that control must be compatible with the behaviour that is to be predicted in the
current study that is implementing the objectives of policy correctly or flexibly. The intention to implement the policy and the action are compatible. The second condition is that they remain stable, that no external factors influence them. There are decisions when they are planning their behaviour, such as the outcomes and evaluated effects. They decide to implement, but they also have to make a choice. Furthermore, planned behaviour moves into a more rational choice and possible game theory that explains the academics’ behavioural patterns within this current study. The intention is to implement correctly or implement a version of the policy to best suit the stakeholder. There are pressures to perform or not to perform the behaviour and results in conflict. They are concerned with the power behind policy and adherence to rules and regulations. There is that subjective norm, which is the power behind the policy that further influences their behaviour. Ajzen’s theory examines attitudes and consequences of the behaviour as either positive or negative. The positive, obviously for any action would be largely desirable to the positive effects on the self, and the negative effects will have undesirable consequences, but the outcomes have a subjective value that “contributes to the attitude in direct proportion to the strength of the belief in it” (Ajzen, 1991, pg. 91). Academics make it about behaviour and compliance. They look at it positively, as in implementing policy correctly. It could be seen as being accountable and maintaining their integrity, which would be a largely desirable outcome. Their behaviour is linked more to this positive outcome for them. They are aware of an outcome’s negative consequences that may be undesirable for the student. This attitude around being in the student’s interest to implement it correctly may not have been doing the student any favours in the first place or reaching the aims and objectives of the policy, and they do not implement it. Nevertheless, they are looking at it positively. They observe that accountability and integrity are largely a desirable option. They are looking at the subjective value of the decision they make. Academics plan their behaviours around the outcomes of their actions. By doing this they are being accountable for their actions that could also be viewed as being professional. Professionalism refers to
status, methods, character or standards expected of a professional or a professional organisation, such as reliability, discretion, even-handedness, and fair play (Wikt- tionary).

Moore (2002) observes the understandings of professional identities amongst the teachers in an observational study with five U.K. schools and looks at how teachers respond to education policy. They examine this from a school teacher’s perspective in particular and how teachers and students are being coerced into becoming the carriers of neoliberal ideologies. Moore and Clarke argue that tensions exist amongst teachers when it comes to academic policy. Some have no issues, and they are fine, but there is a significant number that experience tension and often describe this as serious or troubling. A continuation study in 2016 by Moore and Clarke further examine teachers’ attachment to professionalism and are particularly interested in educational policies and discourses with centralised policies and forced implementation. One aspect of Moore and Clarkes study is how they see teachers who are unhappy with policy aspects and feel that they have no other option but to go along with them. They believe that teachers are so determined to see the students succeed even within an unfair system and harmful one to them.

The implementers’ individual interpretations allow the shaping of policy ideas that others could understand (Erasmus and Gilson, 2008). This is an example where non-compliance leads to innovation and changing of policies over time. However, some move through the process to make fateful and non-fateful decisions for students and involves adhering to the goals and objectives of the policies. They believe it is the right decision, regardless of the outcome. They are abiding by the rules, and in effect, they see what they are doing is the right thing to do by the student even if it is not favourable. There are concerns over the relationship with the students, but it was still in their best interest.
6.3.2 Prioritising career: making fateful decisions

Making fateful decisions by accepting influence, perceiving outcomes and protecting stakeholders

As well as planned behaviour theory, other theories explain the academics’ approaches to overcoming their concerns, such as decision making concerning the stakeholders. They are protecting the stakeholder. They accept a certain influence, which is power. They are perceiving outcomes, which is implementing or non-implementing, compliance and non-compliance while protecting the stakeholder. They are implementing it with the best outcome for the stakeholder. Now, the stakeholder’s best outcome may not have coincided with their most desirable outcome, where the student would have the outcome that they would want. Nevertheless, it is viewed as the best outcome for the student or the best outcome to meet the policy objectives, regardless of the policy.

Lunenburg’s (2012) ideology that different types of power are used to get subordinates cooperation within an organisation what was evident in the current study through alienating involvement with policy. The academics feel that they just do what they have to or can do. If they do not agree with the policies, goals, and objectives, they use their discretion or make choices for stakeholder and self-interest. This can be described as alienating involvement in their compliance. Lunenburg also discusses calculative participation and whether this is negative or positive. Nevertheless, it is a low intensity negative and a low-intensity positive involvement with the action or the object. Moral participation could be viewed as positive involvement, but it would be high intensity. Calculative could describe how academics prioritise their career but may have a low positivity with policy. Still, they get involved in implementing the policy, which moves them from a calculative to a moral involvement. Decisions that involve students benefit or the stakeholders could be positive. There is a mixture of all three compliance theory elements in the current
study and how the academics approach and implement policy. Lunenburg argues that applying force, fear, or other coercive measures usually creates a high degree of alienation, and it then becomes impossible to use normative power successfully. Academics feel a sense of isolation but they move to a normative power where they get rewards for compliance by recognition of being compliant. It is possible that the institutes’ academics are coercive and normative and have moral behaviours. Lunenburg’s interesting point is that some teachers’ unions use utilitarian and normative power to gain compliance from their members. Some academics prioritise their career and have moral involvement where they implemented policy as it is written. After all, they want to implement the policy’s goals and objectives because they are committed to its “socially beneficial features” (Lunenburg, 2012, pg.3).

Berlant (2011) is interested in the relationship between an individual or the human subject and the social world. In the current study that context is the academic living in the social world of academia and higher education. In Moore and Clark’s (2016) study, it is the teachers in second-level education. In an ideal world, the academics and teachers’ hopes and dreams, in their academic careers, are teaching to make things better and to teach everybody and everything in that world, and all would be good. This is especially evident in looking after underprivileged students from college or a mature student returning to college. Teachers and academics aim is to get them through the system. Some academics in the current study express certain policies or procedures in a smaller or expanding institution may hinder or affect this ideology. Berlant expands the notion of attachment between the individual, the academic in this case, and their external influence, policy enforcement. She describes this attachment as a relationship based on rhetoric, anxiety, unpredictability and fear. Berlant believes relationships that result in cruel optimism may have existed for as long as there have been organised societies. Clark and Moore (2016) argue that the want for the academic to have a better life is hindered by policies, but it is accepted and embraced in current society and continues. There is still a conflict
of interest and tensions, though, as a result of policy enforcement. Academics and teachers are professionals, and they want to make a better life for their students. That is obvious in the current theory that describes how academics overcome this fear, conflict and tension. Their professionalism informs accountability and academic integrity that results in harmony and consonance in the face of that existent power.

Clark and Moore (2016) find that teachers want to do their best for their students and want to make an ideal teaching world for them, or they have a desire to make it a better place for them. This belief drew on Berlants’ theory and the idea of having a world where no child is left behind in a helpful kind of world. Nevertheless, what happens, in reality, hinders and damages that belief. The problem felt by academics with policy, when implemented correctly, may affect the student, and they disagree with its goals and objectives that cause this. The wanting to do the best for the student and not wanting to do “what one is told” (Clarke and Moore, 2016, pg. 4) causes tension. They argue that trying to do the best for the student and for every student to come through the system unharmed could be against their ideologies. The hope of no child left behind is hindering their ability to succeed. The issue is how they manage tensions in their careers and reconcile with practices that they may not support or feel detrimental to them (Moore and Clarke 2016). Academics are aware that this is not possible and that ’no child being left behind’ is unrealistic but their behaviour indicates that thinking of the outcomes on the students and what is best for them is the forefront of their decisions.

Berlant (2011) describes the concept of cruel optimism that examines the idea that teachers “go into teaching because they want to make a better world for their students and want them to succeed” (p.1). Berlant believes this is cruel optimism as to achieve the ideal world is not possible. Moore and Clarke believe that if they want it, it is something that they desire. It becomes an obstacle for teachers to flourish
in their careers as this desire to be better, or the best, is out of reach and possibly unrealistic. The teacher’s desire may be cruel and optimistic, and not every student will be brought through the system, but it is inevitable that someone is left behind. In the current research, the academics prioritise their career or make fateful decisions that affect the students. Those fateful decisions may be, in fact, cruelly optimistic as what they are doing is trying to protect the stakeholders. However, on the other hand, they are also thinking of their careers in the implementation process. They are cognisant of correct implementation that could inevitably hurt the students and is a battle for them. Berlant (2011) looks at the concept of cruel optimism and its effect on the teacher’s lived experiences. He believes it is “a mechanism that deliberately is used to support teacher resistance to public policy instructions”. (pg. 1) Data indicates that the discretion that teachers and academics use allow them to downplay and harmonise their resistance, still maintaining professionalism. Part of discretion is the choices that they make around policy and how they approach it and this is an important contribution of the findings.

Positive psychology studies human beings, and “any science that does not use character and choice will never be accepted as a useful account of human behaviour” (Taylor, 2001, pg.128, Seligman, 2002a). Taylor argues that in order for people to have control in their lives and get what they want out of a situation, they need choice and autonomy to do so and is fundamental to well-being, and without these, they will feel deprived. (Taylor, 2001) Literature on negotiations of self and how people make decisions relates to how academics resolve their conflict and prioritise their career. They have to decide on the policy’s compliance and the outcome of the policy on the stakeholder. The focus is still on the stakeholder and that the results meet the policies written objectives and their career through accountability and integrity.

Social cognitive theory looks at how extrinsic factors can influence academic be-
haviours. (Gibson, 2020) Gibson discusses cognitive theory that gives meaning to educators from a self-ruling standpoint. These are outside factors that he argues in his view influence the decision-making process. People become the “creators of their own experience and facilitators of events”. (pg. 13) through practices and goals and aims that connect to ideologies and expectations. Academics are influenced by the policy’s power and are also affected by intrinsic factors such as moral obligations and stakeholder decisions. They know that there is a power behind the policy and that they believe rules and regulations should be adhered to. However, for others, there is the stakeholder, and the fateful decisions that are being made. The social cognitive theory could relate to the policy’s power and the academic practices they maintain or strengthen. Gibson suggests that when academics are under pressure from educational policies, “such individuals will reform their practices to comply with or defer to the extrinsic powers’ confines” (pg.13). It is interesting how the academics succumb to the conflict but also maintain academic integrity by harmonising their cognition and increasing their consonance with the policy and implementing it. According to Catalano and Gatti (2016) policy writers’ decision-making positions should consider how these policies directly affect teachers and the integrity of their classroom practices. However, this accountability is where academic integrity is violated due to the pressures to be accountable and meet the obligations or the policies’ goals (Gibson, 2020). Furthermore, the reality is the educators are trying to achieve these accountability goals. Amongst the academics there is compliance for accountability. Gibson’s study is a qualitative study to understand how academic accountability pressures affect teachers’ educational integrity practices. The study observes the nature of the academics’ insights and how they respond to the laws. These are external laws that affect their integrity and teaching practices. In the past decade, Gibson argues that researchers have found that teacher practices’ integrity has declined due to increased educational policies that have demanded more student outcomes and teachers’ accountability.
Luther Gulick (1966) observes discretion and states that choice is used in administration and systems at the bottom of the hierarchy, where the public touch the policy, or the public servants face the public. Furthermore, this is where the academics are faced with policies that affect their stakeholders or their students. The stakeholders include the students and anyone whom the policy affects when implemented. It is at this level where discretion and choices are made. At this level, street-level bureaucrats, described by theorists such as Lipsky (1980, 2010) and Barrett (2004), discuss their mechanisms to overcome their expectations in the face of conflict. An interesting note that Spillane et al. (2002) makes is that political science research suggests that bureaucrats are hardworking. They typically work to carry out a policy with directives from above. When it comes to the policy’s decisions, the academics have to implement the policy. The decisions they make could affect the students or stakeholders positively or negatively and their behaviour indicates that they use their discretion.

According to Jones et al. (2006), a major theme of stakeholder theory is the nature of the firm’s relationship, which is the academic institutions and the stakeholders. They argue that sometimes there is considerable conflict that causes tension for managers and stakeholders around the decisions that need to be made. They believe that this tension is “frequently linked to, and emanating from, stakeholder attributes, power and legitimacy” (pg.136). They talk about stakeholder culture and how situations or practices are dealt with within the institution. These are normally from collective learned behavioural responses to problems within the organisation, and members have responded to those to manage those complex stakeholder relationships. Stakeholder culture may influence the nature of the organisation and its practices and the methods used to monitor and interact with stakeholders (Hatch, 1993). Stakeholder culture is related to ethical practices and the values, methods, and procedures that look at moral behaviour within the institution (Victor and Cullen, 1988). As well as a moral and ethical culture, there is an amoral culture
where self-interest overrules stakeholder interest. In the current study, elements of non-compliance constitute immoral activity. However, what is not considered when discussing ethics and morality is non-compliance, overcoming it, or even avoiding it. In many ways the academics’ behaviour indicates that their decisions to resolve the conflict is the focus. When academics are not acting in the stakeholder’s best interest, that does not mean that they are morally deficient, they are responding to poorly designed incentive structures, or they are subject to inadequate monitoring mechanisms (Jones et al., 2006).

Donaldson and Preston (1995) describe stakeholder theory from a normative perspective, how the stakeholders relate to the institutions, and how the institute relates to them. In their study, they are concerned with how academics use self-interest and self-justification to overcome their concerns. They also describe ethical theories and identify a convergence theme, others’ interests instead of self-interests, and the stakeholders’ interests rather than the actors’ self-interest. The actors in this research demonstrate a certain amount of self-interest and accountability and integrity. However, integrity could be related the stakeholder involvement. They argue that stakeholder culture resolves tension and influences the managers’ thinking and decisions, and behaviour concerning stakeholders and their relationship. Their study discloses the ideal egoism, which is where one acts in their self-interest and mentions two forms, psychological and ethical. Psychological egoism is one way of describing human behaviour. Ethical egoism is a normative perspective that means people should act exclusively in their self-interest. People are obligated only to be concerned with their long-term welfare (Beauchamp, Bowie and Arnold 2004, Jones et al., 2006). However, this is not moral, and the academics within this study appeared to be. They are constantly thinking about the outcomes of their actions on students, positive or negative, and the outcomes for themselves. So, as much as it is self-interest and self-justification, there is third party involvement and the third party’s welfare, the student or other stakeholder. Moral philosophy takes
the interests of others in the decision-making process and behaviour (Barry and
Stevens,1998). This behaviour is obvious in the current study in what the aca-
demics are doing.

Utilitarianism is the theory that an action should be directed towards achieving
the greatest outcome for the greatest number of people (Wiktionary.com). Theo-
rists such as Kant depart from utilitarian approaches and look at the importance of
motives for acting and argue that making the right decisions for the right reasons
should be the ultimate goal (Kant, 2001). Ethical theory and stakeholder decision
theories observe a focus on utilitarianism. There is no sense during the study of
any immoral actions. The activities are academics doing their own thing but many
activities include stakeholder welfare. The stakeholder is involved in their deci-
sions, and they are passionate about that. Kant argues that an act performed for
reasons of personal satisfaction carries less moral weight than it would if it were
performed because of a duty to do so. Kant also argues that the principles ought to
be universalisable. That is, if everybody adopts the same direction, it should not be
self-defeating. Ethical theory is particularly relevant to corporate context and cul-
ture (Jones et al.,2006). Jones et al. observe stakeholder theory and its relationships
between the stakeholders and the firm. They believe the firm’s self-interest is often
an exercise of power, and there is no regard for moral concerns. The power is well-
defined in the stakeholder relationship with the firm and “structurally determined
potential for obtaining favoured payoffs where interests are in opposition” (Willer,
Lovaglia, and Markovsky, 1996, pg. 563). Focusing on stakeholders and culture and
the context of organisational culture, there are links to corporate culture and that
a successful corporate culture has links to how they treat customers, teachers and
students within these settings (Barney, 1986).

The tension that arises in this context is through deciding whether to act in a
self-regarding manner or an other-regarding manner and that actors are faced with
the dilemma of acting out of moral obligation and duty, honesty and respect, fair-
ness and equity, care and assistance or self-interest (Hendry, 2005). The trade-offs between the interests of the organisation and the stakeholder interests involve the allocation of benefits and burdens among human beings and, hence, involve moral considerations (Jones et al., 2006). When people are faced with ethical decisions, they experience tension between self-interest and other-regarding. Stress levels are higher in an organisational stakeholder relationship because of relationships and the actors’ interactions (Hendry, 2005). The academics feel morally obliged to adhere to the policies that they believe are there for a reason. Hence, the theory of personalising dissonance outlines a part of the process where the academics adhere to policy out of moral obligation. Gorsuch and Ortberg (1983) suggest the need to consider perceived social pressures and personal feelings of moral obligation or responsibility to perform, or refuse to perform, a certain behaviour. Stakeholder culture is a central element of organisational culture and provides managers with guidance regarding how tension should be resolved (Jones et al., 2006). They argue that culture represents a firm’s collective reconciliation of conflicting beliefs and consists of practices and values that have developed over time to solve recurring stakeholder related issues. Organisational culture reflects a sort of negotiated order (Fine, 1984).

Jones et al.’s (2006) describe solutions to stakeholder issues as self-regarding (self-interest) or other regarding (thinking of others) or even a combination of both. In the current study, when the academics consider their career, they prevail on self-regarding. However, it could be argued that it is a combination of both of these as they feel that policy is there for a reason, and the student benefits from its objectives, regardless. Other-regarding is a policy implemented for the stakeholder’s benefit even if it goes against its objectives. Either way, the stakeholder remains dominant in the decisions being made. Self-interest plays a major role in many firms’ stakeholder cultures, perhaps taking the form of an “every person for him/ herself” mentality (Jones et al., 2006). The findings of the study show that self-regarding or self-interest are used by the academics in prioritising the decisions they make based
on the outcomes of them.

6.3.3 Prioritising career: maintaining integrity

Maintaining integrity through knowledge sharing, harmonising cognition and increasing consonance

Integrity in the workplace is defined as commitment even in the face of adversity to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility (Cleary, Walter, Horsfall and Jackson, 2013). They maintain that policies and procedures must be seen to be practicable. They give the bullying policy as an example where the bullying policy should be accompanied by awareness and education. They believe that academics perceive organisational decision-making to be timely, thorough, transparent, and fair. If they see it this way, actors are more likely to behave with professional integrity. Cleary et al. (2013) believe that an ethical culture promotes and “supports individuals’ moral integrity” (pg. 264). According to Widang and Fridlund (2003), integrity encompasses ethical principles such as autonomy, fidelity, privacy, and personal beliefs and values. They believe that acting following one’s general ethical principles is also in keeping with moral integrity (Widang and Fridlund, 2003). Moral integrity is the difference between right and wrong, and that people or actors will speak up for what they do, use their autonomy, and are professional. This is demonstrated in how academics resolve their conflict with policy and consider the outcome of their actions in moral and ethical ways. They are aware that their actions around policy and the consequences for themselves as academics as well as the students.

Lavine and Roussin (2012) define academic integrity as a set of morals and principles aimed towards accountable behaviours consistent with the fundamental aims and principles of responsible teaching practices in education. Integrity is the foundation for the behaviour and the actions of educational professionals in every feature of their practice (McFarlane, Jang and Poon, 2014). All of the legislation and en-
couragement to be accountable has strained academic practices and caused conflict between the demands of education and academic integrity (Gibson, 2020). Hursh (2013) studies educators’ responses to pressures within academia and argues that academics are cutting corners and violating academic integrity in their practices. In the current study, the pressure felt is through forced compliance with the policy they do not agree with or understand. They just carry on doing as they think fit. If an academic is cutting corners, they are doing so around the implementation of the policy but they justify the decisions they make as they feel they are in the student’s best interest. In general, though, some prioritise their positions and are more inclined to err of the side of caution and implement the policy as it is outlined. They are aware of the consequences of not complying but accept other influences and make those fateful decisions to protect their profession.

Hogan (2011) argues that stakeholders and policymakers continue to pressure educators, undermining their academic integrity. When faced with forced or deemed inappropriate policies in a context, this study finds that academics make decisions to promote integrity and this allows them to become more accountable for their actions. Gibson (2020) mentions that in the United States, the blame is shifting to teachers if policies are failing, which impacts their classroom practices where they have lost autonomy within their practice. What happens in the current study is academics believe their voices are lost and they seize opportunities to get involved in the development of policy to make them better and this regains their autonomy and their voices are heard. This will be discussed further in the next section, the final phase in the theory.

Integrity has become a concept “with more prominence in research on government and governance” (Huberts, 2014, pg. 1). Huberts asks the basic questions of what integrity is and why it is important. However, he also looks at the relationship between ethics, integrity, governance, and corruption. Huberts looks at the relation-
ship between management and integrity and describes governance as an “authority of policy-making for problems and interests and implementation of these policies” (pg. 20). He argues that it does not necessarily have everything to do with governance, but it is more concerned with behaviour, process and procedure. The issue is not about the content or the outcomes and more about right and wrong, and the moral obligation that is there. Integrity then, according to moral values and rules, requires an understanding of what moral means, and everybody desires goodness, and that it is important. Montefiore (1999) looks at integrity through wholeness or completeness or consistency and coherence and harmony. The academics in the current study look at reaching a level of harmony in what they were doing and how they approach policy by maintaining integrity and being accountable for their decisions.

According to Harvey (1995), collegialism is the process of shared decision-making by a group of academics, or a collegial group of scholars, concerning academic matters, support in upholding the group members’ academic integrity, and conservation of this knowledge and practice. The academics maintain integrity in sharing knowledge to understand the goals and objectives of policy better. They practice this behaviour in defending their integrity. There is a kind of collegialism in how they maintain their accountability and integrity when there are discussions amongst colleagues on policy and later when they share their experiences and knowledge in the development of policy. However, the debate could include the idea that there are elements of cloisterism in how they work. Cloisters are secretive, isolated environments and quite defensive, also elitist and clings to power, where the new collegial is more about networking (Harvey, 1995). It relates to how the academics move from an isolated environment to a more open and networked environment to help resolve their concerns. There were elements of cloisterism in how they feel within the institution, they work in isolation and a lot of the time implementation of policy happens in isolation. Concerning defensive behaviour and cloisterism, it is definitely
indicated in how they are unyielding when they continue to just do as they have always done regardless.

Stakeholder theory in the current study is concerned with the decisions made amongst the academics and the impact those decisions have on stakeholders or the students. The stakeholders could be anyone affected by the implementation of the policy and could also include other academics. They are actors that are directly affected by institutional culture and structure. Decision theory is concerned with the reasoning underlying the academics choice. Choices are determined by beliefs and desires or values. Decision theory can be described as a theory of beliefs, desires and other attitudes and what is important is how these various attitudes cohere together (Steele et al, 2020). Decision theory is concerned in the current study particularly around choice that have the greatest expected personal and professional results. Policy dissonance is the level of disagreement or conflict felt amongst the academics with policy. Decision theory with dissonance is associated with commitment to a difficult choice.

Cognitive dissonance is concerned with the avoidance of negative consequences (Beasley, 2016). Several discussions around dissonance reiterate that it is not about cognitive inconsistencies, but rather the desire to make the consequences less unpleasant that may result in a change in behaviours (Cooper and Fazio 1984, Johnson et al. 1995). When dissonance is felt the automatic reaction is to reduce it. The academics in their decision making showed similar behaviour. Consonance is the opposite of dissonance in that there is “lack of disagreement” or harmony. Academics reached a level of harmony or personal consonance when they had made their decision as they had a personal belief in what they were doing as a result of knowledge shared or acquired over time. Their goal was to reduce the dissonance felt to reach a level of consonance with their decisions and their behaviour demonstrated that.
Literature on behaviour and, in particular, the work of Wilson and Brekke (1994) discuss the concept of the less than ideal self, the perfect self or the two selves where one part of you wants to do one thing, and another part of you wants to do another thing. They discuss this less than ideal self and look at the judgements, actions and moods that are unwanted compared to a more preferred state. There are similarities in this and Festinger’s work on reducing dissonance. The academics in the current study fit the less than ideal self when they are not adhering to the policy. To be policy compliant, this preferred state allows them to be accountable for their actions.

Festinger and Carlsmith’s (2014) focus is on whether participants or agencies get involved in something that they do not agree with, or maybe they previously disagreed with. Academics behaviour indicates that if they do not agree with the policy, and implemented it in a more flexible way, they reduce the tensions even though they may have not wanted to be non-compliant. They have to make a decision and be happy with that to reduce their tensions. This behaviour results in increased consonance in decision-making. If they decide they are going to be compliant then they still reduce the tension as they are being accountable. By being accountable academics are thinking about the outcomes of their behaviours around the compliance of policy within the institutions.

Etienne (2011) studies compliance theory and its misgivings and contributions to research. He looks at it from a goal framing approach to compliance and believes there are multiple motivations behind compliant and non-compliant behaviour. Scholars explicitly distinguish between different types of non-compliance. (Weaver, 2014) Compliance theorists struggle to theorise the interactions between the different motivations, and these motivations could be normative and material goals. (Etienne, 2011) Etienne attempts to study these and provide a framework that includes numerous findings and provides a combination of significant research by building on existing theories. Lunenburg’s (2012) goal-framing approach provides a powerful
multi-goal preference formation model for compliance. Etienne argues that goal-framing accepts that “actors frequently pursue several heterogeneous goals simultaneously, whether these goals are chosen autonomously or triggered by their environment” (pg. 306). For an action to occur, one of these multiple goals takes precedence, while the others take a secondary role.

It is not necessarily a negligible one as is evident in the current research. The academics in prioritising their careers are both thinking of their job and thinking of their involvement with their students. Whatever decision they make, one takes precedence over the other, but they do not necessarily forget the other one or neglect it. They are considering how they implement policy as being the correct thing to do. They can be related to the decision-making process, the goals of the decisions, and the perceptions of the outcomes of those and the consequences. Etienne argues, goals steer selective cognitive processes, filtering how individuals perceive and make sense of their environment and “capturing and channelling attention may also influence goal pursuit” (Etienne, 2011, pg.306). In Etienne’s review of compliance theory in 2011, he looks at regulating goals and describes them as hedonic, gain, and normative. Hedonic describes goals in the context of enforcement and forced compliance. Guilt and shame can be part of the emotions felt with this enforcement. Fear, enforcement, guilt and shame are frequently discussed concerning this type of goal-framing approach. Goals that involve gain are concerned with moral incentives to perform the tasks. In the way the academics approach policy, they feel that there is enforcement of policy and how they resolve this describes a normative behavioural pattern. When they prioritise their career, some move from normative to gain, looking at incentives and consequences of their decisions. There is no ignorance about the stakeholder’s outcomes, but they allow themselves to maintain integrity by adherence. That is a goal signal for them to perform the act of implementation to harmonise their conflicts. The normative signal here is how they obey the laws. Etienne believes it is not a utilitarian approach, though, and contends
that the goals actors pursue are diverse and reach beyond individual self-interest but include social approval. The actors look at the positives, consequences and outcomes and then decide on how they react. It could be argued that there is utilitarian involvement as utilitarianism results in calculative behaviour where actors look for personal gain. The utilitarian theory applies a “cost-benefit” to all affected by a decision, not just an individual (as in egoism) or an organisation. One form of utilitarianism is rule utilitarianism. Rule utilitarianism involves following rules that are established in order to achieve the greatest positive consequences. Etienne also argues that the preferences within the decision-making process are influenced by an overall goal, which may be non-utilitarian, to do what is right at the expense of other secondary objectives, which may be utilitarian. For example, do what is right for the student. There is a move between normative and gain in how they respond to this power and forced compliance. Normative signals, according to Etienne, are important for “explaining the dynamics of so-called voluntary compliance” (pg.318). The existence of a sanction for non-compliance is a signal for them to comply. Sociologists notice that sanctions are inseparable from normative power and whenever the sanction or reprimand disappears, normative behaviour tends to disappear as well (Etienne, 2011). Where there is non-compliance without sanctioning, the feeling they have is to obey the goals. Etienne concludes that conceptualising compliance due to competition between rival goals implies that behavioural change results from a threshold effect and depends on the actor’s goal setting and options available to them (Etienne, 2011).

Gofen (2015) looks at reconciling policy dissonance and governmental responses to policy compliance. He views individual’s non-compliance as a shift in their values rather than a specific response to the policy. The academics in the current study stuck to their beliefs and the student’s welfare is their end goal. However, Gofen describes enforcement through embracement, adoption, and acceptance as responses to policy dissonance. Whereas academics in the current study use awareness, negotiating, sharing knowledge and integrity to respond to academic policy. Gofen
argues that formal policy has changed to encourage and incentivise non-compliant behaviour. Acceptance, according to Gofen, is where the policy is modified to help reduce the harms of non-compliance. Research on policy implementation in schools suggested that the policy will likely be renegotiated at several levels so that the formal process will look different from the original policy (Berman and McLaughlin, 1968, Elmore, 1969). One could argue that this is innovation, which is similar to other studies, where they have looked at the innovation of policy through the act of non-compliance, such as Barret (2004) and Lipsky (1980, 2010).

Tompkins and Lawley (2009) believe that there is evidence that dissonant behaviour leads to innovation caused by the tensions that create it. They describe this tension as creative tension, and they suggest the need to reduce dissonance, which can cause immoral behaviour and produce creativity or innovative pressure leading to innovation. What happens over time with policy and sharing of knowledge when an approach may be misinterpreted or interpreted for a better outcome, the procedure becomes more fit for purpose as opposed to the non-purposeful policies that are causing conflict and tension for the academics.

Schneider and Ingram (1993) describe public policies as altering target behaviours by either forcing or enabling them to do something they otherwise they would not have done. In response to policies that academics feel are against their values, they continue with their common practice. The acts were never negligible, but there is self-interest and stakeholder involvement. If non-compliance leads to innovation overtime that allows them to, in time, reach a level of consonance or agreement with what they do.

Bazerman, Tenbrunsel and Wade-Bezoni (1998) observe the concept of negotiating with yourself and losing, and making decisions with conflicting internal preferences. They discuss this concept called the ‘want/should’ dilemma. When an academic is faced with implementing a policy, they want to do the right thing. When they face implementing a policy that might hurt the student or stakeholder involved, they
are presented with a dilemma because of their relationship with the student or the stakeholder. They dilute down that implementation process which is more noncompliant than compliant. They may have satisfied the ‘want/need’ in them, but the ‘should/need’ is still there. There is a correlation between this and Festinger’s work on dissonance. Dissonance is felt in the decisions, and the conflict is between what they should do and what they did do. Bazerman et al. (1998) describes it in the context of an employer evaluating an employee. The employer sees the employee coming through the doors. They look at the employee, and they are overcome because the employee is positive and awaits feedback. They end up not giving negative feedback because they do not want to make that employee feel inferior. Bazerman et al. argue that they should have given negative feedback because it would have helped the employee. Similarly, academics implementing a policy that could hurt the student or others and implement it incorrectly or non-comply could potentially conflict with their decision. Furthermore, in Bazerman et al.’s study, the employer does what they want to do. The same applies to academics. They still do what they want to do regardless. They also discuss that ‘want/self’ as an immediate reaction, and it is an emotional reaction that should be overtaken by what they describe as the ‘should/self’. In the prioritising career phase of the theory academics are moving from a ‘want’ to a ‘should’ self. They are ticking the box of being accountable, they are true to their integrity, and they are implementing a policy. Furthermore, they are probably fairer to a student by implementing the policy correctly, where they may contribute to growth or improvement, even if it is negative. For those who implement it flexibly they can position themselves similarly as they believe their decision has the best outcome.

Many authors highlight individual, situational and environmental factors as important facets in understanding academic integrity. Ewell (1994) believes there is a necessity to re-evaluate self-regulation and suggests that the two core concepts traditionally at the heart of self-regulation are academic integrity and collective
responsibility and should be at the core of this re-evaluation. Most research on academic integrity is about students, plagiarism, and educational integrity issues concerning students. Teachers have a great deal of power over students (Martin, 2006). The same dynamic occurs between university official’s faculties, deans and heads of departments. They have power over academics, and a hierarchy operates among staff. Martin’s research focuses on academic integrity, exploitation, and dissent and looks at academics’ problems and their academic integrity experiences. Martin talks about the obstacles being fear, double standards, personal connections, formal processes, and power corruptions. He also states that the challenge is to maintain integrity. When integrity aligns behaviour with principles, the challenge is to keep that, especially when those principles clash. Mac-farlane et al. (2012) argue that for academics, the local hierarchy is moderated by a parallel power system and that disciplinary fields have their own power systems. Each of these systems is subject to the corruptions of power. He also states that not all actors succumb to this power and that personal willpower will maintain integrity. There are incidents in the current study where power felt is evident. Many participants’ language or discourse include words such as battle, war, round-tables, and hierarchy. A language and discourse that dates back centuries where bureaucratic systems were the norm and clear demonstrations of power existed in society. It all stems back to rules and regulations and the belief that they should be adhered to or there will be consequences or a price to pay. It also involves not avoiding rules even though they are aware of consequences, but their ulterior motives for doing what they normally do again as discussed have an end goal, accountability that allows them to do what they do, guilt-free.

Those in positions of power could veto the decisions of the academics, but this reverts to the resolving conflict and the dissonance reduction techniques needed to conform with decisions they make at this point. In this phase of the basic social psychological process most academics have resolved their concerns with policy. However, there are
academics who want to get involved in the development of policy and share their experiences and knowledge that will allow them to speak out and regain their autonomy, that is the resolve for them. This is the final phase of the basic social psychological process of personalising dissonance and discussed in the next section.

6.4 Phase 3: Personalising dissonance - bridging gaps

The third and final phase in the theory of personalising dissonance is bridging gaps. Academics who have not completely resolved their conflicts with policy in the first two phases use opportunities to participate in policy development to exert their influence and acquired knowledge to regain autonomy and strengthen academic voices.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 6.3: How concerns were resolved in the final phase: bridging gaps

Some academics are eager to develop new policies as they have an issue with current ones. Implementation of policies will never be as the policy creators planned and a gap between the purpose of such policies and their results is inevitable (De la Cruz and Razo, 2020). Unclear policies can weaken implementation at the local
level (McLaughlin, 2006, Pressman and Waldavsky, 1984, Weatherley and Lipsky, 1977). This research contributes to this by describing how academics want to get involved in the development of policies and bring their knowledge to the discussion. Academics are more likely to participate if they feel motivated to get involved, which allows them to overcome their issues and concerns with academic policies within their institutions. They seize an opportunity, share knowledge and strengthen their voices. In doing so, they attempt to bridge the gaps between development and implementation. They resolve their conflict at this stage through the process of seizing opportunity, exerting influence and strengthening academic voices. The following sections highlight literature that relates to the behaviours of academics when responding to academic policies in the final phase of the theory.

6.4.1 Bridging gaps - seizing opportunity

Seizing opportunity through progression and participation

In the first two phases they resolved their conflicts through negotiation and engagement and then in the second phase they prioritise their career and make fateful decisions. In the third phase they participate and through participation and exerting influence they can bridge the gaps. The current study’s actors are academics at the micro-level who have issues with policy and they move to a level they feel they have more authority, the meso or macro to voice their concerns and get involved in the discussion on policy. The movement may happen over time but it is at this level that they can attempt to resolve their concerns with policy. The concerns for them are the rules and regulations written at the macro-level and how they are practiced at a micro-level. Many words used by the academics to describe these relations are battle and war zones concerning locus and round table discussions. This language is similar to Rigby et al’s (2016) study on how structure and agency influence policy implementation, where the words duet and duel are used. The academics read the instructions written at the macro-level and this is where the conflict starts as they
do not understand them and at times do not agree with them at the micro-level. They want to be part of the discussion on policy and they believe they have the knowledge and the experience to do so. The main cause of concerns is power and imposed policies that they could not implement.

Lunenburg (2012), in his discussions on compliance within organisations, talks about coercive power and utilitarian power and normative power. He discusses normative power controls and a reward for obedience such as interesting work, identification with the goal, and contribution to society. He argues that institutions where this would happen are political environments, universities, and professional associations. There is a correlation to the current research and normative power where the academics contribute to the policy where they feel a sense of obligation to do so. There was a movement to actively get involved in policy development.

Gallagher (2008) believes that individuals within institutions have a co-dependent relationship rather than a mutually exclusive one. He believes there is an ongoing battle between the two and that each will attempt to influence and realign one another, and Foucault argues that this happens through endless actions upon actions (Foucault, 1969). It is the individuals who instigate change that are also responsible for carrying out the policy’s initiatives, not only from institutional incentives but also from a professional and a personal motivation to carry them out. What is not mentioned with motivation however is participation. The academics overcome their concerns through participation in the development of what they believe will be better policies and is evident in the final phase of the theory presented where the academics seize opportunity to participate in policy development.

While there has recently been an explosion of participation and empowerment initiatives, it rarely varies. It seems power is preceded by the organisations concerned in favour of citizens or service users. (Open University, 2021) Sherry Arnstein (1969)
examines participation levels concerning power or access to power within organisations. It is based on urban planning in the United States in the 1960s. Arnstein describes a ladder to describe participation. It is at the forefront of many discussions on participation and is applied in many studies. Arnstein’s participation model is used to discuss stakeholder engagement and evaluation practices in academic circles, particularly around stakeholder involvement within these institutions (Wilcox, 1994). The ladder has eight steps and is appealing because many disciplines would recognise some of the steps. The steps range from manipulation of citizens through consultation control to the final step of citizen control. Each rung of the ladder corresponds to the extent of citizen’s power in determining the end product of a participatory process. The ladder is a simplification but helps to see significant gradations of participation, and not all participation is empowering but relates to the current research findings from several perspectives. If the ladder was compared to the organisational structure, micro-level at the bottom, macro at the top, policy implementation concerns and conflict are felt at the bottom. Let us compare manipulation to how the academics feel by being forced to implement a policy they do not agree with. Consultation and placation, where the academics comply and implement the policies. Then as they rise to the top of the organisation and metaphorically to the top of the ladder, they move into citizen power. Participation at that level gives them power. As per diagram below each step in Arnstein’s ladder corresponds to a degree of engagement ranging from non-involvement through tokenism to citizen power.

According to Arnstein, “participation is a categorical term for power” (1969, pg.216). According to Gallagher (2008), participation is key to true democracy, a way to transform unjust decision-making structures so that every voice can be heard and their wishes acted upon. Gallagher suggests a second narrative that participation is often ineffective with adults consulting participants but not acting upon their suggestions for change. This is where they may get involved, but it is just for tokenism.
That is the bottom of Arnstein’s ladder and is not real participation at all. Collins et al. (2006) looked at social learning as a new policy paradigm. They argue that this is a way of stepping away from Arnstein’s ladder of participation. They argue that even though participation and stakeholder involvement are important, the capacity for learning and engaging through participation has lagged a little bit in the research. They believe that epistemologies that underline participation are being conceptualised in the policy-making process. When discussing Arnstein’s ladder of participation Collins described this participation as a power struggle between the citizens trying to move up the ladder and controlling institutions and organisations that limit the ascent to the top to gain control. Movement could be seen as a way for the academic progressing to a position overtime that allows them to have their voices heard and that empowers them and gives them back some control.

Heller (2003) defines or notes participation as many things, but includes formal and informal participation. Still, the formal participation is more so where the academics
are in a higher position and participate. They could participate because they advanced to a position in the institution where they feel they can contribute to policy development. It is more formal participation rather than an informal day-to-day discussion with a manager or a supervisor. They do not have day-to-day discussions because they feel that their voice is not being heard. They keep silent by keeping their head down and getting on with their day-to-day duties.

Dundon et al. (2004) differentiates participation as direct upward problem-solving and representative involvement, which relates to academics on an academic board. They are allowed to speak and allowed to bring their knowledge to the table. Participation in policy development is viewed as efforts to resolve concerns with policy learned through experience on the ground. These authors use terms such as involvement, empowerment, and democracy when discussing participation.

Academics in the current study seize opportunity to get involved and gain empowerment through participation. Dundon et al. discuss employee voice as having meaning and purpose. They look at it from four perspectives, individual dissatisfaction, collective organisation through contribution to management, decision-making and mutuality. They address specific problems or issues with management through expression and grievance procedures. These are the individuals who have dissatisfaction with their organisations similar to actors in Hirschman’s (1970) view of voice and dissatisfaction. They also look at this collective organisation where voice compensates. It is a compensating source of power to management under unionisation and collective bargaining. The academics contribution to management decision-making is concerned with efficiency through team-working and sharing of knowledge that becomes a culture of informing practice, behaviours described in the next section.
6.4.2 Bridging gaps: exerting influence

Exerting influence by sharing knowledge and informing professional practice

There are motivations that drive academics to share knowledge. One of the motivations is to strengthen their academic voices and gain autonomy in the institution. It all stems from dissatisfaction within the system with what they describe as a bureaucratic system and relates to Hirschman’s exit, voice and loyalty model. Hirschman (1970) studies responses to dissatisfaction within organisations by employees. The first one is an exit to leave. The second one is a voice, and then the third one is loyalty. The voice is the attempt to change the relationship between the organisation and the individual. Loyalty is the degree to which the employee is loyal to the relationship. So there is this relationship between the individual and the organisation and that motivation encourages them to share knowledge.

Knowledge is communicating to others a personal acquired knowledge or intellect. Collecting knowledge is also collecting other’s knowledge and intellect. Communication and sharing of knowledge overtime will translate into organisational knowledge. The motivations behind knowledge sharing can be described as hard and soft (Hinds and Pfeffer, 2003). Hinds and Pfeffer describe hard being the mode of the communication and soft is the relationship between the individual and the department they reside in. They also describe it as the commitment and the relationship between commitment and knowledge sharing. Commitment is the sharing of knowledge and can be defined as three different types (Meyer and Allen, 1997). They define these as effective, continuance and normative. Effective commitment is having an emotional attachment to the organisation, which is evident in how the academics have a passion for the policy knowledge they want to share. The continuance commitment is associated with not leaving the organisation and needing to continue employment, which is not relevant in the current study, or at least not because of policy issues.
Normative commitment, however, is a feeling of obligation towards the organisation and a feeling that the person should continue employment. Active involvement in policy development would allow them to be heard or possibly seen to be involved and committed to the organisation. If people are seen sharing knowledge, they are appreciated more (Hall, 2001). There is a feeling amongst academics that they are more willing to share their knowledge, especially if the knowledge is being used. They want to get involved in policy to improve the policies that they feel are redundant. These academics believe they have enough experience and want to share that knowledge. Even though some had previously been involved with the policy development process, and they felt those contributions were disregarded. This also causes tensions but what is obvious is a continued commitment to get involved if their voices are heard and listened to.

Kelloway and Barling (2000) look at performance indicators on commitment and motivations. They believe a person’s commitment to the organisation would improve if there is a return on that commitment. A person would be more motivated if they were getting something in return. They would get rewarded for their membership or for the contributions to knowledge. According to Jones and Jordan (1998), sharing knowledge is a complex process because employees perceive themselves as valued by their organisation. Davenport’s research (1998) looks at knowledge as intimately and inextricably bound with people’s egos and occupations but does not flow easily across the organisations without a certain amount of motivation. Kelloway and Barling confirm this commitment as a predictor of performance within the institutions and organisations. Commitment to the organisation is an important part of knowledge sharing, and this is obvious in academics who seek opportunity to do so. They share knowledge to inform future development and better practices.

According to Frooman and Murrell (2005), stakeholder influence depends on the stakeholder’s demographic and the types of stakeholders involved. They also think
the level of influence relates to the type of relationship between the organisation and the stakeholder. The relationship felt in the current study is more a bureaucratic one and that is also where the conflict arises. There is a pre-conception that the relationship between the organisation and stakeholder will change if the academic moves to a position of power. By doing this they have more authority to exert influence and share knowledge. If they stay where they are they may not have that power or a voice to share this knowledge.

Nonaka (1994) defines knowledge as a human process of personal beliefs, and that knowledge is created when a flow of messages interacts between beliefs and responsibilities. Unless individuals share their knowledge within the organisation to individuals and other groups at other levels, it is less likely to impact organisational effectiveness (Nonaka, 1994). Academics share knowledge in order to make more effective functioning policies. Organisational knowledge sharing is dependent on individuals within the organisation to have their voices heard. Knowledge sharing between the individuals is how knowledge held by an individual is converted into a form that can be understood, absorbed and used by other individuals. Through decision-making and collective agreement, academics shared their knowledge.

Ipe (2003) states that knowledge sharing is one of the most strategic resources within an organisation. Furthermore, Ipe argues that there are different levels at which knowledge can be shared, from the basic levels, namely between the individuals in the organisation and that it exists at different levels. Within the current study, there are two main ways knowledge is shared. They are sharing it through collective agreement on the policy objectives and also through the process of participation in policy development. The use of the term sharing implies that this process of presenting individual knowledge in a form that others can use and “involves conscious action on the part of the individual who possesses the knowledge” (Ipe, 2003, pg. 341).
Davenport (1997) describes sharing knowledge as a voluntary act by the individuals within the organisation instead of reporting. Reporting is the exchange of information based on routines or structured formats. Sharing implies a conscious act by the individual who participates in the knowledge exchange even though there is no compulsion to do so. Academics are willing to share their policy knowledge because they have a passion for policy that works and are eager to get involved in policy development.

According to Hendriks and Vriens (1999) movement of knowledge within organisational structures resides with individuals at a specific organisational level. They maintain that when movement is to a different organisational level, the knowledge is converted into value for the organisations. There is knowledge sharing in the sharing of learned experiences of policy they have acquired over time. This knowledge are the issues and concerns they have with policies they believe are not working. Participation allows them to influence changes and improve them. Voicing their concerns at the development level also allows them to gain autonomy and strengthen their voices. The current study does not focus on the idea that knowledge is really important in the organisation or contributes to the organisation but amongst academics sharing is an occurrence within the institutions. The academics are consulting with each other and sharing knowledge on policy. Knowledge sharing within these institutions leads to innovation and change. There is also an increasing recognition of the role of knowledge and personal knowledge in the management processes and a growing interest in people’s perspective of knowledge within organisations (Earl, 2001, Ipe, 2004). However, actors must move to a certain level within an organisation to advance organisational goals (Ipe, 2004, Nonaka 1994). Knowledge sharing within organisations has many facets and is a complex process (Hendriks and Vriens, 1999). This knowledge movement within the organisation correlates to where academics progress within the organisation to share knowledge and influence the development.
of new improved policies.

Daudigeos (2013) identifies in his study two sets of activities through which staff professionals develop an ability to promote new practices inside their organisation. They develop a set of connections inside and outside the organisation to make up for their lack of formal authority. The academics feel that if they are in a more senior position and participate in policy development they have formal authority to change practices. He finds that actors form ties with line management and authorities and professional associations, and expert bodies. They construct these coalitions with other organisational members to get more access to more legitimate organisational processes. An interesting comparison between the actors in both studies show how formal indicators could heavily influence actors reasoning and goal setting, as echoed by Miller and Brickman (2004). They suggest that staff professionals are more likely to overcome social constraints if they can control information flows. The information flows from the lower level to the entire top level. Furthermore, this information is knowledge, and this is where the academics are taking it.

Knowledge sharing to inform better professional practices demonstrates organisational commitment by the academics. Professionals that exert influence within their organisations will influence change when their actions, intentions, and rationality behind their choices are dependent on the institution they wish to change (Battilana and Casciaro, 2011, Daudigeos, 2013). Academics are moving within the organisation to a position where they have some authority and where they can share their experiences and influence policy development. By doing this they were also strengthening their academic voices and regaining lost voices.
6.4.3 Bridging gaps: strengthening academic voices

Strengthening academic voices through speaking out and gaining autonomy

De Bakker and Den Hond (2008) observe stakeholder influence over organisations. They suggest that the stakeholders’ influence is a temporary outcome of action-reaction and interaction among various parties. They believe responsibility and governance and legitimacy within organisations is the focus of stakeholder’s welfare. They argue that the stakeholders within these organisations influence corporate decision-making and they believe there is a limited understanding of that influence. They believe it has become more urgent to start understanding how different groups can influence companies. They describe these stakeholders as diverse and include those who are not directly engaged in the organisation’s activities but can exert influence or are affected by the organisation.

Savage, Whitehead, and Blair (1991) define these stakeholders as secondary stakeholders. Hart and Sharma (2000) describe them as fringe stakeholders with no formal contracts within the firm, and according to Clarkson (1995), they are in a very weak bargaining position within the firm. Gofen (2015) defines stakeholders as homogenous groups and interprets their behaviour as predominantly guided by the pursuit of distinct interests or goals. Similar approaches are used by academics such as goal-framing and self-interest in how they approach policy. Whatever way its viewed, the academics are gaining autonomy through strategic moves. This is a rational choice, where they are actors that were in pursuit of preferences to have their voices heard. The concept of autonomy is where authority has been given to an actor within the system. (Gibson, 2000) They have earned that authority through “authenticity and credibility in a specific body of knowledge” (Peters, 1973. pg. 20). From a field-level perspective, academics feel their voices are not being heard, but if they were in position with more authority they would be.
Wilkinson et al.’s (2014) study employee voice and the different voice manifestations. They identify four different types of representation of voice. The first one was individual dissatisfaction, which was similar to Hirschman’s Exit, Voice and Loyalty study, where dissatisfaction leads to making a choice. They also believe that voice can be a collective concern. According to them collective concern is more concerned with unions and academic voices through those kinds of agreements. They also talk about mutuality where there is a similar interest for employees and employers within the industry, based on economic and moral and ethical grounds.

Hirschman (1970) defines voice as “any attempt at all to change rather than to escape from an objectionable state of affairs, whether it is through individual or collective petition to the management directly in charge, through appeal to a higher authority, intending to force a change in management, or through various types of actions or protests, including those that are meant to mobilise public opinion” (pg. 30). According to Blommaert (2006), academic voice “is the capacity to make oneself heard and understood in one’s terms” (pg. 240).

Budd, Gollan and Wilkinson (2010) describe power and hierarchical power as a reason or key determinant for using a formal employee voice mechanism. They describe two possible relationships that are supported: power relationships between the offender and the target. Power relations appear to “moderate the effect of work self-esteem on remedial voice” (p.g 306). Imposed power drives academics that are policy driven to get involved in policy development that helps them resolve the issues they have with their institutions’ policies. Wilkinson et al. highlight the importance of power in understanding employee voice and the usefulness of a social, psychological perspective on employee voice and participation research. Much of the studies to date focus on academic voice from a union perspective, but this is the academic voice from a rules and regulations perspective and a policy one. They have issues
and concerns, and they need to voice their concerns with that because it affects their working lives. They need to resolve those concerns, and that is a pattern of behaviour discovered in the data. The different authority types can be described as “in authority” and “an authority” (Shalem et al., 2018). They define “in authority” as a position of authority that can direct rules and regulations and “an authority” relates to experiential power and the right to be believed based on that.

Winch (2010) discusses authority types that draw on the amount of knowledge that the influencer or the teacher has within that educational setting where their view is worthy and respected. In the stakeholder power interest matrix cited by Johnson and Scholes (1999), stakeholders are described as the “buzzing in managers’ ears”, when they try to get their voices heard. They try to manipulate, but they do not have enough power to do so. They are bothersome to management until they get into a position of power, and their voice is there to be heard and how much power they have and their legitimacy has received little attention from stakeholder scholars (Mitchell et al., 1997).

Cohn and Kottkamp (1993) observe teachers’ voice or absence of it in dialogues and decision-making within institutions. They argue that efforts to improve education are doomed to failure until teachers become “respected partners in the process” (pg. 16). Hargreaves (1994) describes how teachers’ voices are largely neglected and their opinions have been overridden or not discussed. While this is important, and empowering teacher voices in education is important and recognised by multiple authors, there is an issue that very little has been accomplished to see how this voice can be achieved and, in particular, concerning policy development.

Hargreaves and Shirley (2011) describe teachers as the endpoint of education reform, the last to hear, know or speak, but they are the objects of reform, not participants. They believe that teachers are at the far end of educational reform. They argue
that most research on teachers’ policy voice focuses on its importance for successful policy-making and implementation. They believe there is a shortage of research examining the process of invoking teacher’s voice, especially when their voices are not what researchers and policymakers expect to hear (Hargreaves, 1996, Lefstein and Perath, 2014).

Lefstein and Perath (2014) look at ‘empowering teacher voices in an education policy discussion’ and highlighted a direct correlation between policy discussion and participation. The current study describes how academics attempt to get to a point where they can develop better policies. They view a more senior position, meso-level or macro-level, as having more power and more voice. Lefstein and Perath describe how the stakeholders involved in policy development processes should be graduates, the public, educational practitioners and the students. They argue that teachers are the ones that are closest to policy, but yet their “involvement is marginalised” (2014, pg. 33). They look for a space for teacher involvement in educational policy deliberations and the teacher’s voice. They argue that teacher participation in the educational policy process helps to “fulfil a core principle of deliberative democracy” (2014, pg. 34). In their article, they describe four factors that shape the realisation of a teacher’s voice. These include repertoires, social position, topics and gatekeepers. They find that teachers end up being blamed on accountability or reform and for educational shortcomings. The academics that are blamed leads to further marginalisation of teacher’s voices. They argue that it is one of the first studies that empirically investigates teachers’ attempts in the policy-making process and empowers teachers’ voices. They look at the similarities and differences, and at the practical implications concerning the study of employee voices. They summarise the factors that shape the realisation of teacher’s voices and the study’s limitations. They observe trust issues, and accountability and especially trust issues regarding teacher professionalism that relate to the idea that teachers act in the public good, rather than maximising their interests, trying and having their voices heard.
Gozali et al. (2017) study teacher voice in global conversations around education access, equity and quality. They argue that stakeholders and teachers’ voices have continued to be marginalised in the literature and policymaking related to global educational development. Teachers are “rarely asked to speak on their account” (pg. 1). They find that teacher voice is more “personal than systemic, narrative rather than propositional, and utilised colloquial vocabulary rather than technical jargon” (pg. 32). Nonetheless, they describe a critical necessity for including teacher voice in educational planning and decision-making. They talk about different voices that teachers have, including teacher employment voice, teacher educational voice and teacher policy voice. They describe this as the “most contested category of teacher’s voice” (pg. 32) and related to governance. Teachers are expected to implement the reforms but are “marginalised in the discourse regarding development, implementation, and improvement of reform efforts” (Gratch, 2000, pg. 44).

Olson-Buchanan and Boswell (2002) mention that different employees have different preferences in how their voices are heard. Some go formal, and some go informal, and they find that the more loyal employees go for more informal and less loyal or dissatisfied employees go for a more formal process. However, this depends on the context. If there is dissatisfaction and complaints, it could be seen as that, but what is happening in the current study is that the dissatisfied did not voice, they were passive, and they just did what they were doing but this could also be seen as being powerless. However, the more loyal or those that possibly perceived themselves to be, wanted their voice to be heard. Loyalty at the higher positions could possibly be loyalty to the institution or it could well be self-interest. They were voicing their grievances through participation and sharing knowledge. This leans more towards loyalty to the institution as well as the students, but it also resolves their concerns.

Budd, Gollan, and Wilkinson (2010) examine new approaches to employee voice
and participation in organisations and argue that employee voice and participation is a longstanding issue and still evident in this study. Young (2006) discusses empowering voices in education and policy and argues that one group member cannot represent all group members and argues that it is paradoxical. Young argues, “the normative legitimacy of a democratic decision depends on the degree to which those affected by it have been included in the decision making processes, and have had the opportunity to influence the outcomes” (pg. 5-6). In the current research employee voice is policy-voice, their experiences on policy and how they believe it is not heard. What correlates this research with that of Leftstein and Perath are the factors that shape the teacher’s voice, which is their social position. According to them the local or ordinary level full-time teachers are opposed to the positions that are in management. However, with advanced knowledge, advanced experience, these positions are where the effective voice is represented. This is how the academics in the current study attempt to have their voice heard. The concept of bridging gaps means that the academics who want to progress and participate within the institution would have been very interested in policy development. They do not need guidance for inter-unit structure or co-operation. They are doing it themselves. They use their autonomy when they get to positions that give them more autonomy to have their voices heard and participate in policy development. What also manifested in the findings are concerns around organisational structure and culture and how these affect the behaviours of academics and that they permeate everything within them. The relevant literature that describes how structure and culture influences behaviours is discussed in the next section.

6.5 Organisational structure, culture and personalising dissonance: the connection

Within the organisational structure academics are at the bottom where they are expected to implement policies that are developed at the top. They have issues with
the policy writers at the top stating that they are separated from what is happening on the ground. This results in a gap between the top and the bottom when it came to policy compliance. What is happening are academics are practicing their own thing or what is referred to as “doing what they have always done” and this is not always in line with the objectives of the policy. There is a culture of flexible implementation of policy. Foucault and Weber’s works on power and bureaucracy relate to how the academics view and address power within the organisations. An exploration of their works and how the works of other theorists’ impact on personalising dissonance and is discussed in the next section.

![Organisational Structure and Culture Diagram](image)

Figure 6.5: Structure, culture and personalising dissonance
6.5.1 Personalising dissonance – habitus, field and capital

The French theorist, Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) studies his fellow academics’ social background and practical activities, including Foucault, Derrida, and Lacan, by analysing their social origins and current positions. Pierre Bourdieu constructs a map of France’s intellectual field and analyses the forms of capital and power, lines of conflict, and patterns of change that characterise France’s higher education system. Bourdieu turns his attention to his academics in the French higher education system from a general and a scientific perspective. This is from a French perspective but it is familiar to British or American readers as he describes it himself. Pierre Bourdieu believes that the pre-existing social world of spaces, structures, systems, and the organisation are infused or influenced by power relations (Bourdieu, 1988). According Bourdieu from the day we are born, we internalize these structures. A person born into a wealthy family or a person born into a low-income family will most likely position themselves into these structures. Sometimes we may not be aware of this internalisation. The structures, according to Bourdieu are loci and habitus and describe this internalisation. Within these structures, there is the dominant, and there is the dominated. Depending on internalisation, how a person positions in these spaces is how they are influenced by power. Habitus then decides who we are, whom we think we are, and how we position ourselves in the social order. Concerning policy implementation, social positioning is how implementers of policy situate themselves within these power relations and was termed by Bourdieu as their Homo Academicus. Bourdieu switches his concerns to his community of academics and he recognises problems that need to be solved or acknowledged as academics. Homo Academicus describes French intellectual life and develops a general approach to the study of modern culture and education. It has been of great interest in studies of sociology, education and politics, and those concerned with the role of intellectuals and higher education. According to Bourdieu, academia is a domain of dialogue and debate and a sphere of power in which reputations and careers are made, defended, and destroyed (Bourdieu, 1988).
Intellectual Capital is academic achievement attained through experience. This experience is in teaching, research and scholarly activities in general (Bourdieu, 1988). In the context of the current study it also relates to policy experience and knowledge of policy issues. Intellectual capital is status earned by position within the organisational hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1988). According to Bourdieu, academic capital holds prestige and enables “domination over other positions and their holders” (pg. 84). If academics move from the position of dominance to the dominant, they become empowered. According to Bourdieu, academic capital is similar to managerial power gained through a senior level position within the organisations. Managers have techniques they use to carry out their tasks or duties and is referred to as managerialism.

Managerialism is criticised for management practices that focus on top-down decision making and “is reflective of the domination of academic power over intellectual capital within the university Field” (Rowlands, 2013). Their relative positions within that space define agents and groups of agents. Each of them is assigned to a position or space. Academic and intellectual capital exists concerning habitus, field and capital, so spaces bind these fields (Bourdieu, 1985), and their positions within this particular space define the agents within these. There are various forms of capital. These can be socio-economic or cultural, and they are situated within these fields. This capital is a result of the practices within those spaces. Habitus is enduring, but it is not an unchanging system and is led by thoughts and practices within specific fields (Bourdieu, 1966). Figure 6.6 depicts habitus, field and capital in relation to the academics.

In his discussions on capital, Bourdieu describes academic capital as senior managers’ (policy-writers) power or management within the universities. In contrast, he talks about academic or intellectual capital as capital that is generated by practicing academics. (Bourdieu, 1988). Bourdieu’s Homo Academicus is primarily to expose universities as places of social inequality (Wacquant (1990), and is specific
to French universities, but the concepts are widely relevant and are on-going. The academics in the current study are academics with capital and intellectual capital within the university and held a particular position within their field. However, due to a power dynamic and the intellectual capital at other positions within the field, they feel their voice and power is diminished. According to Naidoo (2004), the struggle within a University between these academics and intellectual capital positions is ongoing. That struggle is evident, and what is happening is that academics within their field that wanted to be heard moved from their current position to a position where they could have greater academic capital, and armed with intellectual capital, they feel they had a voice or control.

According to Bourdieu, academic capital is acquired and determined within the university by holding a position enabling control of other positions and their holders.
This control is “over material organisational and social instruments of reproduction of faculty” (1988, pg. 84). Academics that move to a position of authority had acquired knowledge on policy. However, in order for academics to get to this position, they need to have intellectual capital and then they are in a position to use it as well as policy knowledge. Academic capital aligns with managerial power accrued by holding a senior-level position (Rowlands, 2013). She argues that it is a controversial belief and that university governance manifests as practices frequently described as new public management, focusing on executive-driven decision-making and performance measurement. Rowlands study on academic voice discovers that academic governance at the academic board level is undertaken by academics but practices are influenced by senior managers and executives. The result of this is a reduction of the academic voice. Rowlands argues that there is a reduction in the number of academics on these boards and actual practicing academics, a view similar to academics’ in the current study. Rowlands argues that academics should be involved in the decision-making process when it affects their research practice and teaching. She believes that reduced academic voice relates to a diminished capacity for academics to contribute meaningfully to decisions that affect their teaching. Rowland’s empirical data suggests that strong central control lessons academic engagement and culture within universities and that these are key factors for success. She argues that academic governance requires much greater use of academic capital by practicing academics by reducing their time in producing intellectual capital. According to Rowland’s reducing academic voice within the institutions reduces their capacity in the decision-making process. Academic voice and decision-making are important to the academics in sharing acquired knowledge. Power politics is “an important aspect of knowledge sharing in organisations” (Ipe, 2003, pg. 364). Not only power affects knowledge to share or motivation to knowledge share but also culture, and according to DeLong and Fahey (2000) and Ipe (2003), the co-organisational culture is being recognised as a major barrier to effective knowledge creation sharing and use.
6.5.2 Culture, motivation and behaviour

The gap between governance and power relations are opposite ends of the spectrum and are divided by habitus (Bourdieu, 1988). The culture within institutions and organisational behaviour could be seen as a factor in how the academics overcome their concerns, especially where conflict and forced compliance of policy influences their behaviours within the organisation. The culture is in relation to compliance or non-compliance and attitudes towards policies they are in disagreement with or did not understand yet feel forced to comply.

Hartmann (2006) states that culture has become a more focused phenomenon when discussing organisational behaviours, especially promoting motivation and innovative behaviour. Focusing on motivation and behaviour concerning organisational culture, Dulaimi and Hartmann (2006) describe motivation as having many nuances and has attracted much interest and resulted in many theoretical models. They describe these models as motivational drivers, and what drives individuals to behave in a certain manner and what maintains reinforces or redirects that behaviour. They further argue that several mechanisms and actions will induce commitment and motivation amongst employees. These include communication, recognition, participation and communication. Recognition includes rewards for participation and enabling personal responsibility and autonomy. It shows consistent behaviour by managers who provide time and resources and enforcing new ideas. Academics in the current study demonstrate participation and communication and loyalty to the institute when they participate in the development of academic policies. Motivation is a common behaviour amongst certain academics in how they participate in the development of better policies or to improve what is not working. In doing so they demonstrate dedication and innovation. In a theoretical sense, behaviours around participation look at human behaviour and its drivers. Participation is one way of overcoming the debilitating effects of organisation’s traditionally decided designs and policies.
Maslow’s (1954) hierarchy of needs describes as self-actualisation where all basic psychological needs are being met. This means being independent, engaged in various behaviours and active. Theories around behaviours assume a basic hierarchy of needs which culminates in a need for self-fulfilment or growth. Academics who are in a position to participate, or even in a position of authority are fulfilling those needs by being there and participation extends those. Dachler and Wilpert (1978) believe that intrinsic rewards should be a reward where there is greater employee influence and autonomy such as participation for the academics with policy.

6.5.3 Empowerment

There is a cross campus culture of “doing their own thing” regardless. However, there is also a passion for behaviour that involves working on behalf of the students. Sinha et al. (2016) focuses on psychological empowerment in mediating the relationship between culture, innovative behaviour and work-related attitude. They study organisational culture and innovative behaviour in work and maintain there is a significant relationship between culture, empowerment and work-related attitude and outcomes. They argue that empowerment intervenes between ability, mission and innovative behaviour and that when people feel empowered, positive outcomes are likely to occur. These outcomes are job satisfaction, organisational commitment and innovation. If an employee feels satisfied with their job, they tend to stay in the organisation (Blau,1964).

Spreitzer (1995, 1996, 2008) is also interested in the link between culture and empowerment. He defines empowerment as a motivation reflecting an active orientation towards a work role manifested through self-determination, competence and, similar to the view of Thomas and Velthouse, impact. Lawlor (2001) describes having an impact as influencing strategic administrative or operational activities and outcomes in the work unit. Spreitzer (1995) argues that employees perceive
psychological empowerment and discusses how it allows them to exercise control in their work-life. Spreitzer (1996) discusses that rewards are another manifestation of empowerment. If there is a reward for an action, there is individual empowerment felt by it. Participation is more about resolving conflict for the academics and the reward is empowerment and a voice. The empowerment is personal, so the reward is intrinsic. If organisational management emphasises autonomy with rewards for participation, culture will facilitate employee empowerment (Mallak and Kirstedt, 1996). However, there is no extrinsic reward for participation. The motivation is driven by a passion for the policy process and a better outcome for the stake-holders.

According to Mintzberg (1979), most organisational structures have two levels: managerial and employee. Performance within these structures is based on rationality, accomplishment and accountability and to satisfy a need. This type of management assumes certain clear objectives that guide the organisation and working procedures and a reward system that depends on its employees’ performance (Guerra et al., 2005). Concerning public sector academics reward systems are not as commonplace in the organisations. They are rigid systems with no obvious reward for compliance, per se, and they have to deal with frequently changing agendas and unstable conditions (Ring and Perry, 1985).

The reward for the academic is personal and a way of strengthening their voices and gaining autonomy within the institutions. In contrast, in private organisations with much less job security, employment is seasonal, workers may see conflicts as job threatening. One of the most influential cultural anthropologists is Clifford Geertz. He searches for the meanings of symbols. “Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning” (Geertz, 1973, pg. 5). Within this symbolic perspective, organisational culture focuses on how organisa-
tional members interpret and understand their work-related experiences and how these interpretations and understandings are related to action. According to Moore (2006), a policy that an actor does not like or is interested tells us more about the increasingly coercive effect of policy on resistant individuals as policy becomes part of institutional culture. According to Weber (1968), organisational analysis is always a cultural analysis and analysis of value on values, and power is an external influence that should be studied in cultural analysis. Weber, after all, was a cultural theorist (Clegg. 1994).

Van Muijen et al. (1999) describe four orientation types when discussing organisational culture. These are support, innovation, rules and goal orientation. The support orientation includes participation, flexibility, co-operation, people-based orientation and individual growth. Table 6.2 outlines Van Muijen et al.’s culture orientation and how it links to the concepts described in the current study. These

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Culture Orientation</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Concept</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>flexibility. participation. co-operation. growth.</td>
<td>Prioritising career. Bridging gaps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovation</td>
<td>creativity. openness. anticipation. experimentation.</td>
<td>Prioritising career</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>respect for authority. rationality</td>
<td>Resolving conflict. Prioritising career</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.2: Van Muijens et al. (1999) table of culture orientations linked to personalising dissonance

are evident in the academic’s behaviours within their institutions where participation relates to academic motivation to comply and innovate. Support relates to collective agreement amongst colleagues and sharing knowledge. When a high goal orientation culture exists in private organisations, disagreements between employees on how to perform a task, task conflict, may be considered an essential part of the
process. High job satisfaction and high affective well-being could be achieved when task conflict occurs within a culture that values rationality, accomplishment, and accountability (Guerra et al. 2005). According to them conflict is considered a difference in interpretation of rules and procedures and does not negatively influence workers’ affective reactions in public organisations, possibly because they are used to it. A point they make on conflict and organisational culture is that workers from public organisations have a high level of job security so that conflicts are not seen as factors that might jeopardise their jobs.

6.6 Summary

This chapter outlines the findings and how they integrate with the literature on behaviours that influence how academics are resolving their concerns. The theory of personalising dissonance outlines how the academics overcome their concerns with policy by resolving conflict, prioritising career and bridging gaps. The concept of resolving conflict aligns with Weber’s theory of bureaucracy and Foucault’s theory of power. The way the academics perceive themselves within this organisation correlates with bureaucratic and power dynamics. They overcome concerns by sharing knowledge, awareness and engagement. The participants in the study identify power and bureaucracy as concerns. Power and discourse are in correlation to the sense of bureaucracy felt by the participants and how they behave. They are expected to implement policies that are written by policy writers who were separated from what is practiced on the ground. The policies are also formal and written in a legal language that the academics found difficult to interpret.

This study shows that the actors’ conflict is from imposed power and bureaucracy and correlates with Weber’s work on bureaucracy and Bourdieu’s work on habitus and capital within their institutions. There is a sense of street-level bureaucracy amongst the academics reflective of the same street-level bureaucracy that Lipsky and Kaufman describe as discussed in chapter two. Academics demonstrate ac-
countability in the decisions that they make within their organisations. Academics use discretion when resolving conflict with policies they have concerns with. How they overcome their concerns and what is evident in the literature are behaviours such as self-interest, game playing, personal experiences and choices that helped them overcome their concerns or respond to polices that they have issues with. Similar to Barrett (2004) and Elmore (1969), as described in chapter two, tactics such as pursuit of goals and bargaining echo the academics behaviours. Choices and decision-making correlate with Festinger’s theory of cognitive dissonance on how academics make decisions and choices and how they justify those decisions in the pursuit of harmony. In resolving conflicts and in prioritising their careers, they are discrete in making decisions that will affect their career which corresponds to Ajzen’s theory of planned behaviour. There are some elements of game theory and self-interest that motivate their behaviours in overcoming their concerns. Stakeholder theory highlights how they make fateful decisions that affect stakeholders. They are aware of the consequences of every positive or negative decision they make. Organisational behaviour and the human decision process study achievements related to locus of control. This research looks at compliance and non-compliance theory and how these actions help innovation at the institution or at field level. Many studies tend to ignore the significance of actors positions in organisations within the field. These include professional staff with little authority who try to make changes and promote practices inside their organisations. Getting involved in policy development will help promote change. Academics are trying to change the field level practices by gaining autonomy and having their voices heard. Furthermore, they do this by sharing acquired knowledge. The aim in the third phase of the psychological process is to develop or contribute to policy and strengthen their academic voices. Mobility within the organisation gives them greater influence and they believe they have experiential knowledge. They show motivation to participate. The central argument or core concern is academic policy and how academics overcome that through personalising dissonance. As demonstrated in this chapter many
studies on implementation, empowerment, structures, compliance, culture and self-interest compare to the concerns the academic have and how they attempt to resolve them. The academics prioritise their career by being accountable and demonstrate a planned behaviour. They use discretion and decision-making tactics to reach a point where they are able to implement the policy as best they can.

Theoretically, their behaviours link to compliance theory, cognitive dissonance and planned behaviour. Stakeholder theory explains how they make decisions for themselves as well as the students. They demonstrate self-interest that correlates to theories in prioritising or personalising their concerns in the process. Academics seize opportunity to participate and voice concerns. Academic voice is an important aspect of overcoming their concerns. Having a voice and sharing the knowledge they have acquired through experience allows them to exert influence. Organisational structure, culture and behaviour play an important part in describing how the academics overcome their concerns. Bourdieu’s habitus, field and capital highlights motivation and academics’ behaviours within their field and how they situate themselves within, what Bourdieu describes as, their Homo Academicus and the academic capital that they possess or need. By remaining open to the concepts that emerge, the author develops the theory to describe the patterns of behaviour demonstrated by the participants. The continued reading of theories and empirical data allows the author to integrate empirical and theoretical literature to fine tune the theory and the explanation of the patterns of behaviours evident. The following chapter discusses conclusions reached as a result of findings and discussion in the current study.
Chapter 7

Summary and Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This is the final chapter in the thesis and provides a summary and conclusion to the study. The implications of the study are discussed and the contribution to research knowledge outlined. Recommendations for future studies are also suggested. Finally, a personal reflection from the author on the journey taken from start to completion of the research is presented.

7.2 Research summary

This study determines and observes academic lived experiences and perspectives within three higher education institutions in Dublin. The research investigates and explores academic lived experiences and perspectives on policy. The core concern for the academics is policy interpretation and implementation of policy where they may not agree with the objectives of the policy. The theory presented describes how they overcome those concerns. The theory’s value for policy-writers and implementers of policy in higher education is the perspectives and voices of academics. It provides awareness for policy-writers and academics within the organisation and informs policy development going forward. It provides an awareness of concerns of academics
within the institutions. It provides a voice for academics, highlighting the path they navigate to have their voices heard. There are and have been opportunities taken by those academics who want to share their knowledge, which is evident in the theory of personalising dissonance. The theory presented also highlights awareness that academic issues and concerns are universal, noted and explained. Academics concerns are regarding policy within their institutions.

There is a feeling of forced compliance with a policy that they do not understand. They feel tension when forced to implement a policy when they do not agree with the goals and objectives or they cannot interpret them. Academics work in isolation, so when they have issues with academic policy interpretation and isolation can cause further conflict and concern as policy governs how they do their day-to-day work. They believe the policy comes from a bureaucratic rather than a democratic position and this causes tension or conflict for the academic. They do what they have always done when faced with a policy they do not understand, which is non-compliance. They try to resolve the tension they feel to reach a level of conformity with their approach. Academics attempt to resolve their concerns by seeking support from their colleagues to understand the policies better. They escape their isolated environment or office space to negotiate the meaning of a policy. This sharing of knowledge helps them to resolve their conflict. By engaging with the policy on some level, they gain empowerment and increased conformity with the policy implementation process. All their decisions are to get the best for the policy stakeholders, staff or student.

The theory process moves from resolving conflict to prioritising career to bridging implementation gaps within the organisation. Through prioritising career, the academics make decisions that highlight accountability, decision-making and maintaining integrity. By being accountable, the behaviour of the academic is how they approach the policy. They assess the consequences of their decisions and evaluate the outcomes. The decisions they make are to protect the stakeholder and maintain
integrity and conformity with policy. Their decisions are ultimately for the students, even if it is doing what they have always done concerning policies.

The final step of the process is to participate in policy development to share their knowledge gained from policy experience, have their voices heard, and bridge the implementation gaps caused by conflict. From an extensive review of the literature and existing knowledge it is evident that the development of policy should include implementation of policy and how that should be addressed. Empirical and theoretical researchers such as Moore, Waldavsky and Lipsky have stated as much. There is no road map of how policy should be implemented, and this has caused concerns and results in non-compliance and implementation gaps, as evident in the current research. This study, however, highlights that implementation and interpretation of policy is still an ongoing issue. It presents a theory that explains how academics overcome their concerns with policy and the perspectives and experiences felt by academics in higher education institutions. It highlights conflict and tension with how policy is written and with certain goals and objectives of policy that do not represent what is happening on the ground. It also highlights that those implementers feel that their policy writers are unaware of what is happening on the ground when developing these out-of-date policies. The power of forced compliance and the threat of reprimand also causes concern for them. The fear of getting caught and the consequences of that affect the participants and causes conflict.

Theoretical literature draws on Foucault, Weber, Festinger, Ajzen, Kaufman and Bourdieu. The theory of personalising dissonance involves a process of resolving conflicts, prioritising career, and bridging gaps. Resolving conflict is how the academics deal with forced compliance with policies they view as bureaucratic and draws on theories of power and discourse in Foucault’s work. In prioritising career, the theories of planned behaviour, stakeholder theory and compliance theory relates to the findings. Bridging gaps concerning organisational structure drew an
organisational structure and culture theory, participation within organisations and academic voices.

There is an element of self-interest and ‘others’ interest in how the academics act and the choices that they make and the level of autonomy they have. However, what is happening is the response to policy they are in conflict with becomes personal to them. There is passion for doing right by the students but it is in the face of imposed power. This is where there are constraints and boundaries. Every action has a consequence, and the academics are well aware of that. The findings are multi-faceted and more complex than just non-compliance of policy and inability to interpret the documents. Academics within the study have a passion for doing right by their students or stakeholders of policy hence conflict and tension. By working alone or with colleagues, academics overcome concerns with the stakeholder always at the forefront of their decisions. From resolving conflict to prioritising career to bridging gaps, there is a passion for doing what they believe is best.

The theory explains patterns of behaviour around policy implementation. Researchers such as Moore (2004, 2006, 2016), Barrett (2004), Lipski (2010) and Waldavsky (1979) are some of the prominent researchers that contribute to implementation research mostly through case study and observation. The current study uses grounded theory to uncover the perspectives of academics within third level institutions to get their experiences on policy. What is confirmed and in line with other researchers on implementation studies, implementation is still an ongoing issue. Moreover, the current study uncovers concerns felt by implementers on implementing the policies and why they implement the policy or why they do not implement the policy objectives. Interpretation and implementation of policy is a core concern. Some believe that the policies are not fit for their intended purpose and disagree with their goals and objectives. They also feel that some of the policies are very hard to interpret, and the language is very legal. The theory explains how the academics overcome their concerns. To the best of the author’s knowledge, no
other theory highlights similar concerns of academics in higher education. It is suggested by other researchers such as Barrett (2004) that there is a need more studies on policy implementation but so far challenges around policy implementation still exist and are echoed by Howlett (2019) and O’Toole (2017), Williams (2021) and Vanvelzer (2021).

The implications of the study include a theory in the substantive area of policy within higher education. It provides an awareness of the concerns of the implementers and interpreters and current practices within these higher education institutions. The theory highlights that support must be provided in the policy development process. On examination of the theory, it is argued that this is best from a bottom-up perspective. Through the process of resolving conflict, the academic’s become aware of the policy. They negotiate the meaning of the policy, and this leads to and empowerment in their decision making. By sharing knowledge, a road map for interpretation for them helps to avoid or reduce non-compliance. Similar to McLaughlin (1982, 1987) support is vital for the successful implementation of a policy. Elmore (1979), and O’Toole (1979) echo these sentiments. The long term implications will impact policy development within the institutions in question and even more so now as they have merged to become a technological university. The study also contributes to knowledge of academic behaviours within the institutions. As described in chapter 6, an important aspect of the study is that academics have a passion for student welfare that the author feels is obvious even amongst academics who are against policy and may have been non-compliant.

Following the GT process allows the framework to emerge. As per Nathaniel, Gibson and Hartman (2014), any data can develop a theory and is very much encouraged. The current study uses observations during interviews, interviews and a focus group. By observing patterns, naming patterns, theoretical sampling, memoing, and constant comparison, the core and sub-core categories emerge. The theory is grounded
in the data using these processes. This method and the theory generated is from the perspective of the participants. Constant comparison of the categories and codes happen throughout the process and help the researcher avoid bias or preconception. The theory generated has many variables and accounts for how the participants resolve their main concern.

Using grounded theory as a method for data gathering and analysis works on the premise that people, in general, are creatures of habit. Grounded theory searches for patterns of behaviour amongst participants in the study. The researcher’s role is to observe patterns of behaviour in how the participants solve or process their issues and concerns. The challenges with using grounded theory are quickly resolved once the process of data gathering and analysis commences. During the initial steps, the researcher was more descriptive rather than conceptual in discussions around the codes and categories. By remaining open to the participants’ perspective allows the researcher to tolerate confusion initially caused by being more descriptive. However, reading more of Glaser’s writings from 1967 to 2005 helps. The researcher realises the importance of not being descriptive and the importance of conceptualisation. Theoretical coding and comparison of Glaser’s codes to what is emerging helps to structure the framework. Constantly comparing the indicators and going back to the field notes for relevance means that everything fits and the theory is grounded in the empirical data. This provides confidence in the method, the process and the ability of the researcher.

Glaser says, “just do it” (1998, pg. 19) when it comes to grounded theory, and the important part of the process is to stay open. The sorting, theoretical coding and constant comparison and memoing were intrinsic in how the researcher develops the theory. During this final step and once the literature review commences, the theory is compared and contrasted to the literature. What is important in developing a substantive theory is staying open to what is important and evident in the data. It is
without a doubt that the participants do open up and tell their story. It is from their perspective which is the core of the development of this grounded theory. Review of literature during the write up of the theory allows for identification of gaps in the literature and that something relevant is emerging and is making a contribution to research. Identification of these gaps allows a confidence in the theory and the contribution and is discussed in the next section.

### 7.3 Research contribution

Two areas where this research contributes to knowledge are academic policy in Irish higher education and the empirical application of classic grounded theory. The study contributes to higher education policy knowledge in a theory of how academics overcome their concerns with academic policy within academic institutes in Dublin. The thesis also presents the classic grounded theory (CGT) method and processes used to develop the theory on how academics overcome their concerns with policy development and implementation in Irish higher education. The theory explains the patterns of behaviours that academic’s use to overcome their concerns with policy. This theory describes the basic social processes used by academics in overcoming their concerns with policy. For those interested in general implementation theory and practice, a lot of the work published focuses on policy sector specific sentiment, echoed by O’Toole (2017), Engali and Mazur (2018) and that developed policies should result in effective policy implementation. According to Engeli and Mazur the significance of implementation research is typically not focused enough on the practice of implementation. The current study is more specific as the substantive area is academic policy implementation. The operational challenges of adequate policy implementation still exist, if anything, larger than ever. The theory takes us through how academics resolve their concerns with policy and provides an awareness for future development. It could also be compared in another study with other substantive areas that may contrast or compound the theory.
Policy implementation research has grown to address top-down concerns, including uncertainties associated with long and complicated implementation, bottom-up factors such as the changeable impact of street-level actors and compliance issues related to target groups and stakeholders also echoed by Ansell, Sorenson and Torfing (2017). However, implementation problems continue with important implications for those who suffer as a result of policy failure. The implementers or interpreters of policy that are responsible for its successful implementation should be listened to or involved in the development process and as Cullen (2019) states their sentiments should not be dismissed as mere rambling.

Research on policy implementation has traversed the last three decades. Much early policy research through the ’80s and ’90s was conducted by researchers such as Barrett, Lipsky, Elmore, Pressman and Waldavsky introducing concepts such as top-down and bottom-up approaches to implementation and street level bureaucracy. They concentrate on the different approaches to policy development, such as top-down and bottom-up approaches. They argue the pros and cons of both of these. Regardless of bottom-up or top-down development the issues of policy implementation persist and is argued by researchers such as Howlett (2019) as he describes it as being fractured and that a lot of the research contributions to knowledge on policy have been on evaluation rather than implementation. The suggestion made in this research is similar to those researchers in particular Weaver (2009) and Cullen (2019) that the voice of the interpreter or the target of policy should be addressed more. The theory of personalising dissonance contributes to implementation research with a grounded theory on how academics, the interpreters and targets of implementation, respond to policy implementation issues within their institutions. Leon and Vega (2021), Vanvelzer (2021) and Williams (2021) have continued discussions on policy implementation from local to national level. They focus on stakeholder involvement, top-down approaches discussing the macro-layer of institutions and how
it influences the meso-layer as well as bureaucracy and performance focusing particular-ly on bureaucracy and capacity.

Actor behaviour and decision theory emerge as relevant theories through reading literature and works of Ajzen (1991), Barrett (2004) and Lipsky (2010) and how actors use choice and discretion as preferred options in how they respond to and implement policy. There are many correlations with the current study and these are described in-depth in the basic social process of personalising dissonance. As well as limited contributions from the perspective of interpreters and actors on policy implementation there are few studies that focus on policy compliance from an academic perspective. Rajab and Eydgahi (2019) concur that little research has been conducted on employee compliance with certain policies.

From a governmental perspective Gofen (2015) observes non-compliant policy behaviours and reconciling policy dissonance. Research on implementation tends to focus on governmental types of policies with a lot more phases and actors involved with implementation. The context may be different, but the concerns are similar. He studies the relationship between policymakers and policy targets or actors and reactions to non-compliance. He looks at this from the action reactions of governance and how the responses to change targets behaviours and may evolve and change government’s behaviour over time. The current study observes policy compliance and non-compliance behaviours from the targets action reactions and their mechanisms to overcome their concerns with governance.

Some researchers such as Gibson (2020) use social cognitive theory to look at how extrinsic factors influence academic behaviours. These are outside factors that he argues influence the decision-making process on educational boards. The current study adds an in-depth discovery of intrinsic factors that allow the actors to overcome influences or control. Weaver (2009) argues that non-compliance is traditional
and still discussed and applied to compliance theory and ethical theory within organisations. Researchers such as Rajab and Eydgahi (2019) observe planned behaviour and motivation and how these affect responses to particular policies. Ajzen (1991) in his theory of planned behaviour examines how planned behaviour and attitudes, norms and control can predict employees’ actions and performance. Ajzen’s theory of planned behaviour relates to academic behaviours in the current study, including how academics make decisions on policy implementation and in their consideration of themselves and the students in their decisions.

In line with Howlett’s (2019) study that highlights that policy implementation is still an ongoing issue this study highlights an awareness that policy discourse causes conflict and the forced nature of these policies also results in non-compliance. Academics when feeling forced into implementation of policies that they did not understand or they did not agree with leads to behaviours of non-compliance and feelings of isolation. By highlighting these issues, it informs awareness and a more rigorous and inclusive development process and hopefully reduces non-compliance and conflict. It contributes to possibly reducing gaps between policy and practice. Through the theory, there are evident possibilities available to further assist and inform policy-writers in overcoming these or avoiding them in the future and is evident in the third phase of the theory where some academics concerns are not completely resolved and they got involved in the development of policy.

Implementation studies recommend that the success of policy implementation must be seen from experience of the actors who deliver the service. This sentiment is echoed by researchers such as Lipsky (1980) and McLaughlin, (1987) with some such as Spillane, Resier and Reimer (2002) developing a cognitive framework for this. Academics concerns are the interpretation of the policy and the discourse around policy, they feel it is a tool that can be used to reprimand as it is a legal document written by people who were unaware of what was happening at the coal-
face. If they cannot interpret the document, implementation is an issue for them. The supervision of implementation is not there and results in policy failure. There is a failure by the policy-writers to develop clear directives to allow for successful local implementation and has is also discussed by Mazziman and Sabatier (1983). The current study highlights how the actors within the study move to the third phase of bridging gaps to help overcome these concerns by getting involved in policy development. Behaviours indicate that in order to resolve concerns they want to share experiences and get involved in policy discussions.

To the best of the author’s knowledge, no report has been found so far using grounded theory to discover policy issues and, in particular, within third level institutions. There are substantial benefits for theory development in different fields and from different perspectives in particular there is a renewed emphasis on multidisciplinary working in policy studies. Barrett (2004) states there is no particular discipline that has exclusive rights over policy analysis and concerns. In relation to theory a power dynamic is still ongoing and confirms Weber and Foucault’s theories on power. Bourdieu’s theory of habitus, field and capital is used in discussion on how the academics view themselves within their field and what experiences and intellectual capital they use or need to overcome their concerns.

The contribution to knowledge in the area of policy implementation is a theory that explains how actors overcome their concerns in the substantive area of academic policy. However, it has fit and workability to apply to other substantive areas due to the conceptual nature of the theory generated. Implications include a greater understanding of policy development, interpretation and implementation within higher education and beyond. The following section illustrates further research that is strongly recommended. Several possible future studies using the same experimental set up are apparent.
7.4 Trustworthiness of the study

A grounded theory study develops a theory that has a close fit with the data, is useful, is conceptually dense, and as well as being modifiable, is durable over time (Charmaz, 2006). Following the grounded theory process methodically by collection and analysis simultaneously and conceptualising the data very early on in the process ensures that the theory is conceptually dense. The theory is grounded in empirical data and guarantees that the theory fits through constant comparison and always relating the substantive codes to the theoretical codes. It is the participant’s experiences that are analysed to do this. The theory will be useful over time, as it will inform policy. It gives a name to a pattern of behaviour in the substantive area. As with any theory, it can be modified or compounded over time. Rich data reveals participants’ views and feelings as well as their intentions and actions in certain contexts and structures in their lives. Seeking descriptions through field notes, observations, written personal accounts, detailed narratives, and interviews allows the generation of an influential, grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Any type of data can be used to develop a grounded theory. A good analogy of GT would be like a camera lens. Firstly, there is a broad sweep of the landscape, and then the lens changes several times to bring scenes closer and closer into view. Each researcher brings something unique to a study. The researcher shapes and re-shapes the theory through analysis. Grounded theories must have “grab”, Glaser (1978), and be interesting so that they can be used. Glaser and Strauss state in Discovery (1967) that a grounded theory must meet certain criteria in order for it to be a true grounded theory. The criteria that they state are fit and relevance, workability and the extra criteria they added in 1978, modifiability. These criteria in relation to this study are addressed in the next section.
7.4.1 Fit

The theory that emerged is from the perspective of academics and their concerns with policy within their institutions. The process of analysis and data gathering, constant comparisons of concepts and indicators helped for fit and relevance and to ensure that the theory was grounded.

7.4.2 Relevance

This classic grounded theory study identifies the core concerns of the academics with policy development within their institution. It discovered that interpreting and implementation are the main concerns and the theory that emerged explains the patterns of behaviour that the academics use to resolve their concerns. This study is relevant because it addresses the main concerns of the academics involved.

7.4.3 Workability

The concept of workability means that the concepts, and the way they are related accounts for how the main concerns of the academics in a substantive area is continually resolved (Glaser 1998). According to Gibson and Hartman (2013) grounded theory seeks to produce theory that is practical and useful and closely related to the field in which the theory has been developed. The categories have fit and relevance as they describe what is happening in how the academics are resolving their concerns and are relatable to the field.

7.4.4 Modifiability

This criterion was added late by Glaser to the list of criteria that justify a study as a grounded theory. Glaser and Strauss observed many grounded theory’s over the years after 1967 and discovered that “generation is an ever modifying process”. (Glaser, 1978, pg. 5). A Grounded theory produces a lasting contribution that is modifiable because of its conceptual nature and not empirical descriptions. (Glaser
2001) If the current study were expanded to include participants from other departments within the same institutions it is very possible that these new concepts could be integrated into the theory. Concepts such as resolving conflict, prioritising career and the many others identified in this study exist independently as they represent patterns developed from the participant’s experiences of policies within their institutions. A grounded theory uses experiences of real people facing problems and can be modified as situations, problems, and people change (Nathaniel and Andrews, 2007). According to Nathaniel and Andrews this adaptability is unique to the grounded theory method and allows theories to evolve and continue to be applicable even if situations change over time. The method is merely a tool used to capture the experiences of the academics and to trust that the method works helps to maintain fit, relevance and that the theory can and will be modified over time. Neither observer nor observed come to the scene untouched by the world (Charmaz, 2006).

7.5 Implications for policy-writers and higher education practice

The current study uncovers concerns and conflicts felt by academics in their experiences of policy. Organisations need to understand the ambience felt by academics around policy development, be aware of their issues and concerns, and improve or change their focus on developing more reflexive and more flexible policies. The theory presents a framework to inform policy development going forward. The developers of policy need to consider the theory on how academics process their concerns but further studies should include students and their experience of policy. They are the stakeholders of policy implementation and development. The policy development should have more stakeholder involvement and allow academic voices to be heard as academics feel their voices are not heard.
Besides academic policy within organisations, other areas could also be investigated further. Human Resources policy and marketing policies as well as other areas within various departments in higher education could be investigated. A possible future study could compare and contrast policy experiences from another perspective within the organisation to compare and contrast policy experiences of the stakeholders within these departments. Further research in this field regarding the role of the policy-writers and governmentality is suggested. An investigation into governmentality and the policy writers and what they expect from their subjects. Is there evidence that they are open to the subjects being critical thinkers and using their autonomy in policy implementation or believe the rules should be obeyed? Will they enact their power on their subjects if they use their discretion with policy for the greater good of the students? Is this a lapse of power on their behalf, and is there a fear of not having power and losing control?

Further research to explore current new practices since the three institutions in the study have now merged to become a technological university is suggested. Organisational design and structure have changed. Awareness of experiences and giving a voice is evident in this study with academics feeling that they have no voice. Further studies on academic voice would prove relevant and important in this new structure. This research thesis outlined the development of a theoretical framework using grounded theory. It is a substantive theory developed in the area of policy in academia. Even though it is a substantive theory and because the researcher is theoretically sensitive to other theories, the substantive theory can be related to issues or concerns in other substantive areas. Besides, a grounded theory is grounded in one substantive area. However, a theory at such a conceptual level can have general implications and relevance, and substantive theories can then develop into grounded formal theories. According to Glaser, “in a formal theory, the substantive theory is implicit, having been developed by the author or another writer” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, pg. 79). The theory presented is in policy in in higher education.
Another substantive area for comparison involves stepping outside the current organisation to look at employees’ experiences in another organisation. The researcher is fortunate to be in discussions with the director of the electricity supply board in Ireland. The informal discussions so far involve policy practices within that organisation. A discussion on policy non-compliance suggests an investigation on the experiences of the staff and employers within this organisation could compound the theory further and it could contribute to the development of a formal theory.

7.6 Future perspectives

7.6.1 Study on governmentality

During the study, the works of Foucault are used to compound part of the process where the academics feel forced into compliance. Academics feel a power dynamic that is bureaucratic rather than democratic. The works of Michel Foucault are used in the discussion in the literature review chapter. Foucault writes about governmentality in the later years of his life from 1977 until he died in 1984. Foucault’s writings on governmentality suggest further investigation is a possibility. Governmentality is concerned with organised practices through which subjects are governed. This research touches on power and practice within academia, where policy development and implementation concerns arose. Governmentality is also concerned with how subjects are governed and how they behave and act. A study on how academics are governed would lend itself to a grounded theory study as grounded theory study's behaviour patterns.

7.6.2 International comparative study on policy practices

The researcher has an opportunity to travel to Canada regularly being part of the Centre for Higher Education Policy and Practice. Three interviews at the University of Ontario have already taken place. The interviews were to study academic
experiences on policy development. The data gathered can be used to compare and contrast experiences from an international perspective. These interviews will be coded and results can be compared and contrasted to the current theory and findings.

7.6.3 COVID-19 pandemic policy study

During the analysis phase of the research and when integration through sorting had commenced, the world was experiencing the biggest global pandemic since the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918. There has been much discussion locally, nationally, and internationally around policy and lack thereof when dealing with this pandemic. The way the world works, lives, educates, and looks has changed dramatically. Newspaper articles, television programs, and personal experiences during the pandemic were great sources of data to study that highlighted the changing times and experiences felt. An article published in November 2020 by Capano, Howlett, Ramesh and Goyal examines global governments and their capacity to respond to the policies developed in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic as well as understand the variations in state responses to policy. Even though this is policy on a larger scale and probably more suitable to a formal study on policy implementation, there are similarities to this study on how academics respond to policy. Capano et al. (2020) study the conditions that shape the government’s responses to these policies. The review is based on surveys of online databases on policy tools used in the pandemic. The data analysis describes what shapes their responses are opportunities and capacities each government has, their learned experiences from previous pandemics and their capacity to operationalise and build support measures deployed to deal with the crisis. They also show other factors such as the nature of national leadership, the organisation of the governments and the vulnerabilities of certain countries that also shape their policy responses (Capano et al., 2020). Once a decision is made to respond, there remains the choice of which kind of intervention or policy instruments or tools are employed or available to the policymakers. They argue that combining
these tools to respond was limitless, and there are varying degrees to which the tools can be applied. In other words, the implementation process is somewhat flexible. They also argue that there are variations in the start, the speed and the scope of the responses. Literature on policy capacity offers some clues to understanding these variations in response to the policy (Wu, Ramesh and Howlett, 2015). Policy capacity is defined as a set of skills and resources, competencies and capabilities necessary to perform policy functions across different sectors (Capano et al. 2020). Moore (1995) describes key skills and competencies which comprise policy capacity. These are analytical, operational and political capacities. Each of these involves resources or capabilities at different levels. The three different levels are individual, organisational and systemic. Each level, in turn, has three capacities analytical, operation and systemic. There is individual capacity, operational capacity and systemic capacity. In the case of the responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, the key capabilities of governments relate to their preparation and planning, which is another way of describing the managerial and organisational resources they have at their disposal when first encountering the virus. Their responses were also related to experiences that provide them with existing skills and competencies similar to academics in the current study. If they could implement it, they had the knowledge and experience to do so. An interesting study would be to discover how academic institutions responded to new mandates that were introduced to deal with this pandemic and what were the experiences on the ground. These can then be compared and contrasted to the experiences felt in the theory presented.

7.7 Reflections from the author: my personal journey

Different analogies are possible and have been described by myself in various scenarios and discussions I have had throughout this research journey from the start to its completion. At the beginning of the study the only way to describe that stage,
for me, is being in the long grass. I was the watcher, the observer and at times lucky enough to share my experiences on what I wanted to do and where I planned on going. This happened through process papers and participation at conferences. A brief suggestion to attend a workshop on grounded theory in November 2017 in Trinity College Dublin was a critical juncture in my journey. As Glaser introduced grounded theory in the discovery in 1967, I discovered it in 2017. My awareness had taken place. I spent three days immersed in grounded theory research and conversations and it was enlightening. Having a nursing background helped me immensely as I could relate to a lot of the presenters at the seminar and even reading Glaser and Strauss’s Discovery. I was an observer at this seminar and listened to the round table discussions by experts in the method. I was overwhelmed and excited at the language they used and the terminology that would eventually become my research language and that would flow in my thesis. This is where the transformation started. The path I had to take was laid in front of me and I had to move. I had a topic of interest, I had my methodology and now I needed to source my participants. This was made easier by the fact that they were within reach in my institution and in the other institutions as they were in close proximity to me with colleagues that could suggest initial participants for me. I described this as ‘data on my doorstep’. However, there was still a very substantial and long journey ahead. I needed to read more about the methodology and so I started with the discovery of grounded theory written by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 followed by Sensitivity 1978, Issues and Discussions 1998, and Perspectives III 2005. Glaser’s classic grounded theory was adopted, as my mantra was, if you are going to do it, do it right. Once data gathering started it became a very enjoyable process listening to the concerns, coding the concerns and seeing patterns in the data.

Being an academic researching academic behaviour made it even more important for me to give them a voice and give their concerns justice and produce something that they could understand and relate to. This part of the journey was enlightening and happened quickly until a point where I was faced with many codes and sorts to
make. This is where the grounded theory seminars helped tremendously. I attended a seminar in May 2019 and again in November 2019 and these helped me move along from coding to sorting the data. They gave me confidence that I was moving in the right direction. I was now at the round table and very much part of my own discussion on using grounded theory.

Months and months of sorting, theoretical coding and constant comparison of notes and memos posted on walls and on floors allowed me to see the theory that I had and start to write it up. I was still analysing what was in front of me up until the end of the write up of the theory and more recently to the write up of the thesis, always thinking about the data and the participants. Reading the literature during the write up also helped to give me confidence in what I had found and its relevance and contribution. The transformation for me happened alone in a room writing my theory. I started to think differently about the world, the data and the language I was using to discuss my findings.

The write up of the theory and the literature review took over a year as it was a dense theory and every aspect of the write up had to be considered and described in detail. As described in chapter one and three further challenges were faced when presenting the thesis in the correct format of a PhD thesis document that differs in that of a classic grounded theory study. This challenge was overcome once the theory had emerged and the discussion of the findings had been completed. The review of literature that related to policy sociology and policy building was incorporated into chapter two and the literature on behaviours fitted appropriately into chapter seven. This was a time consuming process but not so much an arduous one as I joined a writing support group. I wrote online with other researchers at the same stage of the PhD process. Many hours were spent living, breathing and dreaming about the thesis and the theory that it became very personal and a part of me was always afraid to let it go out of fear. However, I was nervously eager to get it finished and get my findings out there to be critiqued. Having had the process used and the early findings published in IJAP, the Irish Journal of Academic Practice, I
was eager to publish the theory as there has been interest expressed throughout the process on the findings which was very comforting. See appendix IV.

The findings of this study highlights the core concerns of academics within higher education on policy and they are implementation and interpretation. This research study also provides some key ideas that have helped me examine my professional values and place myself in future policy discussions and how I can contribute and share my knowledge. The journey was a personal one from start to finish but to use the analogy of a stone gathering moss, there has been a lot of knowledge and experience gathered that can contribute to policy and further research endeavours. As well as knowledge there have been many companions gathered along the way and mostly out of pure luck and being in the right place at the right time. Companions that started off as professional but are now personal friendships. Fellow GT researchers and others that have started or joined me along the way to share the research journey.

Finally, the theory, I am proud to say that I have developed a theory that describes a pattern of behaviour amongst academics. It has given a voice to the academics that were faced with conflict caused by bureaucracy and power, and it is not only a voice but it is a passionate voice and one that is always speaking on behalf of the students or those affected by policies within their institutions. It is also a modifiable theory that can be developed over-time and because of its conceptual nature possibly relatable in other areas and other substantive studies in the future.
Chapter 8

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Appendix I - Consent and advice form given to subjects prior to their participation in research

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<th>Title: Ms</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<td>A Grounded Theory Study of Academic Experiences in Policy Development and Implementation in Higher Education.</td>
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<td>As part of the completion of PHD</td>
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<table>
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<th>To be completed by:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>subject/patient/volunteer/informant/interviewee/parent/guardian (delete as necessary)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>Have you been fully informed/read the information sheet about this study?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is your participation given voluntarily?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you received enough information about this study and any associated health and safety implications if applicable?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from this study?</td>
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<td>• at any time</td>
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<tr>
<td>• without giving a reason for withdrawing</td>
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<tr>
<td>• without affecting your future relationship with the Institute</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you agree to take part in this study the results of which are likely to be published?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you been informed that this consent form shall be kept in the confidence? of the researcher?</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Participant Signature</th>
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<table>
<thead>
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<th>Name in block letters</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Signature of researcher</th>
<th>Date</th>
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Figure 8.1: How concerns were resolved in the first phase: resolving conflict
Appendix II - Participant Information Letter

Dear Participant, You are invited to take part in a research study to examine the lived experiences and perspectives of staff across the three institutes of technology in Dublin on how policy has been developed, implemented and evaluated in your institution. The aim is to develop a theoretical framework that can be used to inform policy as we move towards transformation to a technological university. I would like to interview you to ask you about your experiences to date in developing, implementing or evaluating your current policies. This research is part of a PhD thesis at the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15. Before you decide whether to take part in the study it is important that you understand what the research is for and what you will be asked to do. Please take time to read the following information. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep. You will also be asked to sign a consent form. You can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study without giving a reason. You are welcome to phone me if you would like any further information. The purpose of the research study is to examine / explore your lived experiences with developing, implementing or evaluating policy at your institute. I would like to ask questions about what it was like for you, your thoughts, your feelings as well as situations, events, place and people connected with your experience.

You have been chosen because you are part of an institute where you access and implement policy on a regular basis. The study will involve up to 45 participants, who will all be interviewed separately or in a focus group. The interviews and focus groups will take approximately 45 min. If you choose to take part I will organise a location for the interview convenient to you. The information gained from this research will be used to make recommendations for best practice and will offer insights into the experiences of staff in the three institutes of technology as they move towards designation as a technological university. The results of the study may also lead onto further studies into comparisons of national and international perspectives and experiences of policy in higher education institutions. The interviews and focus
groups will be recorded on voice recorder and then transcribed onto a computer. The audiotapes will be stored in a locked secure place at all times and the computer data will be protected from intrusion also. The recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study. Your response will be treated with full confidentiality and only code numbers will identify anyone who takes part in the research. The interviews will be analysed by using the computer package Nvivo. At the end of the research I will write a report and the results may be published in peer reviewed journals and conference presentations. No research participant will be identifiable from any publications. This study has been reviewed and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at the institute of Technology, Blanchardstown. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information. Thanking you in anticipation, Yours sincerely, Marie Brennan
### Appendix III - Initial codes

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<th>threat</th>
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<td>Acknowledgement</td>
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<td>Weapon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Awareness of the Policy</td>
<td>Isolation</td>
<td>Accessibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>Battle</td>
<td>Level of Application</td>
<td>Interpretation</td>
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<td>Policy Education</td>
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<td>Participation</td>
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Table 8.1: Initial codes
### Appendix IV - Conceptual codes

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<td>Isolating</td>
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<td>Distorted jointing policy</td>
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Table 8.2: Level 2: Conceptual codes(31)
Appendix V - Published Journal Paper - January 2020 Irish Journal of Academic Practice

**A Grounded Theory Study on Academic Experiences in Policy Development across three Higher Education Institutions**

The research aimed to study and observe academic lived experiences and perceptions on policy development across three higher education institutes in Dublin. The research adopted a grounded theory approach. This paper presents the methodological approach and some early findings of ongoing research. Its original contribution will be in the form of a comparative analysis of literature and theory developed from the core concern of the participants. Data collection consisted of one-to-one interviews with academics across the three institutes of technology in Dublin reflective of grounded theory following Glaser and Strauss’s data gathering and coding mechanisms. Consequently, the emergent theory is rooted in the data. Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss introduced the methodology in 1967. This methodology was the preferred choice for this project as it is an authentic way of capturing the voice of the participants that, in turn, generate rich data. This paper offers a number of contributions based on preliminary findings. Early findings discovered that there are concerns in development of policy, but, the core concerns are implementation and interpretation of policy. The purpose of the research is to discover patterns of behaviour around policy that could be used to develop a theoretical framework to inform policy. The aim after this study is to study policy at a national level, for instance, public versus private sector or state versus semi-state and develop a formal policy.

**Keywords:** Grounded Theory Study, Policy development, Policy implementation, Policy evaluation, Technological University, Education in Transformation.
Introduction

The Hunt Report published in 2011 suggests that a framework should be put in place to facilitate institutional mergers. Following on from that, the three institutes of technology in Dublin signed a memorandum of understanding establishing the Technological University for Dublin Alliance. These institutes were Dublin Institute of Technology, the Institute of Technology Tallaght and the Institute of Technology Blanchardstown. The three presidents from each institute formed a steering group that consisted of a team of staff from across the three campuses. The role of this team was to launch the foundation themes that were necessary for designation. One of these themes was the development of a teaching and learning strategy. During the research into educational strategy, the precursor to these strategies became the focal point, and that was policy formation. The study then focuses on policy and how each institute orchestrates policy development and implementation. Consequently, this research aims to explore issues and concerns academics may have had with policy development and their fears for future policy as they transformed into a university.

One objective of the research is to gain a greater understanding of the processes used in the development of policy. The personal lived experiences and concerns of the academics in the development of policy within their institutes were investigated. The second objective of the research is to apply the knowledge in the development of a theoretical framework that will inform policy development. The substantive area of study for this research is academic policy experience and concerns. If the research went outside the substantive area too soon, there is a danger of irrelevance, fit, and workability of the theory. When the confidence of the fit and workability of the initial conceptual framework has been reached then comparisons can be made with other data in other substantive areas to “enrich the theoretical content of the substantive theory being developed as opposed to developing a formal theory.” (Glaser, 1978).
The paper is structured as follows: presents the motivation behind the research; the methodological approach used to carry out the data gathering and analysis and some early findings of an ongoing investigation.

**Background and Motivation**

The initial vision for the research was to explore the strategic processes inherent in the merger process and to formulate a participant informed ideal strategy that was dynamic and accessible to encapsulate the learner experience.

Instrumental in this approach was Boyle and Humphries (2001) "A New Agenda for the Irish Public Service" in which they argue that where no institutional strategy is implemented, over time, individual requirements had been met unintentionally.

Lillis (2015) observes that the "Masters of the Universe" model assumes a stable environment where extreme change and unexpected events are not accounted for and that a contingency plan should be put in place in such events.

The research started to take shape from a top-down and a bottom-up perspective at this point. At the top were policies written within an institute and at the bottom were the implementers and the stakeholders where the effect could be measured.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identify the issue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy Development (Developers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy implementation (Implementers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation/Impact on Stakeholders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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The National Forum, (2018a) study argues that ‘implementable’ policies can enable excellent practice. Policies deemed as enabling were identified as having a “high score to meeting criteria under being reflective of HEI’s priorities or being implementable rather than being situated in practice”. (National Forum, 2018a). Furthermore, the study finds that without appropriate policy guidance, informal practices can emerge that may not serve institutions, staff or students well.

Murphy & Maguire (2018) agree stating that “many existing policies do not adequately recognise the practice context within which they are situated” (pp). It also suggested, where there is evidence of informal practices around policy, the need for a process of consultation with members of staff who will ultimately be implementing the policy is essential.

In terms of current practice and best practice, the Higher Education System Performance Framework 2018-2020 highlighted key objectives for higher education in Ireland. One of the requirements was to improve the quality of the learning environment with a close eye on international best practice through quality and academic excellence. Internationally, there is a move away from measuring quality through compliance and a move towards a quality culture rather than a tick-boxing procedure. This means shifting the focus from “process towards outcomes and putting the emphasis on the management of a quality culture” (Higher Education Authority, 2018).

The Bologna process1 (2012) considers the gap between policy and practice in educational institutions. Compared to the national forum review of policy documents, this project monitored several behaviours of staff and students within a university focusing on mobility. This project came to be known as the Mannino Project. 2

1 https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/higher-education/bologna-process_en
According to Maria Helena Nazare, President of the EUA\(^2\) at the time "Both the governments of the EUA and the European commission have articulated a strategic vision for enhancing mobility, entailing concrete benchmarks and better measurement of progress" (pp). However, where policy has been articulated or documented, has progress been monitored sufficiently?

The EUA has a specific role to play in over 850 universities in Europe to put policy into practice. The EUA document reflects on how policy and practice can be better coordinated. An exciting outcome of this project was the Mobility Mapping Tool developed to monitor progress.

One of the crucial steps in the policy process is the formulation stage where the solution to the public problem is selected, amongst various possible alternatives, for implementation (Parsons, 1995; Hillman and Hitt, 1999; Howlett and Ramesh, 2003; Goodin et al., 2008). Savio (2010) suggests the use of a PIS (Policy Implementation Strategy), an instrument that is used to attain the objectives or targets set out by policy but is broader in scope (Savio, N. & Nikolopoulos, K. 2010).

The literature reviewed so far was for background and motivation in the substantive area and to get a feel for issues and concerns. It is not to discover gaps but rather as a motivation to continue and explore the subject area. The following research carried out a more in-depth explorative study of the subject area and using grounded theory allowed for other research questions or concerns to arise.

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\(^2\) European University Association
Method

Data Collection

Focus Groups

Data was gathered through an initial focus group to decipher the questions in the one-to-one interviews. Focus groups would have been a preferred method of data gathering initially as the participants were academics and are limited by time and workloads. The focus was to get a sense of the types of concerns of the participants and could give focus on what to ask in an interview. Staff were invited to attend the focus group scheduled mid-semester, and seven participants attended. The focus group did verify that there were pressing concerns amongst academics concerning policy development and for future development in a larger institution.

From a grounded theory perspective, the remaining interviews were one-to-one. The perceptions of the staff and their experiences was the focus and this could be explored in a one-to-one scenario. Conducting the one-to-one interviews allowed a more interactive discussion with participants, to ask some questions, to listen to them, to gain access to their accounts and articulations and to analyse their use of language and constructions of discourse. According to Seidman (2006) "At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the learned experience of other people or the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (pp) which is the essence of a grounded theory study. The focus group data was analysed and is subsumed into the theory being developed. Theoretical sampling may result in follow up one-to-one interviews with the focus group participants to compound the theory.

One-to-one Interviews
As the planning of the interview questions commenced, the big research questions presented, and possible sub-questions or prompts were developed to allow the participant to expand on their answer. The questions were open, and the aim was to use the prompts when needed.

A total of 17 interviews have been carried out to date. The interviews were recorded and transcribed into a word document. Field notes were also taken during the interviews.

Participant Population

The participants in the focus group included one female and six male staff. For clarification purposes, gender has not been flagged as a concern in this study, and to date has not emerged as relevant in the study through qualitative analysis. The participants in the one-to-one interviews included eight males and nine females. The academic positions included lecturers, senior lecturers, heads of school, and heads of departments. The selection was based on awareness and knowledge of policy issues within the institutes. A profile of each participant has been stored for discussion and analysis. This profile is anonymous. The following chart illustrates a snapshot of the participant population profiles.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Years at current position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>SL (Senior Lecturer)</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>SL (Senior Lecturer)</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>SL (Senior Lecturer)</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>SL (Senior Lecturer)</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>&gt;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>&gt;5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Head of School</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P17</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>SL (Senior Lecturer)</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Participant profiles

Ethical Considerations

The study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee, which is a sub-committee of the academic council at the Technological University Dublin - Blanchardstown Campus. The data is stored on a personal password-protected PC. NVIVO was implemented for initial data analysis where each institute is anonymized for cross-comparison for pattern and behaviour. For staff that agreed to one-to-one interviews and focus group attendance, a consent form was presented and signed before any conversation took place. Again, all contributions are anonymised. The aim is to observe patterns of behaviour to develop a theory. Data analysis at present is through pen and paper and protected in a locked office at all times. In all elements of data collection, analysis, and dissemination of strict ethical institutional guidelines upheld.
Data Analysis

Glaser’s (1978) grounded theory approach to data gathering and analysis was employed to examine and interrogate the interview data in depth. The focus group and the interviews are recorded and transcribed into a word document for further analysis. Initially, NVIVO was implemented as a repository for the codes and the incidents of categories. Line-by-line coding was carried out at this stage. A total of 130 codes were generated from the data using this method. Field notes were taken during the interviews. Field notes taken were used for further investigation and theoretical sampling. They highlighted the main concerns of the participant rather than the recorded interviews. As a researcher using GT processes codes were very descriptive at this stage. These descriptive codes were:

1. Interpretation - The dominant category being interpreting the data.
2. Implementation
3. Roles and Responsibilities
4. Participation
5. Time
6. Education
7. Communication
8. Support
9. Level of Application
10. Non-Compliance
11. Institutional Culture
12. Support

On further analysis, codes and categories of the codes were developed. Substantive coding is how one can describe this process. The open coding of the data codes for as many categories as possible (Glaser, 1978). Codes for different incidents are also coded into as many categories as possible. Open coding allows the analyst to see the direction to take in the study by theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling continued, which resulted in more data gathered through subsequent
interviews. Rather than looking at the codes as being descriptive with multiple instances, codes were more conceptual, also known as theoretical coding. "The theoretical code conceptualizes how the substantive codes may relate to each other as hypotheses to be integrated into the theory." (Glaser, 1978 p72). Line-by-line coding resulted in many more codes so once analysis of the field notes commenced then codes reduced to 29.

The conceptual codes are like the descriptive codes and incidents are the same. There was a confidence that came with this and helped verification of the codes developed through conceptualization. These codes proved as relevant in the investigation and will be further analysed to prove fit and workability in the theory. According to Glaser (1978), the essential relationship between data and theory is a conceptual code. The ideas were there through initial coding, but the challenge was then to continue the discipline of understanding them as concepts.

*Conceptual Codes*

The following are a list of the initial conceptual codes and an example of incidents indicated. These codes can be compared, and further incidents will be added and compared. For example, the interpretation code had 26 incidents associated with it. Several incidents appear across multiple codes, and these will be analysed further. The questions that needed to be asked throughout the analysis of the data were:

1. *What is the data a study of?*
2. *What category or property of a category indicate?*
3. *What is happening in the data?*

When a pattern of behaviour is evident in the data, the researcher names the concept. Similar events are placed into categories. "Coding for concepts allows the researcher to transcend the empirical nature of the data while at the same time accounting for the processes within the data in a theoretically sensitive way." (Glaser, 1978, p142). The following tables illustrate each concept, description and examples of incidents.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/concept</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Dissipating Policy | This code was created to study the issue where participants get involved in policy development and for reasons the policy was never created. Some participants stated that they got involved in policy development and put in a lot of work to see dissipate over time. There were different conditions; however, that may have led to this and that being time or coordination issues. | "I find that it may start, but it eventually peters out."  
IW do not think policy internalized enough within the school". |
| Imposed Policy    | Some participants felt that policy documents were pushed onto them and they thought that they were "a bit alien" with one participant stating "I feel that policy is something that is done onto you rather than you doing the development of policy." This concern was coded to imposing policy. | They are always something that is outside in rather than inside out". |
| Policy Power      | There was a sense that policy development comes from a position of power and is created and it is not in the interest of academics yet the academics are expected to implement it. There were also references to policy becoming a weapon and a "stick to beat you with" when something went wrong. Some academics are unaware of all the polices and are only made aware of the policies if an issue arises and the policy is presented to them. The policy is then used as a reprimanding tool. | "There is a difference between empowerment and emancipation. As employees, we are empowered to work in a system governed by policy, but we are not emancipated to change or challenge."  
"What I would say is that most policy, especially academic, come from a position of power." |
| Interpreting      | What was very prominent in the participant’s concerns was the interpretation of the policy. However, this took on many nuances in different interviews. Some found the language of the documents complicated, and others found the materials to be very dense. There was also a link between complying and interpreting policy. If the academic cannot understand the document, then that led to a degree of non-compliance. | "I have found problems with a policy document that I have found very complicated, and it is not being implemented correctly by the lecturers" and "I suppose that people are doing their own thing when it comes to policy."  
"I find policy documents very dense, and I work in academia, and I find them difficult to read." |
| Implementation    | There was a concern amongst academics that the day-to-day implementation of some policies is quite difficult. The idea of referring to documents as codes is very confusing and that they are not widely disseminated and not understood consistently and difficult to implement by the academics. | "Being cynical, sometimes the answer is ignoring policy, and hope that you are doing things right"  
"I would say that there is no overarching consideration into how those policies are being implemented"  
"I would say that people are doing their own thing when it comes to policy." |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category/concept</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Density</td>
<td>“Dense” or “cumbersome” were words used to describe the readability of some of the documents and that they would be challenging to implement.</td>
<td>“Dense to access. Their day-to-day implementation is quite difficult.” “The idea of referring to documents as codes is very difficult.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy meaning</td>
<td>The way that policy is interpreted can be measured in the meaning of the policy. If the policy is written by an academic for an academic, there is an increased understanding, whereas if it is written by someone outside of academia, there is some level of misinterpretation.</td>
<td>“Policy is always developed by admin, and they are not widely disseminated and not understood consistently and difficult to implement by the academics.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy development opportunity</td>
<td>Staff were given the opportunity to get involved in policy development, so they had opportunity. Some stated that they were never approached to develop policy. Some had negative experiences, and others had good experiences. Coordination and support were descriptive codes and had many incidents associated with them, so the degree of support and coordination will improve or negate the staff experience.</td>
<td>“We were asked to develop a strategy at the school level.” “There is a lack of process that provides a seamless flow of the development.” “My fear is that policies will be developed in isolation and sent back to the campus, and possibly will become dry and dusty and ignored.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy effort</td>
<td>Policy opportunity could work well alongside or be compared with the code &quot;policy effort&quot; that indicates the opportunity that may arise to get involved in the development of policy. There was also an assumption that depending on the level of the academic the opportunity may not be there with one participant stating “I suppose I was never asked to develop policy; it tends not to be done at the lecturer level.</td>
<td>&quot;You get involved in the development of policy, but it eventually peters out.” “The frustrating element was that it was challenging to coordinate the development of policy.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic time design</td>
<td>Time design in the policy development impacted and shaped what people did. Constraints on developing policies included the time they were given to do so. Some participants felt that it was an extra-curricular activity that also had no impact on their timetable.</td>
<td>&quot;You are busy doing day-to-day stuff, and sometimes interpreting policy or processes can be difficult.” “I bit off more than I could chew developing policy, and it was a distraction from other work duties.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disconnect</td>
<td>Some academics feel that there is a gap in policy or a disconnect between what is in the policy documents and what is being interpreted or happening on the ground. They feel that there is a level of con-compliance.</td>
<td>“I feel there is a disconnect between what is in the policy document and what is happening on the ground” “I tend to have a concern about working on a policy document that doesn’t represent what is happening on the ground”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>There was a concern amongst academics that the day-to-day implementation of some policies is quite difficult. The idea of referring to documents as codes is very confusing and that they are not widely disseminated and not understood consistently and difficult to implement by the academics.</td>
<td>“Being cynical, sometimes the answer is ignoring policy, and hope that you are doing things right.” “I would say that there is no overarching consideration into how those policies are being implemented” “I would say that people are doing their own thing when it comes to policy.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 Concept, Descriptions and Incidents.
Some participants were concerned about the impact on the students. They had concerns with the size of the institute as in a smaller institute, the focus can be very student-centered, and in a more astronomical institute, they may become anonymous and be affected by these blanket policies. Thus far, the codes, categories, and incidents are being recorded and stored in memos and compared.

For a grounded theory study the resulting theory is indicative of a pattern of behavior and is abstract from the lower level analysis of roles of the participants and situations. But the patterns showed that heads of department or senior lecturers seemed to have more concerns with development of policy rather than implementation of same. Their concerns were in getting involved with policy that tended to dissipate after a period and the document never gets developed or that policy development is a battleground. “As we enter the larger institution, I fear we will become more political, and policy will be used as a political tool. Academic council will become a political battleground”.

**Discussion**

The analysis suggests development and implementation of policy are prominent concerns. The patterns that are clustering around those concerns are meaning gaps, personal tensions and collective tensions. Implementation due to the number of incidents is more dominant. There are still substantial issues arising around development and it will be subsumed into the theory or will give rise to a
subsequent study on policy development and the theory will most likely revolve around implementation and interpretation issues. This will happen organically at the next stage of the analysis and that is sorting of the memos through constant comparison of incidents and codes. But patterns of behaviours around these concerns show that there is a level of tension felt by the academics. So in terms of GT theoretical codes, this would be context. There is context when there is tension. And context in relation to theoretical codes for grounded theory is the ambience or the feelings in the air within the group of people. What is happening then is a level of dissonance between interpreting and implementation. You have policy intended meaning and you have policy interpreted meaning. When a colleague asks another to explain the policy, you then have shared meaning, so you have a meaning gap. The problem arises when you have sets of individuals where their interpretive meaning varies. How does that create an issue and who cares? Well, it creates an issue for the academics because they care about the students and they are accountable for their actions. Hazellcorn (2018) mentions that concepts of accountability and transparency have taken centre stage in public and policy discourse and that there is “an emphasis on being responsive and answerable was well as being straightforward and truthful for one’s actions” (pp). There may be personal tension where you do not like the policy and you do not enact it. So we have personal dissonance here, and we also have collective tension. As a result of this there is a level of non-compliance that came up as a concern for many of the participants.

Findings thus far align with those of the National Forum 2018 and conclude that suggested without appropriate policy guidance, informal practices can emerge that may not serve institutions, staff or students well. There are factors that influence what academics do and that includes culture, the power that policy has and their personal consonance so all of these codes are now comparable and can be applied to the theoretical code for further analysis.

Policy has an intended meaning and sometimes interpretation is imposed upon the academics. Preliminary findings suggest participants feel there is a power behind policy. They feel they were
somewhat forced to implement policy that went against their personal or professional beliefs and they were unable to change that.

Personal tension is felt whether they implemented them or not. If you do not implement it, you are in trouble. It is used as a “stick to beat you with”. There is a fateful decision made by the academics. You did not follow the policy and that is against your nature or you do and it is also against your nature. So there are decisions made here by the academics that cause tension. These decisions have outcomes that ultimately affect the students, so they are fateful decisions. So in terms of the theoretical codes fateful or non-fateful decisions, that ultimately affect the students, cause concern for academics and in terms of a theoretical code are consequences.

As these are the early stage findings the core concerns of the participants will become more evident through further conceptualization and abstraction of the data. There are some codes that remain to be integrated into the theory. Theoretical sensitivity can occur at this stage and it is allowed to look outside the substantive area to compound what the data is showing. Memos of the process are kept with a record of the decisions to develop codes and the relationships between codes as they are being further analysed.
Conclusion

The aim of the research was to investigate academic experience of policy development across three institutes of Technology in Dublin. The method of data gathering and analysis was grounded theory. The present findings confirm that there are concerns amongst academics with regards to policy. The main concerns of participants in relation to policy are development, interpretation, implementation, gaps, time, compliance and culture. There are other concerns not elaborated on that will most likely prove relevant in the theory going forward, and they are support and education. At this point, the research study is still focusing on the conceptualization of the ideas that are there and memo-ing of the approach taken and ideas generated. Once a theory emerges, comparisons can be made with other substantive areas to develop the theory further. This will possibly result in further interviews with participants in other areas. What is liberating about the research is the findings indicate very clear concerns of the staff and they will be addressed in a theory through a better understanding of the overall concern. The resolution of the core concern will be a theory generated. The data suggests that there still is more work to be carried out, more data to be gathered and further analysis that will successfully develop a theory that can be used by the academics in the new Technological university and indeed further afield.

Further Work

During the research process so far, there have been opportunities to interview participants from an institution in Canada that have been through the same transformation as the institutes in this study. These interviews have not been analysed as part of this research. Future studies aim to replicate results on a larger scale in the development of a formal theory going forward to look at comparisons of policy experiences nationally and internationally.
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