Trajectories towards failure: Considerations regarding post-16 transitions within the United Kingdom Sport-Education sector.

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Abstract

This paper offers insights into the increasing dichotomy that exists between official forms of opportunity and access and the actual 'lived experience' of young peoples trajectories towards careers in the United Kingdom's market-orientated Sport-Fitness and Physical Education employment sectors. It does so by drawing on data generated by an 18 month ethnographic study to provide a case study of two students who chose to make the transition from a Foundation Degree in Sport Coaching (FdSc) onto a 'Top Up' Bachelor of Science (BSc) Sports Science and Coaching qualification. The paper illustrates their experiences of this transition in relation to the following phases of their trajectory (a) *facilitators of transition* (b) *managing expectations* (c) *transformation*, and (d) *isolation*. The findings highlight how, for some individuals, current transitions facilitate a critical distance between individual dispositions towards sport and education and the positions and practices of Further and Higher Education institutions. We suggest that the education and industry sectors must further listen to the voices and experiences of students to transcend the rhetorics of official policy discourse; facilitating a process in which the *conditions of transition* may begin to be reimagined.

Key words: *Physical capital, Foundation Degree in Science (FdSc), Bachelor of Science (BSc),Social Class, Transition, Transformation, Isolation.*

Introduction: The role of the Foundation Degree in shifting the FE-HE policy landscape.

The contrasting educational and employment agendas of successive United Kingdom (UK) governments have long vaunted the growth of the Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) sectors, encouraging discourses that are underpinned with competition and consumer choice. Such agendas are reflective of wider global developments concerning vocation education where, Gleeson et al (2005, p.446) note, 'FE has much in common with attempts by governments worldwide to reform post-compulsory education and training within a global discourse of economic improvement, re-skilling and social inclusion'. Such growth reflects the thoughts of Cree et al (2009) who note how students 'have been recruited to HE, in part, for ideological reasons (that is, to widen participation), without, we have suggested, sufficient or adequate preparation in either FE or HE'. The combination of discourses of social justice and economic prosperity, reflects the perceived need for 'a modern welfare system' based on 'the market', 'choice', 'efficiency', 'standards' (Lunt, 2008, p.743), that in the words of Blair (2006, p.2), promised young people 'productive and sustainable employment'.

As a consequence, individuals are now presented with a number of progression pathways into post-16 education and forms of employment. One example that attempts to address both of these pathways is the development of Foundation Degrees (Fd). Within the UK education system, the Fd is a degree-level qualifications designed by colleges, employers and higher education institutions (Quality Assurance Agency, 2010) to provide,

> Graduates who are needed within the labour market to address shortages in particular skills [and] also aim to contribute to widening participation and lifelong learning by encouraging participation by learners who may not previously have considered studying for a higher level qualification. (QAA, 2010 p.1)

Consequently, the Fd qualification has become an integral component of a UK education system wishing to infuse market individualism with principles of social justice and widening participation (Lumby & Wilson, 2003). Although Fd's are a specialist two-year Higher Education qualification, enabling progression into forms of employment, there is a mandatory articulated progression route into the final year (Level 6) of designated degree programmes. Such initiatives in the market have seen an increased co-operative provision between Further Education College's (FEC's) and Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) (Pike & Harrison, 2010).This is frequently referred to as the 'Top-Up' year (Bandias, 2011); designed to equip people with the relevant knowledge, understanding and skills to improve performance and productivity (DfES, 2007; Wolf, 2011).

The changing nature of relations between FE and HE sectors are creating new opportunities for students from disadvantaged socio-economic groups who, traditionally have not considered post-16 education. Various studies (e.g. Ball et al, 2000; Ball, 2006; Bowl 2003; 2007) have illustrated how students from non-traditional backgrounds who are offered opportunities for progression within the labour market share common experiences commonly from working class social backgrounds. While policy has vaunted these new opportunities as being unproblematic for the working classes, questions remain given that such transitions are understood to be sociologically and experientially complex and dynamic processes (Aldous et al., 2012; Byrom, 2009). For Bates et al. (1984) the transitional experience of individuals may be thought of as being 'moulded and developed in part by direct official policy...[but]...also achieved through the experiences, knowledge and cultures of the people involved'. However, as Ball (2006, p. 232) highlights, for working class students, 'Going to university involves them becoming a person different from the rest of their family and many of their

peers in eschewing a normal biography and at the same time risking a sense of feeling themselves out of place'. One particular concern is that while recent developments in vocational education may have afforded an increasing number of working class students the opportunity to enter HE this may have taken place without providing them with the necessary dispositions to successfully complete courses. Our data indicate, this may be prevalent for students studying Fd qualifications in sport and education related disciplines.

The growth of the sports-education industry and working class opportunity

Sport, like the armed forces, has traditionally been seen by working class males as an 'escape route' in search of what McDowell (2003), refers to as material success. As highlighted by SkillsActive (2010, p.4), 'SkillsActive industries account for 0.9 per cent of total UK output and two per cent of employment'[1]. Within the UK fitness and sport sector, this pursuit of material success has been facilitated through the growth of employment, with an '615,000 people in 39,800 establishments' (ibid, p.4). However, only 34% of this workforce were qualified to level four or above in the UK qualification framework[2] whilst only 22% have relatively low level or no qualifications at all. In addressing this evident skills shortage, there has been a rise in the number of qualifications with an increase in what the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) have referred to as a 'work based route into HE' (DfEE, 2000, p.6). Within the context of sports-education this includes the development of Foundation Degrees in Science (FdSc) and Foundation Degree in Arts (FdA). Commonly, FdSc's and FdA's are a two year qualification that requires students to place their work based learning into an academic context. While both the FdA and FdSc share many commonalities, within the FdSc, there is an emphasis on connecting scientific knowledge to work based learning. As highlighted elsewhere, (see SkillsActive, 2010) the main focus of the FdSc is to provide students with both scientific knowledge within fitness related disciplines and the soft skills[3] that are required by employers. At the end of the Fd, students have the opportunity to progress onto a one year 'Top Up', usually either a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or Bachelor of Science (BSc) qualification, delivered within an associated Higher Education Institution (HEI).

The transitional pathway illustrated above affords working class males the opportunity to gain additional qualifications focused on their interests in sport and fitness while experiencing a education system that they may not have traditionally considered. As we have documented elsewhere (see Aldous et al, 2012) working class males entering HE through the FdSc typically do so with large amounts of what Bourdieu (1990) refers to as physical capital, adopting an instrumental relationship to their body. Such instrumentality is defined by Shilling (2012) as,

> The development of bodies in ways recognised as possessing value in social fields while the conversion of physical capital refers to the translation of bodily participation in work, leisure and other fields into contrasting resources. (Shilling, 2012, p.137)

The possession of physical capital by working class students in the field of sport and PE has been recognised by FE-HE institutions as having a convertible value that might go some way towards addressing the official discourses of widening access and social justice. More specifically, the tran-

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[1] When expressed as a proportion of total UK all-sector GVA and employment,

[2] The framework for Higher Education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

[3] Please see National Children's Bureau (2012) for a more comprehensive overview of soft skills

sition necessitates (and assumes) that individuals can convert physical capital into forms of cultural capital (module credits) in the hope of further acquiring forms of economic capital within the sports industry (Hickey and Kelly, 2008) or Physical Education teaching (Brown, 2005). Such a mode of operation is heavily dependent on the individual having what Bourdieu (1990) and subsequently Stones (2005) referred to as general dispositions that encompass,

> Transposable skills and dispositions, including generalised world-views and cultural schemas, classifications, typifications of things, people and networks, principles of action, typified recipes of action, deep binary frameworks of signification, associative chains and connotations of discourse, habits of speech and gesture (Stone, 2005, p.88).

In making the transition from the FdSc, students are required to integrate these general dispositions into the practices and processes required in BSc qualifications. This necessitates that they quickly recognise forms of *conjunctural* knowledge, (namely, the specific learning outcomes of the course, key institutional practices, such as attending tutorials, lectures and laboratories). Beyond these official practices, FdSc students are also required to co-exist and negotiate social positions with students who have attended the BSc programme for two years. Thus, the FdSc-BSc transition can be viewed as a socially complex and temporally intense set of reflexive processes in which students are required to exchange physical capital incorporated in their general dispositions in order to acquire conjunctural knowledge, specific to the context of the BSc qualification.

Against this backdrop we now draw on data generated by an 18 month ethnographic study to focus on the experiences of two students, Peter and Charlie (all names are pseudonyms) who underwent the transition from an FdSc onto a BSc qualification. In so doing, we seek to provide insights into the increasing dichotomy that exists between the construction of official forms of opportunity within policy, and the actual 'lived experience' within FdSc-BSc transitions. Accordingly, we begin by outlining the ethnographic study before exploring their lived experience.

An ethnography of FE-HE sport students transitional experience

The data about Charlie and Peter is drawn from a larger 18 month ethnographic study that focused on understanding the transitional experiences of sport students between FE and HE between 2008 and 2010. Following university ethical approval contact was made and access negotiated by the first author to Hope College (HC) and Towers University College (TUC). Through discussions with the course director at HC, it was agreed that data would be collected from one Foundation Degree group in their final year of study as this would enable a more detailed picture of the transitional experience to be formed. The nature of study was discussed with the six students who made up the Foundation Degree group who agreed to be involved.

Informed by ethnographic principles as described by Angrosino (2007) data were collected by (name of first Aldous) via field observations, informal and formal interviews, and web based documentation. Both taught lecture sessions and practical sessions were observed. Observations focused on generic themes such as the type of knowledge being delivered, the practices of the participants and their interactions with the lecturer. Reflective comments were added into a field diary. Observations of informal interactions with the participants were also recorded. The observations made in the field were used to inform the topics discussed and focused upon during formal interviews that subsequently took place. In total, six formal interviews were conducted with Peter and Charlie that ranged from one hour to two hours in duration. All interviews were conducted by (name of first Aldous), digitally recorded, and transcribed verbatim by him. The interview questions were loosely

structured around general issues relating the experiences of Charlie and Peter and emergent themes from the field observations as mentioned above and themes following up on previous interviews. Initially, descriptive exploratory comments were made about the data were underlined and key events highlighted. Within this, a thematic analysis as described by Riessman (2008) was conducted that focused exclusively on the content of 'what' is said as opposed to 'how' something is said, 'to whom,' or 'for what purposes.' Conceptual comments were then made on the content of the transcripts that involved moving away from the explicit claims of the participants.

To assist in the development of plausible interpretations, the findings and emergent themes were shared with two colleagues (names of co-Aldouss) who had specific expertise in educational theory, life history and narrative studies. Their role was to act as critical friends who provided a theoretical sounding board to encourage reflection on, and exploration of, alternative interpretations of events in the field and the analysis of the data. Each was also fully involved in the crafting of the current article. Through this process, key emergent themes were identified in the data. The remaining sections of the paper will now illustrate the experiences of Charlie and Peter.

The participants and settings

Charlie and Peter were the first in their families to consider post-16 education. For Charlie, the choice of FE was not easy,

> I went to college from High School not really knowing what I wanted to do in life and thought I am fairly good at sport, so why don't I do the sports development course...There was two to choose from, there was performance and excellence and there was sports development and fitness...When it came to choose what sort of university course I wanted to do I was a little bit, ...I don't know, scared [is] not the word but sort of shocked. I don't think I was really ready for it. So I found out they had this Foundation Degree course going on at the college and I thought it's two years [and] if I don't want to do it after that I'll drop out [Charlie: Interview 1]

Similarly, for Peter continuing into FE was not an automatic choice,

> Before I decided to go to college I went around and did a few interviews for full-time and part-time jobs. The impressions I got from that, was I'd rather be going to college than be going to work. The prospect of a full-time job at Sainsbury's or Tesco's didn't really appeal to me. [Peter: Interview 1]

These extracts illustrate how transition and the choice of continuing with their education is framed by the alluring necessity of needing a degree qualification to progress or avoid employment. Despite not knowing specifically what careers they wanted to enter, both highlight the ease with which they were accepted onto a Foundation Degree at Hope College.

Hope College (HC)

Similar to many FE colleges in the UK, HC offered an eclectic range of courses and opportunities at various levels of development. This included the Foundation Degree (FdSc) in Coaching and Fitness,

> This course is for those with an interest and experience in coaching or teaching sport and PE. The broad perspective of the course opens up opportunities for employment at higher supervisor/lower management levels within sports centre's, health and fitness clubs, in

sports development, as personal trainers or in the wider areas of PE such as teaching, advising or co-ordinating. (Hope Course Prospectus)

As required by UK policy, the FdSc at Hope college was constructed in partnership with a local HE institution called Oceania University. The intended consequence of this partnership was to enable students to 'Top Up' and progress to gain a BSc qualification,

> There are also opportunities to progress to the 3rd year of BSc (Hons) in Health and Fitness at Oceania University, or directly to the 2nd year of Ivory University for the BSc (Hons) in Sport and Exercise Science. (Hope, web extract).

It became evident that the influence of Oceania on the teaching practices within HC was solely placed at effectively managing the quality of the learning opportunities. This is highlighted by one of the academics at HC,

> The Fd we've got at the moment, has been running for three years. The first cohort graduated last year and most of them went onto do a Top Up to turn it into a full BSc Hons. A lot of them with the view to go into coaching or teaching. [Lucy, Interview 1]

While the official transition pathway was validated by Oceania, due to the geographical location of Oceania, many students, including Peter and Charlie chose to 'Top Up' their degree at another local institution called Towers University-College.

Towers University-College [TUC]

At the time of the study, TUC was a local, community orientated university college focusing on delivering a range of BSc and BA degree programmes, one of which was the BSc (Hons) in applied sports science and coaching. As highlighted by one of the lecturers, TUC played a central role in providing local progression routes for students,

> We're starting to be recognised more as a community based university that offers these progression routes and have had lots more colleges signing up. I think one of the things we've always done right from the start since I have been working here is that you have this open door policy so we are readily accessible; so I don't think the students find it as challenging when they come here and I don't think they probably feel to the same extent of transition that they might do in other institutions. [Claire: Interview 1]

As the extract illustrates, central to some of the goals of TUC is the need to be an accessible university, one with an open-door policy to support student transition. In what follows, we explore how this institutional position shaped the transitional experiences of Charlie and Peter.

Findings

The facilitators of transition

Although, not deemed academically strong by his school, due to his enjoyment of sport, Charlie was encouraged by members of the Physical Education Department and the Careers Department to think about post-16 education,

I didn't know what I wanted to do so I went and did the sport [course]. I wouldn't say I don't have inability to do sport but I don't have a great flair and natural taking to some sports. [Charlie, Interview 1].

Charlie's biography is illustrative of individuals entering forms of Sport-Education without having a fixed idea of the progression route or with a natural predisposition towards sport. Similarly this position is highlighted by Peter,

I started looking [at] the options at college cos I had an interview at Connexions, who said I liked sport and would be interested in studying it. They then put me through to college and get an interview for [a] National Diploma in Sport Science. I got onto it because what I did get was better than expected. [Peter, Interview 1]

The backgrounds of Charlie and Peter reflect those of students often defined as coming from 'non traditional' backgrounds (Bowl, 2001; Widdowson, 2005) but with dispositions that have a low physical capital value. Without physical capital the trajectory towards FE-HE sport-education related courses is recontextualised at the micro-level through particular agents and agencies within the school environment; implicitly reproducing macro discourses regarding social mobility and access to employment,

The teacher, basically said everyone is going to go to college if you haven't got an apprenticeship. She said 'Don't worry about not getting into college, you're a primary high school in [city name]. [So] basically you're guaranteed a place so as long as you get the grades for your course'. So she sort of built it up that that's what you could do. [Charlie: Interview 1]

The reliance on external support for transition is extremely fragile; dependent on the individual having general dispositions that enable them to recognise what will be required for the prospective transition into FE,

School, it's sort of almost pushing you. I think I can remember one [teacher] even giving me a coursework to copy to make sure that I did it. The way they write it out is that they give you: for a pass you must do this, for a merit you must do this, for a distinction you must do this. You look back and it's like 'Peter do this, tick'. [Peter: Interview 1]

Unlike students who actively choose to enter FE with sufficient academic ability and physical capital (see Aldous et al., 2012), Peter's choice of college and FE was strongly facilitated by the discourses of access and widening participation. The combination of school encouragement and the porosity of FE-HE acted as conditions of action that led Peter to seek qualifications via courses in which he lacked both interest and dispositions towards academia and vocational practices,

I didn't really know what I was going to be doing when I first started college. It was sort of a case I enjoy doing PE - might as well try going down that route while I still figure out what I want to do. I was getting DDD, thinking, 'well National Diploma that's not that bad but its going to be even more impressive if it goes onto a degree'. So a qualified football coach, with a sports coaching degree that's going to get me more jobs than not. The minimum you needed to get on the course was pass, pass, pass. I got distinction, distinction merit. [Peter: Interview 1]

The thoughts of Peter illustrate the disparity between official discourses of opportunity and lived experience of transition. At an institutional level, there appears to be an assumption that that an individuals enjoyment of Physical Education and Sport equates to forms of physical capital, which

can be converted into useful skills and knowledge on the Fd. Similarly, Charlie highlights the type of knowledge transference expected,

> With the foundation degree, they say 'this is kind of like A-level stuff'. But in the National Diploma I never covered any of the A-level stuff so in a way it's sort of all new for me. [Charlie: Interview 1]

Charlie's comment highlights that the type of knowledge required (or expected) within sports education is not always recognised by individuals whose previous educational experiences have been shaped within vocational educational diplomas. While not explicit in their influence, the numerous opportunities to pass and progress may also be illustrative of the necessity for institutions to adhere to a social justice agenda. Such adherence shapes the strategic positioning of qualifications within the trajectories of Charlie and Peter and the hope and expectation of HE qualifications,

> I was like 'blimey I can do distinction level!?'. I thought right, 'I am actually not that bad at doing that, if I can get it by accident by going for the merit'. See what can happen when I actually go for it!! I was pleased with myself when I did get a distinction, confident in myself that I could go on and get a good grade and go onto university. [Peter: Interview 2]

> At the end of this course I want to go down to TUC and do the coaching and fitness course and then after that do my PGCE. After I finish at TUC he [previous PE teacher] is thinking of offering me a GTTP [Post] [Graduate Teachers Training Programme]. I'll work at the school and go to uni two day's a week; working there three days and get my teacher training done instead of doing the PGCE and doing the placements and then going off to find a job. [Charlie: Interview 1].

The prospective outlook of Charlie is reflective of his knowledgeability regarding the strategic pathways to a career within PE teaching. As the second extract illustrates, this pathway is implicitly based around the assumption that he will be able to recognise and acquire knowledge on the coaching and fitness course at TUC by exchanging forms of physical capital for forms of social capital. There is little insight into the differences that may await him. Such hope and expectancy is interwoven with nervousness about the transition into FE and then HE,

> It might, alienate us a little bit? I think they are going to exclude us. They're going to be really wary of us. They'll probably be a massive divide. I don't know...I think on a whole, the lecturers don't know us and the existing students don't know us so we might be treated slightly different cos we're like the Foundation Degree People, labelled for life. [Charlie: Interview 2]

Due to the policy landscape of the college and the purposeful adherence to discourses regarding widening participation and access, both Charlie and Peter are positioned to develop practices that will enable them to cope with the expectations of Higher Education. Thus, before the entrance into Higher Education both Charlie and Peter prospectively created sets of knowledge regarding strategies and practice that are focused on succeeding within HE. This prospective position required management from both the agent and TUC.

Managing expectations

Contrasting to students who enter the 1st year of the BSc programme, FE 'Top-Up' students are expected to acquire specific position-practices and understand the normative expectations of the programme within weeks. This, coupled with the increased traveling distance from home leads to a situation where Charlie and Peter were left with little time to develop a series of practices and strate-

gies to cope with the transition into HE. The success of this process of knowledge acquisition significantly determined their ability to understand what was required of them in HE. This is evident within their first weeks at the TUC,

> They [TUC] say you either got to pass it [the dissertation proposal] or fail. But I got my bridging work back and they said you have to pass it to get onto the course and I only passed the referencing bit. The rest of it was sort of in-between- like not failed outright, just sort of good but not good enough to pass. It was a bit of a shock, like it was our first bit of work within the first two weeks of getting here...I think its the whole step up from the Foundation to the degree. [Charlie: Interview 2]

> We have a tutor. I had to chat with mine at the start; welcome to TUC and sort out the modules and get a couple of pieces of paper signed. My tutor is quite good actually, she always listens. She liked the idea of my dissertation as well cos its the area that she is working. The main reason I decided to do this study was because the way they teach us to do the research project at college is different to the way they want us to do it at uni. I failed everything on that including the minimum references cos they [TUC] wanted ten different sources. There was a different structure and method and protocol.[Peter: Interview 3]

Significantly, the management of this transition is, in reality, at a speed in which Top Up students have to acquire and embody forms of knowledge immediately to negotiate different positions and practices between the FdSc and the BSc. There was little time to reflect or convert general dispositions into sets of valued practices and knowledge, specific to the BSc programme. Consequently, required knowledge acquisition is removed from the positions developed in the first two years at Hope. This outcome exacerbated feelings of being the 'other',

> I feel just left alone really. Okay, we were treated as any other student who had been there but we weren't there for the two years before. In lessons we were labelled the 'CAFE progression students' and were singled out. You feel like everyone is looking at you and thinking 'who the hell are they'. [Charlie: Interview 3]

> Well having to have two days off work and then having to get yourself back into a frame of mind for just one day before having another two day break can be a bit trickier than some people might think.I'm knackered. [Peter: Interview 3]

The expectations set by TUC forced Charlie and Peter to draw upon their general dispositions as a coping mechanism. Thus, the position of the other became defensive, protecting their identity as FD students to position themselves in the hope of gaining degree level qualifications. Such a position resulted in the development of a mythical discourse of class solidarity. This inward process, in which agents reproduce rather than elaborate on their experience led to a series of transformations that slowly isolated them from academic and social positions at TUC.

Transformation

While it may be argued that students undergo the process of transformation throughout, this aspect of this trajectory refers to the transformations within the final year of their Top Up programme. It is here where the data highlighted a apparently irreversible detachment of general dispositions from the processes and practices required by the course. This increased the *critical distance* between their in-situ experience and the expectations of transition set at TUC within the requirements of some modules,

It was only in the first semester where they showed us how to write our proposal and how to go about things. I remember our module leader saying when we did the proposal presentation 'right thats all I want to see from you until hand-in day'. So you could say I have been stitched up. I met my tutor about it and he said you could do this and I said, 'I have, I have written it'. And he said 'let me know when your doing it and I'll come in and see how your getting on'. [Charlie Interview 3]

It's different than at Hope. At Hope it's a ratio of 1:5 between teacher and student. Whereas here at TUC, it's usually a ratio of about 1:50. Some of the rooms are like 2 or 3 times the size of what they are at Hope college. To begin with, I wouldn't say I was daunted but I wanted to find out what the experience was going to be like. It wasn't like 'christ we're not going to get a word in edge ways here, what's the point of being here'. [Peter: Interview 3]

His evident frustration with the management of the course, led him to a position in which he communicated less regularly with those who were there to support his transition. However, he also highlighted some of the coping mechanisms of responding to the position he finds himself in,

I do three days a week [coaching] and it works out to be ten hours a week, so its like £150 a week so it's not bad really. I've got my community sports coach, schools sports coach top, you know badge on the front. I've order myself some jogging bottoms with [my name] on it, you know just to look a bit more professional really. That side of things is going well [but] I just want to finish it now. [Charlie: Interview 2]

In contrast to what Leese (2010) might expect, Charlie reverted back to the educational and sporting experiences developed at his time at school. While he perceived these to have some sort of value in enabling him to complete the transition into employment, there is little recognition of whether such practices were valued within the HE context. This in many respects is reflective of the findings of SkillsActive (2010), who note how,

the current educational priorities and targets for HE and FE are not correctly attuned to providing qualified workers for the active leisure, learning and well-being sector. (SkillsActive, 2010, p.65)

Such a position in which he is attuning his practices to the employment rather than education sector reinforced Charlie's distinctiveness as a working class FE vocational student, seeking to engage in forms of short-term employment rather than trusting that the BSc qualification would enable more sustained employment in the future. While he recognised his educational experience as being beneficial, he increasingly spent less time at TUC,

I don't feel like I am at uni. I just feel like I am going down [to university] just ticking a box, doing the lessons and then coming back really. But then it's weird, I didn't feel at uni when we were doing the Foundation Degree just because we were in a room at college. [Charlie: Interview 3]

Peter also experienced a similar transformation from Top Up student within TUC to being 'the other',

I imagine it's a similar problem most people would have entering onto a 3rd year course like ours. The one's that I have talked to are okay but I haven't had a chance to talk to that many…I tend to sit with the others from the FD…We know each other, we know what we're like. [Peter: Interview 3].

The outcomes of this transformation from attempted engagement to active isolation, is the final process within their transition. These comments reflect Whittington's (1997, cited in Stones, 2005) view that agents draw upon acquired socio-cultural schemas acquired in previous contexts. However, drawing upon these context specific schemas of practice and position led Charlie and Peter to become increasingly isolated from the context of TUC.

Isolation

The increasing critical distance between the general dispositions of the participants and the expectations and requirements of the course resulted in sets of tensions. These tensions illustrated what others have named as a 'discursive and dispositional twist' (see Merton, 1957, cited in Stones, 2005). Here, there is a shift in the relation to the requirements of HE, a further critical distance between the in-situ experience of being in HE and the positions forwarded by the policy of FE-HE transition. This is illustrated by both Peter and Charlie's perspective on their experiences towards the end of the 'Top Up' year,

> I kinda went downhill a little bit; didn't really cope with the work. I haven't been back yet but I am not expecting a great amount and possibly might have to retake [the final year]. That's how bad it was. I was handing it [work] back to lecturers but they weren't getting back to me in time. If they did, they were giving me a day to sort of fix it. I was sort of panicking. There was a couple of times, my dissy and another one of the log books, [where] they give a two weeks where you have to hand it in. If you [do] get it in then you only get a 40%. I missed the deadlines on two of them. [I am] disappointed in myself. Disappointed… gone off the pedal, gas came off. Just got to wait and see what happens. [Charlie: Interview 4]

Peter revealed a similar dispositional twist,

> I had two other assignments due for the same week. They said to hand in what we had done so far so they could amend it but they sent it back so late. So I took it upon myself not to complete the work, I didn't have enough time. Cos that deadline came first that's why I set the deadline to do that one before and then do the other two which were in the day after. So even though there was still technically time between being told and handing in date, if I did digress onto that one I would have to miss out on handing in one of the other two other assignments for the module. [Peter: Interview 4]

Both experiences allude to possible conflict between the acquired general dispositions of Peter and Charlie and the position-practices of the TUC. As Charlie illustrated, the position of outsider, afforded to them as Top Up students, resulted in a conflict or the feeling of the 'other'. Such isolation resulted in a position in which both struggle to complete the course, tainted with feelings of anger and despondency,

> They said I could retake the one module if I wanted but if I fail more than one then I have to retake the whole year. I don't whether to take a year out get it all out of my system…To be honest I have had a few tears in my eyes. I was just like shit, I can't cope with this. I didn't want to say 'by the way I can't cope'. [Charlie: Interview 4].

After almost six years in education this outcome is not one of elaboration or opportunity, but a position in which they have been unable to gain qualifications to enhance their employment opportunities. The realisation of this position, facilitated a sense of despondency that was felt so readily by Charlie in particular,

> They [parents] were so pleased that I did the progression route and I thought I was doing okay. I think I didn't tell them because I don't want to disappoint them. If I just suddenly turned around and went 'I'm not coping with the work' I would have been scared that they would have been disappointed with me if you know what I mean…I was the first one to go from college to uni and because I did quite well in the foundation degree I didn't want to suddenly turn round and say I was struggling. [Charlie: Interview 5]

The position Charlie found himself in not only shifted the value of his general dispositions, it irreconcilably shifted the practices and positions beyond education and onto his family. In what follows, we conclude our insights by suggesting what hopes we have for the shifts in policy that may be derived from these insights.

Reflections

The stories of Charlie and Peter highlight that much is expected of working class students making the transition from Foundation Degree to Bachelor of Science 'Top Up' programmes. Focusing our analytical lenses on clarifying the experiences of working class students raises questions about the ability of current policy initiatives to actually deliver the opportunities they so readily claim to provide. The trajectory towards feelings of failure, isolation and despondency evident within the findings, is in part due to students being unable to unable to transform sets of general dispositions to develop the necessary academic practices required on BSc programmes. Consequently, while both Charlie and Peter managed to gain FdSc and (eventually) BSc qualifications, the longevity of this success and the 'value' the qualification adds to their ability to position themselves in the sport, fitness and physical education sectors remains questionable.

Preventing 'Top-Up' students from having the time to recognise the academic requirements of BSc programmes fails to adhere to the original requirements of the development of the Fd which encouraged students to develop 'the right blend of skills which employers need' (DfEE, 2000, p.6). This failure is further highlighted by SkillsActive,

> There was a perception that students were not sufficiently well advised about their career options and preparedness for work, and that degree courses were not practical enough to be aimed at employment in the active leisure, learning and well-being sector. (SkillsActive 2010, p.64)

Finding the appropriate blend of academic and vocational skills, is particularly important with the context of sports-education where there has been a historical instrumental relationship between corporeal practice and academic achievement. While HE institutions, such as TUC may outwardly promote the opportunities for working class students to exercise agency and create their own educational and employment trajectories, it is evident that not all working class students benefit. Thus, future research is required to facilitate some re-examination of the conditions that prevent students within sports-education becoming lost within the current myriad of academic discourses, of performativity, academic achievement and career success.This raises questions concerning how the culture of sports-education may shift to prepare working class students for HE and what else can be done to support them in making the transition into employment. The thoughts of Bernstein, (1996, cited in Fitz et al., 2006, p.8) are particularly pertinent in reflecting how the institutions of sports-education response to this must be more than 'individual psychological boot-strapping [in which] the concept of trainability in socially empty identities shift toward the materialities of consumption'. Accordingly, the institutions of sports-education (schools, colleges, universities and employers) need to reflect on the consequences of whether the multitude of qualifications and tran-

sitional pathways is actually providing students not only with qualifications but with dispositions that have transferable value across the sector.

In particular, given the working class instrumental relationship to the body greater attention and support needs to be paid to the needs of working-class students within sports-education and to support the exchange of physical capital into forms of value social and cultural capital within HE. Institutions may have to move away from a 'one size fits all' approach to learning and retention; expecting that students need to 'adapt' in order to 'fit in' to HE and consider first the needs of the proposed 'new student'. This preparation as suggested by Avis (2009 p.659), and as Charlie's and Peter's comments support, would need to take seriously the ways in which social class positioning is an 'active process' rather than one that is merely determined solely by policy and attainment in school and college. Such active processes may be facilitated through greater collaboration between partnership institutions and employers. This would include the sharing and co-development of resources, collaboration between staff and the sharing of expertise and mentoring programmes for students who express the wish to make the transition from FE into HE. Further collaboration between education and employers may create a system that is able to support students in transition post-education. This reflects the thoughts of Bandias (2011, p. 592), who notes 'What is required, is improved connections across tertiary education and training to meet economic and social needs which are dynamic and not readily defined by sectoral boundaries'. As such, future research may be focused on not only illuminating the current conditions of transition but *reimagining* many of the hierarchical and horizontally organised practices, positions and relations across sets of different (yet interwoven) employment, educational and social contexts.

Importantly, any re-imagination of the current relations, practices and positions between and within forms of post-16 education and employment must be informed from the experiences and voices of those students who experience forms of transition. Such a position may move away from questioning what is wrong with the 'new student' to a dialogue that asks questions about what needs to change either within the post-16 curriculum or with the processes of interaction that can potentially prevent students from attending, learning and "fitting in". In this way the stories of students like Charlie and Peter may be used as a catalyst from which a more progressively and socially sensitive collaborative provision between education and the sector may be developed.

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