

**“Dance to the dominants’ tune”: The impact of
institutional habitus on mature students’ study in
both England and China**

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For my families

Abstract

Massification in higher education has been developing globally, with more and more mature students entering university and benefiting from higher education. Because higher education has been anchored in its historical traditions of serving traditional young students (Sissel et al., 2001), institutional habitus tends to be marked by the dominant social groups—the traditional young students (Reay, et al., 2001; Thomas, 2002; Tett, 2004; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). The institutional structures, pedagogical structure and institutional practices are all based on the need of the dominant group (McDonough, 1997), which may affect mature students' study as a non-dominant group in higher education.

In order to explore mature students' higher education experience in both England and China, 37 semi-structured interviews have been carried out including 17 in England from two universities and 20 in China from two universities. Institutional habitus and habitus have been used as theoretical perspective. As a qualitative research under the constructivism, the institutional habitus and how it affects mature students' study experience are interpreted through mature students' perceptions. Nvivo software is employed as the data analysis tool and themes emerge from the data construct the research findings. The major findings of the study suggest the appropriateness of the metaphor of "dance to the dominants' tune and filter out those unable to keep time" (McDonough, 1997:107) which reflects the incompatibility between institutional habitus and mature students' habitus in both England and China.

More specifically, mature students suffer from exclusion and segregation from their institution, which is manifested in their poor academic and social integration in their institution. This situation is influenced by not only the institutional structure and pedagogical structure, but also mature students' own self-exclusion, which is presented differently in England and China based on the different higher education systems in the two countries. In England, mature students are entitled to be fully involved in university life academically and socially as their full-time younger counterparts, but because they feel the university is alien and difficult to fit in, they choose to exclude themselves from participating in academic and social activities apart from their lectures. In contrast, in China, due to the incompatibility between the regular higher education system and the

adult higher education system, even though the mature students have their higher education physically in regular higher education domain—the university, they have limited involvement in university life academically and socially because of the actual barriers built up by the university. Furthermore, since the Chinese mature students feel inferior and unconfident about themselves, they choose to avoid involvement into university. The exclusion that the English and Chinese mature students suffer from is described as “soft” exclusion and “hard” exclusion in this research, both of which make the mature students in the two countries generate self-exclusion.

This research suggests that along with the development of higher education massification, mature students in both England and China are still in an unequal position, which reflects the persistence of incompatibility between institutional habitus and mature students’ habitus. The exclusion that the mature students suffer from their institutions affects mature students’ own habitus and forms their attitudes which reproduce the action that the mature students exclude themselves from integrating into the dominant group.

An institutional habitus that embraces diversity will be less discordant with the habitus of students coming from non-traditional’ backgrounds, and enables them to feel less like “a fish out of water” (Thomas, 2002, p. 440). Furthermore, in order to create the inclusive institutional habitus, the institutional structure and practices should involve mature students academically and socially based on their characteristics and specific needs, which could improve the compatibility between the institutional habitus and mature students’ habitus.

Declaration

I hereby declare that the work presented in this thesis is entirely my original work, except explicit attribution is made. None of this thesis has been previously submitted for any other award.

Signature: _____

Guan Shanshan 关珊珊

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Glossary of Terms

<i>Terms</i>	<i>Definitions</i>
<i>Mature students</i>	In this research, mature students refer to those older than 21 (UCAS, 2016) and study in alternative route in higher education at undergraduate level. Specifically, in the English context, mature students refer to those who study on both Foundation Degree and Top-up course; in the Chinese context, mature students refer to those who study on undergraduate course particularly in “night university” form.
<i>Foundation Degree</i>	Foundation Degree is one of the flexible modes of higher education delivery regarding the Widening Participation agenda (HEFCE, 2000) aiming 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 or prefer a more applied curriculum (QAA, 2015).
<i>Top-up course</i>	The “Top-up” courses are used by providers as a route for Foundation Degree students to progress to level 6 within their own faculty or from other institutions (TDA, 2008).
<i>Dual higher education system in China: regular higher education system and adult higher education system</i>	The dual higher education system is contextualized under the scheme of the public education system established in the People’s Republic of China after 1949. The regular higher education mainly targets traditional regular young students who graduate directly from high school and are recruited by universities through the Higher Education Entrance Examination, which could award a formal Bachelor degree to the graduates when they meet the requirement and complete the courses. The adult higher education provides both non-academic higher education and academic degree higher education. The Bachelor degree awarded by adult higher education is more work-oriented and less academic-oriented than the degree awarded by the regular higher education system (Li, 2015; Qin, 2016).
<i>“Evening University”</i>	“Evening University” (<i>Ye Da</i>) is a form that adult higher education institutions provide higher education at Bachelor degree face-to-face to mature students part-timely and especially during the evening time and/or weekends (Le, 2014). The so-called “Evening University” is an adult higher education form rather than a study place; it could be given by various adult higher educational institutions and the teaching is mainly given during evening and/ or weekends that why it is called “Evening University”.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

This study contributes to a growing awareness of mature students' experiences in higher education from a global perspective. In the era of higher education massification, mature students in both England and China are provided with alternative routes to the higher education but their experiences are still associated with negative and unpromising associations: inequality (Reay et al., 2001; Reay, 2004; Dumais, 2002; Sissel et al., 2001; He, 2009; Li, 2014; Wan, 2006), marginalization (Tett et al., 2012; Kasworm, 2008; Bolsius & Williams, 2013), exclusion (Penketh & Goddard, 2008; Kasworm, 2008; Dumais, 2002; Lu, 2014; Liu & Gao, 2016), suffering from more study difficulties than younger traditional students (Thomas, 2002; Tett, 2004; Penketh & Goddard, 2008; Winter & Dismore, 2010; McTaggart, 2016), lack of confidence (Busher et al., 2015; Tett et al., 2012), and a lack of a sense of belonging (Kasworm, 2008; Reay et al., 2001; Reay, 2004; Atkinson, 2011). Mature students especially those who have non-traditional qualification routes to higher education are in a disadvantaged situation in the higher education context (Gorard et al., 2017); and they suffer from more difficulties and inequalities if they want to enrol in prestigious universities such as the Russell Group Universities (Boliver, 2015). Among the current research studies that explore mature students' experience in higher education, the institutional habitus has been used as a specific theoretical lens, which could illustrate how the university affects mature students' study experience from a comprehensive perspective.

The central aim of this study is to use institutional habitus as a conceptual lens in order to explore mature students' study experience in both England and China. As Reay et al. (2001: para.1.2) highlight, the institutional habitus is essentially a "rich internalised core from which everyday experiences emanate", the everyday university life reflects the institutional habitus and affects students' study. The institutional practices are the reflection and specification of the institutional habitus. Weissmann's research (2013) also announces that institutional factors, attitudes and dispositions contribute significantly to how staff and students behave towards non-traditional students, thus actively contributing to the externalisation of an institutional habitus that excludes the non-traditional from its priority. At the same time, Burke's research illustrates how the

institutional habitus affects students' habitus. His research claims that the institutional forms and collective practices generated by institutional habitus can directly shape the individual's habitus as well as their behaviour, which illustrates that within a specified field the institutional habitus and students' habitus could interact with each other and students' study is affected by both of them (Burke et al., 2013:167). Instead of looking at a specific aspect of the institution's practices or a specific aspect of mature students' study experience as the previous researchers have done, by using institutional habitus as the theoretical lens, this research explores how the institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience via both institutional practices and influencing mature students' habitus.

By achieving the aim, this study is significant in terms of:

(1) an understanding of mature students' study experience in higher education from a global perspective to see how different institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience. At the same time, by exploring the mature students' situation in higher education from a global perspective, mature students as a specific student cohort in higher education, their current situation and experience could be understood more deeply.

(2) enriching the theory of institutional habitus by showing the mechanism by which the institutional habitus and mature students' habitus interact with each other and cooperate in contributing to mature students' unequal and disadvantaged situation. This research argues that the institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience both via the institutional practices and affecting mature students' habitus; as a result, the institutions generate exclusion of mature students and the mature students are forced to engender their self-exclusion. Because the English higher education system and the Chinese higher education system work in different ways for mature students, this research describe the exclusion that the English mature students suffer from as "soft" exclusion whereas the exclusion that the Chinese mature students suffer from as "hard" exclusion.

In this chapter, the researcher introduces the background to the study, as well as addressing the research questions and their rationale in the following sections. The chapter concludes with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

1.1.1 The English higher education system regarding mature students and the problems that mature students encounter

Three national policy reports (Fryer, 1997, Kennedy, 1997, NCIHE, 1997) established and strengthened the Widening Participation strategy which was initiated in the Robbins Report in 1963 (Macdonald & Stratta, 2001). Mature students are one of the groups that the Widening Participation strategy targets. Alternative routes to higher education are a crucial feature of English higher education regarding Widening Participation; and mature students should be provided with a non-standard route through which they could gain higher education without owning traditional qualifications (Leathwood & O'connell, 2003; Heagney & Benson, 2017).

The Foundation Degree is employed as a specific strategy for implementing the Widening Participation policy. Learners can access Foundation Degrees from a range of starting points and with different entry qualifications, for example, apprenticeships, access programmes, NVQs, and professional certificates and certificates (and relevant work experience) (QAA, 2015). The students who participate in Foundation Degrees are likely to want part-time, modular, and distance or web-based learning that enables them to maintain progress towards their qualification alongside their work commitments (HEFCE, 2000). The progression in Foundation Degrees is towards two directions: towards work and/or towards an Honours degree, which means the routes should be both occupational (for example, through further professional qualifications and higher level NVQs) and academic (for example through further study towards an Honours degree) (HEFCE, 2000).

The Foundation Degree is perceived by mature students as an achievable way to get qualified, whereby they can succeed in higher education and gain further benefit in their life. Nonetheless, many reports and academic research studies claim that mature students still suffer from various inequalities and disadvantages on their way towards being qualified through a Foundation Degree, such as:

- a gap regarding the teaching content and pedagogy between the Foundation Degree and the Honours degree (DfES, 2004: para 4.7; Penketh & Goddard, 2008; Bolsius & Williams, 2013)

- mature students who have come from a non-academic background or those who have been away from the education environment for a number of years may face more study difficulties (DfES, 2004: para 3.45; Winter & Dismore, 2010; O'Shea & Stone, 2011)
- mature students do not receive enough guidance and support from their faculty, which puts them in disadvantaged situation as they lack knowledge of the system when they are adjusting to a very different support and assessment regime (Tett et al., 2012; Kasworm, 2008; Bolsius & Williams, 2013)
- mature students tend to feel a sense of insecurity and sense of isolation (Kasworm, 2008; Mallman & Lee, 2017; Erb & Drysdale, 2017)
- mature students also lack confidence and always feel anxious (Murphy and Roopchand, 2003; Woodfield, 2011; Heagney & Benson, 2017)
- mature students rarely have a sense of belonging to their institutions and they have emotional vulnerabilities (Kasworm, 2008; Reay et al., 2001; Reay, 2004; Erb & Drysdale, 2017)

1.1.2 The Chinese higher education system regarding mature students and the problems that mature students suffer from

At present, there are two parallel forms of higher education systems in China: regular higher education system and adult higher education system (Yu, 2006; Yu, 2010; He, 2012). Regular higher education mainly targets “traditional” young students who graduate directly from high school and are recruited by universities through the Higher Education Entrance Examination onto programmes which could lead to a formal Bachelor degree. Adult higher education in China generally refers to study leading to a first degree certificate awarded to working adults. Not dissimilar to many adult education systems in “western” countries, adult higher education in China has long been recognised as a means for upgrading the work force and has also been advocated as an alternative for promoting the expansion of higher education. This has proved to be effective in China as a way to supplement the regular higher education system and to

provide working adults with higher education opportunities (He, 2006; Liu, 2006; Zhang, 2017).

Mature students who wish to enrol on an Adult Higher Education programme have to pass the National Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination (which is organised differently from the regular Higher Education Entrance Examination) and, if successful, these students are taught separately from “traditional” university students (Yu, 2010; Liu, 2016). Likewise, the entrance requirements and awards for mature students are different from those of their peers in the regular higher education system. Due to the fact that, in China, adult higher education is widely perceived as a pragmatic extension of skills and knowledge for existing work and job requirements, the degree awarded by adult higher education is less academically-oriented than the degree awarded by the regular higher education system. As such, these degrees tend to be valued less compared to degrees awarded by the regular higher education system (Le, 2014; Lu, 2014; Yang, 2017). Even though Chinese mature students are taught physically in the university campus, because the adult higher education system is independent, the university arranges the adult higher education separately to mature students and do not give them the equal access to the educational resources on campus with their full-time counterparts (Feng, 2008; Wang, 2016; Liu, 2016).

Due to the fact that, in China, adult higher education is still widely regarded as inferior and more “vocational” compared to “traditional” (or mainstream) higher education, many adult learners are confronted with ambivalent social preconceptions relating to their status within an increasingly competitive, high-achieving and success-oriented Chinese society (Yu, 2006; Yu, 2010; Li, 2015; Qin, 2016). Simultaneously, the Chinese mature students suffer from numerous disadvantages that have been shown in current literature.

Firstly, the regular universities take organizing adult higher education as a way to gain financial income by charging tuition fees, rather than providing high quality education for mature students (Li, 2014; Yao, 2017). Secondly, because regular higher education is prioritized by both the government and universities, adult higher education receives less attention and guidance, which causes adult higher education to lose its developmental direction and quality (Zhao, 2016; Wang, 2016; Li, 2014; Li, 2016;

Yang, 2016). Thirdly, due to the higher education massification, there is an imbalance of the financial allocation from the government between regular higher education and adult higher education, which is associated with mature students' limited access to the educational resources on campus (Qin, 2016). Fourthly, many researchers claim that the academic quality and professionalism of the teachers in the adult higher education system is the main problem that causes unsatisfactory teaching performance (Fu, 2008; Guo, 2015; Li, 2014; Zhao, 2016). Fifthly, the authority and value of the degree awarded by adult higher education is not convincing, which is caused by the lack of supervision and management, especially the lack of a government policy which guarantees the quality of the adult higher education (Chen, 2011; Zhang, 2017).

Meanwhile, due to the ample supply of graduates from regular higher education, employers much prefer to recruit a regular full-time graduate rather than an adult who graduated from the adult higher education system, which is the main reason causing discrimination against adult higher education in society (Lu, 2014; Yang, 2017).

1.1.3 The institutional habitus and its impact on mature students' excluded and disadvantaged situation

Even though, in the era of higher education massification, both England and China provide alternative routes for mature students to access higher education, current research studies demonstrate that mature students in both England and China are still in a disadvantaged and unequal situation. Many research studies have been done using the theory of habitus and institutional habitus to explore the study experience of non-traditional students, including mature students, in the institutional context (Reay et al., 2001; Sissel et al., 2001; Thomas, 2002; Tett, 2004; Laird & Cruce, 2009; Morrison, 2009; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011; Weissmann, 2013; Wardley et al., 2013; McTaggart, 2016; Feldman, 2016) and argue that the institutional habitus is still in favour of traditional students and constructed for the sake of traditional students.

Sissel et al. (2001:18) comment, "Because higher education has been anchored in its historical traditions of residential, selective education and because it is based in perceptions of a privileged place and role for young adult leadership development, this environment embraces full-time, residential youth. Little space, voice, and value are given to other groups and in particular those who are the most different from young

students—adult learners”. Their research demonstrates clearly the fundamental reason why mature students are into an unequal situation in higher education. Weissmann’s research (2013) uncovers that currently both the institutional and content structures create dispositions that constantly reinforce the study of traditional students as the norm. He announces that institutional factors, attitudes and dispositions contribute significantly to how staff and students behave towards non-traditional students, thus actively contributing to the externalisation of an institutional habitus that excludes the non-traditional from its priority.

Thomas’ research (2002:431) firstly claims a similar argument by exploring the consequences of institutional habitus in relation to Widening Participation students – mature students as well as students from lower socio-economic backgrounds or students from ethnic minorities, and highlights how the institutional habitus can impact on their experience of ex- or inclusion by saying, “Educational institutions favour knowledge and experiences of dominant social groups (e.g. white, middleclass men) to the detriment of other groups. Hence, the education system is socially and culturally biased, and this is played out in the relations between staff and students, and amongst students”. Also, as Thomas announces, “Institutional habitus should be understood as more than the culture of the educational institution; it refers to relational issues and priorities, which are deeply embedded, and sub-consciously informing practices” (ibid.). Thomas’ comment illustrates that institutional practices are formed by the institutional habitus; therefore, the ways in which institutions treat mature students shows how the institutions contribute to their unequal and disadvantaged situation.

1.2 Research questions and their rationale

The aim of this study is to explore mature students’ study experience in both England and China from the perspective of institutional habitus. The main research question is:

How does institutional habitus affect mature students’ study experience from the perspective of mature students in both England and China?

Institutional habitus has been taken as a research lens by researchers to investigate the higher education study experience of students from the non-dominant group, including mature students (Weissmann, 2013). Reay defines the concept “institutional habitus”

to mean “the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual’s behaviour as it is mediated through an organisation” (Reay, 1998:521). Thomas (2002) points out that mature students’ higher education experience is the interaction between institutional habitus and their own habitus. More specifically, whether the institutional habitus is compatible with mature students’ habitus or not would make the mature students feel like “fish in water” or “fish out of water”. Based on the two types of arguments above, the impact of institutional habitus on mature students’ study experience could be understood in two ways: via the institutional practices and via influencing mature students’ own habitus. As a consequence, even if universities are open to students from non-dominant groups, the institutional habitus of most universities is still marked by an emphasis on traditional students and non-traditional students still suffer the problematic deviation from the norm. Enlightened by the current literature, this research holds the position that the institutional habitus is reflected by mature students’ perceptions rather than being treated as existing objectively. Mature students’ perceptions in this research are treated as the lens of exploring the institutional habitus and how it affects mature students’ study experience.

Even though many studies have been done using institutional habitus to explore mature students’ study experience in higher education, there is still a gap in the current literature. There is hardly any study that explores mature students’ study experience considering the impact of the institutional habitus on mature students’ study experience via both the institutional habitus and its influence on mature students’ habitus, especially from a global perspective. Furthermore, currently, there is no research that compares mature students’ study experience between England and China by using the theory of institutional habitus as a research lens. Therefore the three sub research questions are as follows:

- (1) How does institutional habitus affect mature students’ study experience via institutional practices in both England and China?
- (2) How does institutional habitus affect mature students’ study experience via influencing mature students’ habitus in both England and China?
- (3) How do the institutional habitus and mature students’ habitus interact with each other and affect mature students’ study experience in both England and China?

Led by the main research question, the three sub research questions could guide the research to explore how the institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience and investigate the process of how this influence takes place. As mature students' numbers in both England and China keep increasing, while more studies that argue mature students' negative study experience in these two countries keep appearing at the same time, it is significant to investigate the study experience of this student cohort from a global perspective.

1.3 The structure of the thesis

The final section of this chapter offers a brief overview of the structure of the thesis:

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter of this thesis.

Chapter 2 offers contextual explanations on the background of this study which are significant to enable readers to follow this thesis, including: (i) the higher education system regarding mature students in England, (ii) English mature students' disadvantaged situation presented in current literature, (iii) the constitution of the dual higher education systems in China and the Chinese adult higher education system, (iv) Chinese mature students' disadvantaged situation presented in current literature.

Chapter 3 organises the theoretical analysis of the main concepts and presents the conceptual framework. The main theoretical concepts in this research include habitus and institutional habitus. Based on a review of the current literature, mature students' study experience is affected by the institutional habitus in two dimensions: via institutional practices and by affecting mature students' habitus. As very little current literature uses the theories of habitus and institutional habitus to explore non-traditional students, especially mature students' study experience, this research also reviews the literature that investigates mature students' distinct features as adults and how other institutional factors affect mature students' study experience academically and socially via mature students' interaction with the institutions.

In chapter 4, the research design and methodological issues of this study are explained. The rationale of the research design is built upon an overall thinking about the methodological issues, including the philosophical stance adopted in this study, the

methodological choices, and the focus on specific methods and techniques employed in this study. As this research follows a constructivist stance, this qualitative research employs semi-structured interviews as the technique for data collection. Two English universities and two Chinese universities are selected as research sites, and 37 interviews have been done in both England and China. England and China are the two case countries in this research and the reasons why these two countries are selected as two cases in this research will be explained in detail in this chapter. This chapter ends with an explanation of ethical issues relevant to the study.

Chapter 5 presents four profiles of the interviewees in this research, two of whom are English and two of whom are Chinese. The four profiles could let the readers have a vivid impression of the mature students involved in this research.

Chapter 6 presents the data in this research. The data presentation in this chapter is thick, in-depth and interpretive in nature. The chapter is organised by the themes emerging from the mature students interviewed from two English universities and two Chinese universities. As a multi-site case study, because of the different ways in which the English higher education system and the Chinese adult higher education system operate for mature students in the two countries, this chapter presents the English and the Chinese data separately in a parallel structure. The data of each country is presented in two dimensions which are how the institutional habitus affects mature students' study via institutional practices and how the institutional habitus affects mature students' study via influencing mature students' habitus. A brief summary is offered at the end of the chapter to conclude the similarities and differences of the impact of the institutional habitus on mature students' study experience in the two countries.

Chapter 7 contains a synthesis discussion, combining the theories and the empirical data of this study. This chapter teases out the major conclusion of the study. The major findings of this study suggest the appropriateness of the metaphor of "dance to the dominants' tune and filter out those unable to keep time" (McDonough, 1997:107), which reflects the incompatibility between institutional habitus and mature students' habitus in both England and China. The institutional habitus interacts and cooperates with mature students' habitus in two dimensions: via institutional practices and via affecting mature students' habitus, which affects mature students' academic and social

integration, and hence results in mature students' unequal and excluded situation in the two countries. Although Widening Participation has been advocated and supported for a long time already, the institutional habitus of English universities is still defined by traditional students, which causes marginalization and exclusion of mature students. As a response to this inequality, mature students exclude themselves from involvement in university life and limit their university life within the community they build up together. In contrast to the English mature students, the exclusion and inequality that the Chinese mature students suffer from extends outside the university context to the wider society, because of the lower perceived value of their degree and the education provided by the adult higher education system in society.

Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter, offering a summary of the main text and conclusion of the thesis, the limitations, the contribution, and the implications of the study.

Chapter 2 The higher education context regarding mature students in both England and China

This chapter presents the higher education context regarding mature students in both England and China including the alternative paths to higher education for mature students as well as the disadvantages and problems suffered by mature students illustrated in the current literature. As the higher education systems in England and China work differently, this chapter presents the English context and the Chinese context separately.

2.1 The higher education system regarding mature students in England

Benefiting from the Widening Participation strategy, mature students in England are supported by the government to study in higher education and are offered alternative routes to higher education. Three national policy reports (Fryer, 1997, Kennedy, 1997, NCIHE, 1997) established and strengthened the Widening Participation which was initiated in the Robbins Report in 1963 (Macdonald & Stratta, 2001). Mature students are one of the groups that the Widening Participation strategy targets as the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) states:

“The government also wants to support those wishing to study part-time in higher education, and mature students” (BIS, 2011: para 1.5).

Alternative routes to higher education are a crucial feature of English higher education regarding Widening Participation; and mature students should be provided with non-standard routes through which they could gain higher education without owning traditional qualifications (Leathwood & O'connell, 2003; Frago et al., 2013). BIS defines the alternative routes into higher education as “students accessing Higher Education with no qualifications; with a vocational qualification (e.g. Access qualifications, BTEC National Certificates, NVQ Level 3) and not more than one A Level qualification; or a mature student accessing HE with any entrance qualification” (Foster, 2009: para 1.5). Based on the alternative routes into higher education, BIS also clarifies the alternative pathways through higher education along with the traditional A-Level as “students participating in alternative HE provision e.g. part-time learning;

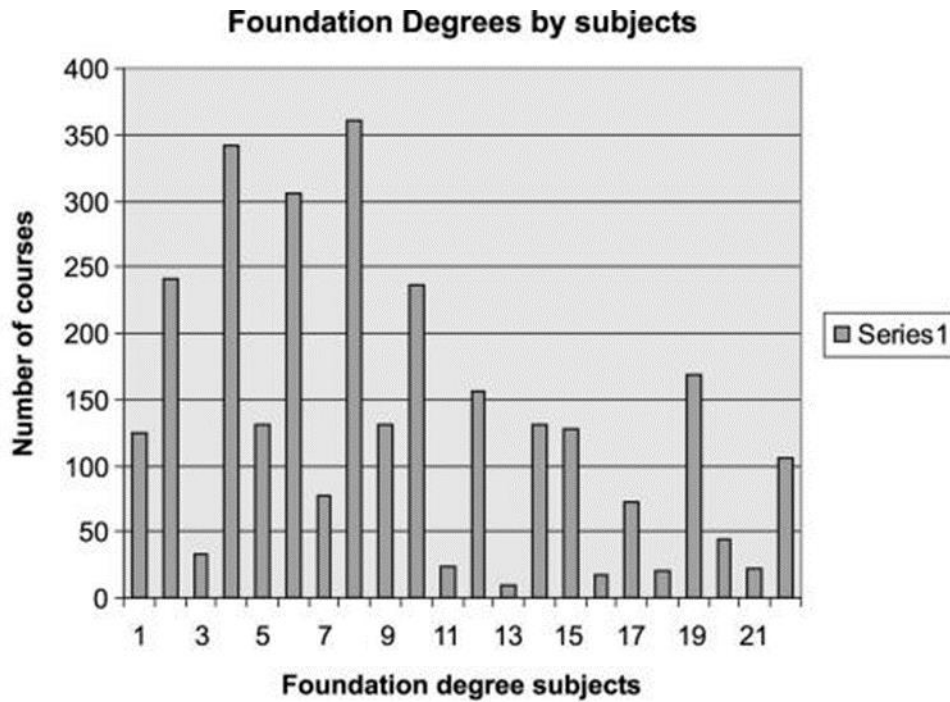
flexi-study; non-Honours degree programmes such as Foundation Degrees, HNDs or Certificates in HE; or any higher education undertaken at Further Education colleges” (ibid.).

Apart from the alternative routes to higher education, mature students in England are also offered the flexible provision of higher education. In the report to HEFCE constructed by the ARC Network, the flexible provision of higher education regarding the alternative routes is explained as “alternative to the mainstream traditional full-time campus based higher education, a provision implies different admissions, curricula and deliver structures, including elasticity of timetable and length of study, and different locations for study including in work, colleges and universities or at home” (Moore et al, 2013).

As described by ARC, the Foundation Degree is one of the flexible modes of higher education delivery regarding the Widening Participation agenda. The Foundation Degree is a new form of flexible provisions which was established by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment in the year 2000 (HEFCE, 2000). The Foundation Degree aims to both widen and increase higher education participation, and is treated as strategy of Widening Participation policy by higher education institutions (DfES, 2004). The Foundation Degree also aims 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 or prefer a more applied curriculum (QAA, 2015).

There are 361 FDs in Education registered with Foundation Degree Forward, more than in any other subject area (see Figure 2.1). These courses have the largest number of FD students enrolled in England (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2005: para. 23). A factor in this increase has been specific government drivers such as the introduction by the DfES of the Early Years Sector Endorsed Programme (Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, 2005: para. 23). These sector skills endorsed programmes benefited from significant additional funding from SureStart (a government funding stream) to contribute to fees and provide additional support to students.

Figure 2.1 Foundation degree by subjects (QAA, 2005)



- Key**
- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Agriculture and Land based Studies | 12. Hospitality and Tourism |
| 2. Art and Design | 13. Law |
| 3. Biological Sciences | 14. Media |
| 4. Business | 15. Performing Arts and Music |
| 5. Community and Social Studies | 16. Physical Sciences |
| 6. Computing | 17. Public Service |
| 7. Construction | 18. Retail |
| 8. Education | 19. Sport |
| 9. Engineering | 20. Technology |
| 10. Health and Care | 21. Transport |
| 11. History, Archaeology, Theology and Geography | |

Foundation Degrees target different groups of people who cannot engage with higher education in the traditional way because of their previous education experience or other reasons. The target groups include people who do not have A-levels but have other kinds of qualifications; mature students who have relevant work experience; and people who can benefit and succeed in a Foundation Degree based on their previous formal qualifications (DfES, 2004). To address the shortage of people with intermediate higher technical and associate professional skills in the labour market is the purpose of the Foundation Degree as a specific government initiative (CHERI, 2008). Authentic and innovative work-based learning is an integral part of Foundation Degrees and their design. Therefore, learning and work are closely interlinked within Foundation Degree programmes (QAA, 2014). As stated by the policies and reports, mature students could

benefit from joining the Foundation Degree programme as they could succeed in higher education in an achievable and practicable way. Therefore, this study targets English mature students who study in higher education via a Foundation Degree programme.

Encouraged by the policies, mature students from various academic backgrounds are offered alternative routes (such as the Foundation Degree) to study in higher education. On the one hand, this makes higher education more achievable for mature students. On the other hand, mature students' academic situation before entering university may cause them study difficulties once they encounter higher education, especially via the Foundation Degree programme. Many research studies present the academic difficulties that the mature students encounter in their higher education study, normally relating to three aspects: the mismatch between mature students' academic background and the pedagogical structure, the conflicts between the flexible delivery modes of the modules and the lack of support from the faculty perceived by mature students, and the academic gap between the Foundation Degree and the Honours degree (Reay et al., 2001; Sissel et al., 2001; Thomas, 2002; Tett, 2004; Laird & Cruce, 2009; Morrison, 2009; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). Numerous reports and research studies also claim that these academic difficulties pose mature students with emotional challenge during their study journey of Foundation Degree and Honours degree study (Weissmann, 2013; Wardley et al., 2013; McTaggart, 2016; Feldman, 2016). These three types of study difficulties and mature students' emotional challenges as presented in the current literature will be illustrated successively in the following sub sections.

2.1.1 The entrance requirement and the difficulties of adapting to the academic domain

Since the Foundation Degree is a specific strategy for implementing the Widening Participation policy, learners can access Foundation Degrees from a range of starting points and with different entry qualifications, for example, apprenticeships, access programmes, NVQs, and professional certificates and certificates regarding work experience (QAA, 2015). QAA (2015) also clarifies the other entrance qualifications: applicants for Foundation Degrees must have the potential to study at HE level 4 initially, so minimum entry qualification of Level 2 or equivalent might be expected in basic skills to meet the academic demands of the Foundation Degree; providers may wish to consider supporting applicants to gain level 2 qualifications in maths/numeracy

and English/literacy at the same time as studying on the Foundation Degree; providers may also consider it desirable for applicants to have a full Level 3 qualification, for example an NVQ or equivalent. Some Foundation Degree providers ask for a minimum of two years paid or voluntary experience in a relevant role in a school or setting, evidence of engagement with recent relevant continuing professional development; and a supporting statement from the employer (TDA, 2008).

As stated in the policies and regulations, English mature students are offered achievable and affordable entrance to the Foundation Degree. Since mature students could access to the Foundation Degree from various academic backgrounds and they could come back to study at any stage of their lives, the current reports and research studies illustrate that some mature students encounter problems such as lack of adaptation once they enter the academic domain in higher education.

The report to the Department of Education and Skills conducted by the York Consulting raises the problem that “the more academic/technical elements of the programme can be difficult for those students who have come from a non-academic background or are mature students who have been away from the education environment for a number of years” (DfES, 2004: para 3.45). Other research studies also reveal that mature students including those who take Foundation Degrees then Top-up programmes have more difficulties in managing both their time and their academic work, due to the existing university structures, approaches and culture (Thomas, 2002; Tett, 2004; Penketh & Goddard, 2008; Frago et al., 2013). There is a structural mismatch existing for mature students, especially regarding the pacing of study and the length of programmes (Penketh & Goddard, 2008). Winter and Dismore (2010) also point out that mature students have limited time to adjust to the teaching in the Honours programme as they have only one year to finish that. They also claim that mature students suffer from many first year issues, especially academic and social integration whilst completing the final stage of their higher education studies. These relate not only to academic and social issues of progression, but also to the wider physical and cultural changes experienced.

These academic challenges and the lack of adaptation at the beginning of the study contributes to mature students’ emotional challenges such as the sense of insecurity. Kasworm (2008:28) points out that “they may face challenges negotiating the

institutional procedures, the time commitments and demands of course work, and the ego demands of classroom assessment. They may sometimes be discouraged or disheartened". Mature students usually tend to have nervousness and hesitancy at the start of their courses and later tend to be worried about the high fees for which universities are asking (Busher et al., 2015; Mallman & Lee, 2017). Murphy and Roopchand (2003) announce that although mature students experience higher self-esteem and higher levels of intrinsic motivation compared to traditional students, they are unconfident and anxious learners. Mature students tend to feel frustrated and isolated if their voice cannot be heard or they cannot connect the academic courses and theory to their practical experience (Forrester-Jones and Hatzidimitriadou, 2006; Burton et al., 2011).

2.1.2 The flexible delivery modes and the lack of support

Students who participate in Foundation Degrees are likely to want part-time, modular, and distance or web-based learning that enables them to maintain progress towards their qualification alongside their work commitments (HEFCE, 2000). The flexible delivery modes and study patterns include workplace delivery (for larger groups of students from one employer or location), virtual learning environments, distance or off-site learning, weekend and holiday attendance, evening/weekend study (workshops), block release, part-time study, full-time study, blended learning (i.e. a mix of the above), with the flexibility to study, within reasonable limits, when and where it best suits the learner (QAA, 2015; TDA, 2008).

The flexible delivery modes and study patterns are designed to make the study more convenient to mature students and suit their lifestyle, but many research studies point out that mature students suffer from a lack of guidance from their teachers and faculty because of their limited time in university (Weissmann, 2013). A large body of research also illustrates that mature students' lack of enough academic guidance and support from their faculty puts them in a disadvantaged situation as they do not have knowledge of the system when they are adjusting to a very different support and assessment regime (Tett et al., 2012; Kasworm, 2008; Bolsius & Williams, 2013). O'Shea and Stone (2011:286) claim that for mature students, "adequate access to support services such as counselling, career advice, learning support and other services can be essential to both

participation and success”. Bolsius and Williams’ research (2013) announces that mature students need to make a great effort to get access to support from staff; some mature students claim that there is no extra support available in university. Based on the current situation of mature students in universities, Bingham and O’Hara (2007) also point out that the initiatives in the university’s current processes of student relations management and student support ought to be embraced; the communication and liaison between staff and mature students need to be enhanced.

Penketh and Goddard (2008) claim that the traditional model of study, which was designed for young full-time students, is adapted for use with mature students; and this model of provision was not devised with consideration of the specific needs of mature students. This statement by Penketh and Goddard captures the fundamental reason for mature students’ academic difficulties, which is that the universities still apply the way they treat full-time traditional students to manage mature students’ study. Mature students’ particular characteristics have not been considered fairly and they have to follow the pattern by which the traditional students’ study is arranged and required, since the traditional students are still the dominant group in the higher education domain (Franklin, 2006).

Mature students’ part-time study modes, especially their limited time on campus, affect their sense of belonging to their institutions. Many research studies have illustrated that mature students usually lack a sense of belonging (Kasworm, 2008; Reay et al., 2001; Reay, 2004; Erb & Drysdale, 2017). Mature students commonly doubt their place in university and they have emotional vulnerability (Kasworm, 2008). As Kasworm (2008:32) announces, “Adult learners also face challenges in gaining a place, a position, a voice, and a related sense of valued self in the cultural worlds of higher education... adults actively negotiate their sense of place, social authority and agency, and relatedness to others who value or marginalize their presence”. From the perspective of the usage of academic language, O’Boyle (2015) argues that mature students always experience compartmentalisation and fragmentation in their university life.

2.1.3 The study patterns and the academic gap

The Foundation Degree is designed by the government as a way for mature students to get qualified and have further success in the higher education domain (HEFCE 2000).

The progression in a Foundation Degree is towards two directions: towards work and/or towards an Honours degree, which means the routes should be both occupational (for example, through further professional qualifications and higher level NVQs) and academic (for example through further study towards an Honours degree) (HEFCE, 2000). The Foundation Degree must have clear progression routes to Honours degrees (TDA, 2008). The Foundation Degree is also a valuable contribution to the ladder of lifelong learning, attracting people from different starting points and providing opportunities for progression to an Honours degree and further professional qualifications (HEFCE, 2000).

“Top-up” courses are used by providers as a route for Foundation Degree students to progress to level 6 within their own faculty or from other institutions (TDA, 2008). The student survey which was done by the York Consulting Limited commissioned for the Department for Education and Skills shows that the Foundation Degree is seen as a good access path to a prestigious university, to which it would otherwise be hard to gain entry as an undergraduate, even with good A-level results; meanwhile, there is also demand from Foundation Degree students for a Masters’ qualification (MSc) to allow them to progress even further once they have completed their Honours degree (DfES, 2004). Apart from the political goal, from students’ perspective, the Foundation Degree is also seen as a route to an Honours degree (Greenbank, 2009). In the Evaluation of Foundation Degrees—Final Report, the Department for Education and Skills reports that 38% of the students in Foundation Degree programmes stated that their main hope as a result of completing their Foundation Degree was to gain an Honours degree (DfES, 2004). In this Final Report, the Department for Education and Skills states that bringing more people to Honours degree level is the significant goal and contribution that the Foundation Degree should make. The Foundation Degree programme plays a significant role in enabling mature students to get qualified, as stated in the policies.

However, when this Foundation Degree is put into practice as a way for mature students to achieve an Honours degree, there are numerous worrying aspects shown in the current literature. The report to the Department of Education and Skills conducted by the York Consulting presents that the students suffer difficulty with the transition from Foundation Degree to Honours degree, which “tends to be related to the specialist nature of the Foundation Degree and the more vocational nature of the programme in

comparison to the Honours degree” (DfES, 2004: para 4.7). This report reveals that there is a gap regarding the teaching content and pedagogy between the Foundation Degree and the Honours degree. This situation is also illustrated by Penketh and Goddard (2008). They claim that the difference of the nature as well as the different requirements of assessment between the Foundation Degree and the Top-up programme make it difficult for students, especially mature students, to adjust and transit in the Honours degree programme; they encounter new challenges, different demands on their study practices and are required to engage in deeper ways of thinking in working towards a higher academic level (Penketh & Goddard, 2008; Swain & Hammond, 2011). Greenbank (2007) also argues that the transition from foundation to Honours degree creates considerable levels of stress for the students because of the different approaches to teaching and learning adopted in the two distinct programmes. The transition from year 2 of a Foundation Degree to year 3 of an Honours programme is experienced as a greater jump than the equivalent level of academic progression for students continuing on the Honours degree (Bolsius & Williams, 2013).

The academic gap between the two programmes imposes a considerable amount of study difficulties for mature students, which then forces mature students with emotional challenges. Mature students are worried about the esteem in which their courses are held by universities, as they feel the universities do not prioritize their programmes (Busher et al., 2015). The initial engagement with the university is affected by students’ construction of themselves as capable or struggling learners, while the majority of mature students do not have a promising initial engagement, which puts them at a disadvantage by their lack of knowledge of the system and they are adjusting to a very different support and assessment regime (Tett et al., 2012; Fragoso et al., 2013). Mature students feel less confident to approach the Honours degree if they do not feel their Foundation Degree had been good preparation for study at level 6 (Bolsius & Williams, 2013).

Mature students’ higher education experience is dynamic and complex, which intertwines with various factors. As shown by the literature above, working adults in England are offered alternative routes to higher education as mature students, which makes their success in higher education feasible and achievable. Nevertheless, mature students in higher education still suffer from various types of study difficulties as well

as emotional challenges, for which, the mismatch between mature students' situation and the various aspects of the implementation of the academic programme has been pointed out as the significant reason.

2.2 The higher education system regarding mature students in China

There are two parallel forms of higher education systems in China: the regular higher education system and adult higher education system (Yu, 2006; Yu, 2010; He, 2012). The regular higher education system mainly targets traditional regular young students who graduate directly from high school and are recruited by universities through the Higher Education Entrance Examination. It offers full-time teaching and awards formal Bachelor degrees to graduates (He, 2012). The adult higher education system provides both non-academic higher education and academic degree level higher education (Li, 2015; Qin, 2016). Non-academic education refers to various kinds training, advanced studies and refresher courses, which award certificate of specific training. Academic degree education includes junior college degrees, Bachelor degrees (which start from high school level or junior college level) and on-the-job Masters' degrees (Jiao, 2008; Qin, 2016). The ex-president Xiaoping Deng announced that the adult academic degree higher education "walks together" along with regular higher education as the other "leg" of the Chinese national higher education systems, which makes a great contribution to higher education massification (Li et al., 2010; Chen, 2011; He, 2012).

Since this research only focuses on education at Bachelor level offered by the adult higher education system, the "adult higher education" mentioned in the following sections refers to education leading to a first degree certificate provided by the adult higher education system to working adults.

Legally speaking, adults (no matter the age, marital status and job etc.) have the right to participate in the Higher Education Entrance Examination and be accepted by higher education institutions to study together with young traditional students, as is announced by the *Chinese Higher Education Law* (Li, 2008). However, because of the competitiveness, full-time study mode and the insufficient opportunity to study in the regular higher education system, as well as adults' own job and family commitments, the part-time study form leading to a first degree certificate provided by the adult higher

education system is more approachable for working adults and it has contributed significantly to educating people especially working adults, during different time periods (Liu, 2006; Liu and Gao, 2016; He, 2012; Jiao, 2017).

Mature students who expect to enrol in the adult higher education system for pursuing an undergraduate degree have to pass the National Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination (which is organised differently from the regular Higher Education Entrance Examination for traditional regular students) and are taught separately from traditional regular students in these institutions (Yu, 2010). The requirements to both accepting and awarding mature students is independent and distinct from that of the regular higher education system. Similar to many adult education systems in “western” countries, adult higher education in China has long been recognised as a means for upskilling the work force and for promoting the expansion of higher education (He, 2004; Liu, 2006). Primarily regarded as professional skills development, an adult higher education degree is less academically-oriented and thus the entrance requirement of adult higher education is perceived as easier than that of the regular higher education system. Mature university students in China are generally limited to those who have failed or voluntarily declined to participate in the Higher Education Entrance Examination organised by the regular higher education (Le, 2014; Yu, 2010; Chen et al., 2017).

The independence and distinctiveness of the adult higher education system impose particular and distinguishing features to the way the education is implemented and how mature students are treated (Chen, 2015). The way the adult higher education system operates contributes significantly to Chinese mature students’ disadvantaged and unequal situation, including the unequal distribution of educational resources, the unsatisfactory teaching equality and management efficiency, and the lower perceived value of the degree awarded, which is shown in more detail in the following sub sections.

2.2.1 The organisers of the adult higher education and the unequal distribution of higher educational resources

Adult higher education is given by two groups of institutions (Le, 2014). The first group is named Adult Higher Education Independent Institutions including the Open

University, Radio and TV University, Management and Cadre Institutions, Independent Correspondence Institution, Central Party School of the Communist Party of China etc. The second group is regular higher education institutions including universities and colleges. The Minister of Education (MoE) has announced that the regular higher education institutions provide tertiary education to regular young undergraduate students full-time, and they are also authorized to organise adult higher education (Li, 2008). The adult higher education at Bachelor degree level and above should be conducted mainly by universities which are approved by the MoE and adult higher education is managed and supervised by the adult higher education system, even though the teaching is implemented in regular higher education institutions (Sun, 2008; Ji, 2013). In universities, adult higher education is usually given by a specific department which is variously called the Adult Education Department, Continuing Education Department or Distance Education Department variously. These departments take the responsibility to recruit and teach the mature students, and their work is organised and managed by the adult higher education system according to the policy and plan issued by the MoE (Le, 2014).

Due to higher education massification, there is an imbalance of the financial allocation from the government between the regular higher education system and adult higher education system. Both the Chinese central government and local government take regular higher education as the priority and allocate more financial support to it, which means the improvement of adult higher education is constrained by the lack of financial resources (Feng, 2008; Wang, 2016; Yang, 2017). In the higher education massification period, the Chinese government optimized and adjusted the distribution and structure of higher education by upgrading and combining some adult higher education institutions into universities (Li, 2008; Le, 2014). In the process of higher education massification, many universities set up adult higher education programmes and increased enrolment (Li, 2008; Ji, 2013). Students who graduated from different institutions were allowed to take the Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination.

Apart from the imbalanced distribution of finance at governmental level, there is also an unequal allocation of educational resources in university level. Higher education massification pushed universities to seek more resources including facilities and teaching space to accommodate the enlarging regular student cohort, because of which

the regular universities merged with the independent adult higher education institutions and organised the adult higher education (Ji, 2013; Yang, 2016). However, after the adult higher education institutions were merged into universities, the universities assigned the resources that belonged to adult higher education institutions to serve regular students rather than mature students, in other words, the regular higher education is alleged—i.e. by Chen and Yang—to have embezzled the resources that were supposed to benefit mature students, to benefit traditional students (Chen, 2015; Yang, 2016). The merged adult higher education institutions became part of the universities but adult higher education cannot be conducted in a satisfactory manner, because the universities that organise it do not spend enough effort or allocate sufficient resources to it (Fu, 2008; Ma et al., 2014; Chen & Wang, 2016). Under this circumstance, the mature students' access to the study resources on campus is limited as well (Qin, 2016). There is no systematic supply of study resources for mature students; the educational resources in universities are provided by the regular higher education system from the perspective of financial allocations, which aim to serve the students in the regular higher education system rather than the mature students who belong to the adult higher education system (Zhang & Li, 2015; Sun, 2016).

The unequal distribution of resources and finance at both the university and governmental levels work together to contribute to the unequal and disadvantaged situation of the adult higher education in China, which constrains the development of adult higher education and marginalizes it. This unpromising situation of adult higher education then generates its further unsatisfactory performance, which is shown in the following sections.

2.2.2 The teaching patterns and the decrease of the teaching quality and management efficiency

The most common ways to deliver adult higher education in regular higher education institutions currently are: Distance Learning (*Yuan Cheng Jiao Yu*), Self-taught Examination (*Zi Kao*) and “Evening University” (*Ye Da*) (Wang, 2013; Le, 2014). The Distance Learning form includes Correspondence Education and Network Education (Sun, 2008). Distance Learning and Self-taught Examination mainly focus on self-learning, which means that mature students get their learning material either online or

in hard-copy and study mostly by themselves, then take the examinations of each course (Sun, 2008; Li et al., 2010). When they pass the examinations and fulfil the graduation requirements, they will be awarded a graduation certificate and Bachelor degree.

“Evening University” (*Ye Da*) is a form in which adult higher education institutions provide higher education at Bachelor degree level face-to-face to mature students part-time, especially during the evenings and/or weekends (Le, 2014; Chen, 2015). The so-called “Evening University” is an adult higher education form rather than a study location; it could be given by various adult higher education institutions and the teaching is mainly given during evenings and/ or weekends, which is why it is called “Evening University”.

The national policy *The Notice about the further strengthening of the Adult Higher Education and Continuing Education Management Regulations in universities Affiliated Directly by MoE* issued by the MoE in 2007 states that universities (affiliated directly to the MoE) should stop recruiting the full-time off-job mature students; at the same time, the universities should not cooperate with other kinds of institutions to organise full-time off-job courses (Li, 2008). Instead, universities (affiliated directly to the MoE) should organise part-time, on-job, non-academic and academic degree education mainly serving the working people based on their own subject advantage and characteristics. From 2008 universities stopped recruiting full-time off-job students and there is no full-time programme for working adults to participate in an off-job form in regular higher education institutions (Li, 2008; Jiao, 2008; Le, 2014). Since the issue of the policy, the MoE has stated that universities should take “Evening University” as the regular form of adult higher education at Bachelor degree and progressively the “Evening University” has become the main form or even the only form by which mature students can have the face-to-face courses (Yu, 2010).

The characteristics of “Evening University” in universities include on-job, part-time study, and self-study; the adults above 25 years old are the main target (Wang, 2013; Le, 2014). The main characteristic of the education in “Evening University” in universities is part-time learning through face-to-face teaching. Students can keep on working while they study in adult higher education. As introduced above, among the diverse learning forms for mature students, the “Evening University” is the only form

whereby mature students can study on campus and the main study form is face-to-face learning. Therefore, this research will only focus on this form—the “Evening University” in the university context, since the research aims to explore the mature students’ study experience in universities.

Many research studies argue that the education provided by the adult higher education system particularly in the “Evening University” as the way of face-to-face teaching conducted in universities is problematic and unsatisfactory. The academic quality and professionalism of the teachers in the adult higher education system are main problems that cause the unsatisfactory teaching performance (Fu, 2008; Guo, 2015; Li, 2014).

The main feature of the academic staff in adult higher education is their temporary status—there are no permanent personnel for teaching mature students in universities and the universities just arrange teachers temporarily and randomly to form a team to give lessons to mature students, which means the professionalism of the teachers cannot be guaranteed (Guo, 2015; Wang, 2016). The academic staff in the adult higher education sector are rarely full-time teachers in university; the majority are part-time teachers hired from outside, or current postgraduate students on campus; and there is no strict assessment of the employment of these part-time teachers, therefore the quality of the staff is perceived as not professional (Sun, 2009; Liu, 2016; Lin, 2018). Some of the part-time teachers do not have teaching experience or an academic degree which is high enough for teaching mature students; on-course postgraduate students do not have expertise in teaching mature students (Guo, 2015; Zhao, 2016). In addition, there is not only no training before these teachers start to give lectures to mature students but also no consistent and systematic criteria for evaluating teaching practices, so the teaching quality really cannot be guaranteed (Guo, 2015; Zhang & Li, 2015). Many research has illustrated the lack of professionalism of the teaching staff leads to the unsatisfactory teaching performance (Sun, 2009; Zhao, 2016).

Since adult higher education is placed in a marginalized position in universities, the universities do not pay much attention to its management either (Ma et al., 2014; Lin, 2018; Zhao, 2016). Since adult higher education copies the regular higher education in terms of various aspects of the education process, but with a lower standards and criteria, each aspect of the teaching has its particular problems and weaknesses (Wang, 2016).

The discipline arrangement copies that of regular higher education, which leads to the duplication of discipline in the two systems and the teaching given by adult higher education leads to mature students' lack of competitiveness compared with the regular students, due to the lower academic quality (He, 2009; Zhao, 2016) since there is no systematic assessment to guarantee the teaching quality (Yang, 2016). The universities apply on inflexible attendance check to force mature students to attend the lectures but fail to provide systematic management of other issues such as course arrangement and student assessment (Li & Wang, 2017). There are no clear standards and criteria by which to assess mature students, which means the mature students' academic quality cannot be guaranteed (Lv, 2009; Zhao, 2016). Regarding management, adult higher education still copies the full-time regular higher education, which neglects the distinctiveness of mature students and puts mature students in an unequal and disadvantaged situation.

2.2.3 The principle of the adult higher education system and the lower perceived value of the degree awarded

The principle of adult higher education when it was founded was to compensate for the knowledge deficiency of governmental officials, industrial workers and staff members as well as other adults in society who could not fulfil the requirements of the developing industrial base caused by the suspension of education due to the 10-year Cultural Revolution (Lu, 2014; Le, 2014). During the Reform and Opening-up period, in order to satisfy people's need for higher education, adult higher education worked as a parallel system along with the regular higher education system to award Bachelor degree, since the opportunity for studying in regular higher education was insufficient (Chen & Wang, 2016; Jiao, 2017). The ex-president Xiaoping Deng announced that adult academic degree level higher education "walks together" along with the regular higher education as the other "leg" of the Chinese national higher education systems, but is designed to be more work-oriented rather than academic-oriented (Li et al., 2010; Chen, 2011; He, 2012; Zhang, 2017).

Because of higher education massification, the requirement for entering regular higher education was lowered, which allowed students who could not be recruited into regular higher education before to get the opportunity to study in regular higher education;

therefore, adult higher education lost its function of “knowledge compensation”, since the opportunity for regular higher education was no longer so rare (Li, 2014; Chen, 2015). Adult higher education lost its student source and attraction during the higher education massification; and under the era of higher education massification, the function and value of adult higher education are also declining because of its unsatisfactory performance (Liu, 2006; Ji, 2013; Ma et al., 2014).

First of all, the universities take organizing adult higher education as a way to gain financial income rather than providing high quality education for mature students (Li, 2014). Because of the rapid and sudden expansion of Chinese higher education without previous preparation of infrastructure and staff, a lot of universities cannot digest the increasing number of regular students financially (Wan, 2006; Ma et al, 2014), therefore, most universities take the organization of adult higher education as an accessory and auxiliary industry whose main function is to absorb tuition fees for the university as part of the funding for the regular higher education rather than providing high quality education to mature students (Lu, 2014; Liu & Gao, 2016). Based on this purpose, the host universities prefer to use adult higher education as a way to earn income rather than put investment into it, which means adult higher education cannot develop but has lost its quality (Li, 2016).

Secondly, because regular higher education is prioritized by both the government and universities, adult higher education receives less attention and guidance, which causes the adult higher education to lose its developmental direction and quality (Guo, 2015; Wang, 2016; Li, 2014; Li, 2016; Yang, 2016). Adult higher education has failed to build its own educational mode and management system, or to construct its characteristic features as a parallel higher education system; instead, it copies the teaching mode and teaching content from regular higher education (Ji, 2013; Nie, 2017; Liu, 2016). The universities rarely invest in adult higher education financially and academically, which leads to most adult higher education departments just copying the educational plans and pedagogy from regular higher education, rather than managing adult higher education systematically and providing high quality education attentively (Yang, 2016; Wang, 2016). Adult higher education neglects the characteristics and distinctiveness of mature students when the teaching programmes are designed, by copying the full-time regular higher education (Li et al., 2010). Because of the lack of

professional academic staff and proper teaching resources, the teaching provided by adult higher education by copying regular higher education is relatively lower and is negatively perceived by the society, which cause the degrees awarded by the adult higher education system to have inferior academic value and less recognition (Li, 2014; Li, 2016; Yang, 2016).

Because of the unsatisfactory performance of adult higher education, mature students are actually in an unequal situation in society compared to graduates of regular higher education. This is despite the fact that mature students' welfare and benefit was clearly stated in *The Request Of Several Issues Concerning The Graduates From Corporate College, Amateur University Of Staff And Workers, Correspondence Education And "Evening University" In Normal Higher Education* issued by the MoE which announced "the mature students who graduate from adult higher education system should have the same academic level as those who graduate from the full-time regular higher education and should be treated the same and enjoy the same welfare as those traditional regular higher education graduates" (MoE, 1982, cited in Li, 2008).

Also, because of the lack of government policy to guarantee the quality of adult higher education, the authority and value of the degrees awarded by adult higher education are not convincing among the society, compared to the degrees awarded by the regular higher education system (Chen, 2011; Zhao, 2016). Meanwhile, due to the plentiful supply of graduates from regular higher education under the higher education massification era, employers much prefer to recruit a regular full-time graduate rather than an adult who graduated from the adult higher education system, which is the main reason causing the discrimination against adult higher education among the society (Lu, 2014; Liu, 2016; Yao, 2017).

Two pictures of the degree qualifications awarded by the adult higher education system and by the regular higher education system are shown below, which illustrate the differences in the qualification.

Picture 2.1 The degree qualification awarded by the adult higher education system



As shown in the picture above, the Chinese characters circled at the bottom of the qualification mean “graduated with a Bachelor degree from the adult higher education system”. The picture below presents the Bachelor degree awarded by the regular higher education system.

Picture 2.2 The degree qualification awarded by the regular higher education system



The picture above presents the Bachelor degree qualification awarded by the regular higher education system. There are no words specifying that the qualification is awarded by the adult higher education, which means the degree is awarded by the regular higher education system.

By comparing the two different kinds of Bachelor degree certificates, members of society and especially employers could tell the academic value of a student's Bachelor degree. Therefore, in addition to the other inequalities suffered by Chinese mature students in the adult higher education system, mature students suffer from discrimination in society because of their different Bachelor degree certificate, implying the perceived lower academic value of their academic background.

Regarding the unsatisfactory performance of adult higher education and its weakness, there is a contradiction between how mature students should be treated as declared in the law and how mature students are actually valued in society. Even though the mature students are announced to be treated equally by the law, in reality, adult higher education is still in a marginalized position within the entire higher education system and in the wider society (Li, 2014, Yang, 2016; Liu, 2016).

2.3 Brief summary

Based on the foregoing presentation of mature students' different unequal situations in both England and China as demonstrated in the current literature, a brief comparison could be drawn.

There is no separate or distinct higher education system focusing solely on mature students in the English context; the universities just arrange various part-time study programmes for mature students in order to meet their requirements and characteristics as working adults. On the contrary, there is an independent and distinct adult higher education system which manages the whole process of higher education for mature students in China. This difference at the level of the higher education system generates different problems and inequalities for mature students in the two countries.

In the English context, the problems that mature students suffer from are caused by the conflicts between mature students' particular characteristics and the education offered by the universities within the university context. Mature students' previous academic background drives them to have more expectation and need to receive support from their teachers and from the university as a whole; but their part-time study mode and the characteristics of their programme makes it difficult for mature students to obtain support from the university, and also makes it difficult for the university to provide comprehensive help for mature students.

In contrast, in the Chinese context, the problems that the Chinese mature students suffer from are caused by the conflict between the two parallel systems within the context of the whole society. The adult higher education system, especially the academic education leading to a first degree, was founded in a specific historical period for a particular goal, according to the situation at that time. Since higher education massification took place, there is a lack of policy and guidance from the government leading the developmental direction for the adult higher education system. At the same time, the lack of investment and support from both the government and universities also results in adult higher education, especially academic education leading to first degree, copying from the regular higher education and losing its distinctive value as an independent and distinct parallel system. Consequently, mature students are not only

marginalized in the university, but also are undervalued and suffer from discrimination in society.

Actually, the adult higher education system and the regular higher education system are two stratified higher education systems, and this kind of stratified and differentiated higher education system in China has a negative impact on social justice and equity in higher education. Even though there is no such stratified and differentiated higher education system in England, McLean's research also claims that "the UK university system is hierarchically structured both materially and symbolically by way of: resource inequities; the different social positions of students in different status universities; and reputation reflected in league tables" (McLean et al., 2013a: 34). The inequality of higher education in England is also reflected in the way that "students from poorer backgrounds tend to study at lower-status and less well-resourced universities for which the social and economic value attached to the degree is likely to be less" (McLean et al., 2013b: 263). Although the higher education massification has been taking place in both England and China—one a developed capitalism country and one a developing socialist country, with different higher education systems, inequality of higher education exists in both countries, manifested in different forms, which contributes to mature students' disadvantaged situation in the two countries.

Chapter 3 Conceptual Literature Review

Over the past few decades, universities all over the world have experienced the higher education massification and have adjusted themselves to a more diverse student cohort (Wardley et al., 2013). Next to the so-called “traditional students” (19-year-olds, newly graduated from high school, mostly from families of medium-high socio-cultural status), higher numbers of mature students as part of the non-traditional student cohort are entering university (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011; Fragoso et al., 2013). Mature students’ study experience has been attracting researchers’ interest for several decades and researchers have been using various theoretical perspectives to investigate their study experience, among which the habitus is an important one (Edgerton et al., 2013; Lehmann, 2007). There are two main reasons why the theory of habitus is employed as a research lens in this study.

Firstly, Wacquant has clarified the usage of “habitus” by saying, “Habitus is indeed a multi-scalar concept that one can employ at several different levels of social activity (from the individual to the civilizational), and across degrees and types of aggregation (settings, collectives, institutions) depending on one’s research question is precisely what allows us to make clear distinctions as well as connections between these” (Wacquant, 2014:118). Burke agrees with Wacquant that habitus is both an individual and a collective concept. He interprets the usage of “institutional habitus” as “concepts of institutional habitus attempts to theorise the collective practices of groups of individuals rather than individuals per se” (Burke et al., 2013:166). Their argument provides the theoretical foundation that habitus could be applied and employed at both individual level and institutional level. Therefore, the theory of habitus is an appropriate research lens which enables this study to investigate mature students’ study experience in the institutional context.

Secondly, there are some factors that have been found to have an effect before the students have entered higher education but which are not significant to mature students' study experience through their interaction with the institution (Bergman et al., 2014; Bean & Metzner, 1985). The age, gender, race/ethnicity, type of high school attended, and the final high school examination mark have been found not to have significant impact on mature students' study experience and persistence (Bergman et al., 2014; Sandler, 2000). Many studies have found that adult students' parental level of education and the cultural level of students' family do not affect their study and persistence (Cleveland-Innes, 1994; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). Reay (1998) also highlights that the institutional habitus can be used to explore the institutional influence over and above the impact of family background, class, race and gender. Regarding the research purpose, which is to understand how mature students' study is constructed in an institutional context, the theory of habitus and institutional habitus allows this research not to involve ethnicity, gender and social economic status; but to focus on how mature students' study is affected by institutional factors, as well as mature students' distinguishing features that are caused by their maturity and life circumstances. Therefore, this research approaches the habitus of these English and Chinese mature students in this research on the basis of their commonalities as students and people and as mature students, which enables this research to explore habitus over and above the impact of family background, class, race and gender.

This chapter reviews the previous research studies which have explored how habitus and institutional habitus affect the study experience of non-traditional students including mature students in higher education. A few research studies have been done using the theory of habitus and institutional habitus to explore the study experience of non-traditional students including mature students within the institutional context. These research studies argue that the institutional habitus is still in favour of traditional

students and constructed for the sake of traditional students (Reay et al., 2001; Sissel et al., 2001; Thomas, 2002; Tett, 2004; Laird & Cruce, 2009; Morrison, 2009; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011; Weissmann, 2013; Wardley et al., 2013; McTaggart, 2016; Feldman, 2016). Since mature students belong to a non-traditional student cohort (Fragoso et al., 2013) as well as part-time student cohort (Laird & Cruce, 2009), and also because there are insufficient research studies that focus on mature students from the perspective of the interaction between mature students' habitus and institutional habitus, this literature review involves research studies concerning non-traditional students and part-time students, to have a broad understanding of how mature students' study experience may be affected by institutional habitus and their own habitus.

Regarding such of research studies, which employ the theories of students' habitus or institutional habitus, there are still deficiencies in current literature regarding the following aspects. Firstly, the majority of these research studies focus on either habitus or institutional habitus; not many of them focus on how habitus and institutional habitus interact with each other and hence influence mature students' study. Moreover, the majority of the current research studies which employ habitus or institutional habitus are interested in students' study choice-making, rather than students' study experience. Secondly, there are few research studies that focus on mature students, especially focusing on how habitus and institutional habitus interact and affect mature students' study. Thirdly, there are few research studies that clarify the relationship between students' habitus and institutional habitus and how they interact with each other or show the impact on mature students' study. Fourthly, most of the research studies focus on a single institution or multiple institutions but within the same higher education system; and there is nearly no research that focuses on multiple institutions under different higher education systems from a global perspective.

It is noteworthy that among the current Chinese literature it is rarely seen that the researchers explore mature students' study experience using the theory of institutional habitus or habitus. The chapter 2 (section 2.2) presents the Chinese literature regarding mature students' study experience in adult higher education system whereas as the theoretical literature review, this chapter focuses on how the theory of institutional habitus and habitus have been applied to investigate mature students' study experience in higher education therefore no Chinese literature being mentioned here because of the insufficiency.

This chapter will start by reviewing the literature about the theory of habitus and then turn to the theory of institutional habitus. After clarifying the two theories, how previous research studies explore the institutional habitus and students' habitus, affecting non-traditional students including mature students' study in higher education will be illustrated. As very little of the current literature uses the theories of habitus and institutional habitus to explore the study experience of non-traditional students especially mature students, this research also reviews the literature which investigates how other institutional factors affect mature students' study experience via mature students' interaction with the institutions. After that, the theoretical framework of this research is constructed by combining the research findings from these three areas.

3.1 How does habitus operate in the higher education domain?

Bourdieu defines habitus as “a system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices” (Bourdieu, 1979: vii). He highlights that “the structures constitutive of a particular type of environment...produce habitus, systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures” (1977:72). Habitus is a common set of subjective, internalized, class-based perceptions that shape

one's thoughts, expectations, attitudes, aspirations, and actions (Bourdieu, 1974, 1977, 1984, 1986). Bourdieu also announces that habitus must function and be interpreted in a particular field, since habitus can generate various practices in different fields (Bourdieu, 1990b: 116).

Reay, in her research (2004: 435) summarises four core features of habitus by reviewing the academic works regarding habitus from Bourdieu to show that “habitus can be viewed as a complex internalized core from which everyday experiences emanate”. The first feature is that habitus is embodied; as Bourdieu (1998:81, cited in Reay, 2004: 435) says, “It is a socialised body. A structured body, a body which has incorporated the immanent structures of a world or of a particular sector of that world—a field—and which structures the perception of that world as well as action in that world”. Bourdieu (1990a: 70, cited in Reay, 2004: 435) writes that habitus is expressed through durable ways “of standing, speaking, walking, and thereby of feeling and thinking”. The second feature is that habitus could generate action and social orders. Bourdieu (1990c: 87, cited in Reay, 2004: 435) writes that: “habitus is a kind of transforming machine that leads us to ‘reproduce’ the social conditions of our own production, but in a relatively unpredictable way, in such a way that one cannot move simply and mechanically from knowledge of the conditions of production to knowledge of the products.” After that, Bourdieu (1990b: 77, cited in Reay, 2004: 435) provides an explanation of why habitus could reproduce actions, “The habitus, as a system of dispositions to a certain practices, is an objective basis for regular modes of behaviour, and thus for the regularity of modes of practices, and if practices can be predicted ... this is because the effect of the habitus is that agents who are equipped with it will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances.” The third one is that habitus is at both the individual level and collective level as Bourdieu (1990b: 91, cited in Reay, 2004:435) says, “The subject is not the instantaneous ego of a sort of singular cogito, but the individual trace of an

entire collective history.” The fourth one is that habitus is a complex interplay between past and present. As Bourdieu explains, “The habitus acquired in the family is at the basis of the structuring of school experiences...; the habitus transformed by the action of the school, itself diversified, is in turn at the basis of all subsequent experiences...and so on, from restructuring to restructuring” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992: 134). Simply speaking, Bourdieu (1990b: 116, cited in Reay, 2004: 435) interprets habitus as “the product of social conditionings, and thus of a history.”

After Bourdieu, other researchers give their own explanations of habitus. Weissmann announces that “Bourdieu’s definition of the habitus is the internalised structures from the external social division which constantly reproduce structures of cultural dominance” (Weissmann, 2013: 263). Edgerton defines habitus as “the set of learned preferences or dispositions (styles of thought and action) by which a person orients to the social world. It is the internalized interpretive framework through which one perceives the social world and one’s place within it, and correspondingly calibrates one’s aspirations and appreciation related actions/ practices” (Edgerton et al., 2013: 305). Thomas (2002: 430) describes the habitus as “a set of dispositions created and shaped by the interaction between objective structures and personal histories, including experiences and understanding of ‘reality’”. Dumais interprets Bourdieu’s definition of habitus as “one’s view of the world and one’s place in it, is an important consideration in trying to understand how students navigate their way through the education...and the orientation one has toward using those resources” (2002: 45). Habitus has been used as both the research lens and research instrument to investigate personal experience and practices (Costa et al., 2018).

Apart from these various definitions of habitus, many research studies have operationalized the habitus and illustrated how habitus operates in the higher education domain.

Edgerton's research operationalizes habitus as the following aspects: students' perceptions of schooling environment and/or processes; their own academic prospects; the importance or value of schooling to their future; the level of educational aspiration; disposition towards teachers; disposition towards education (Edgerton et al., 2013: 310). Dumais specifies habitus as students' occupational expectation, along with students' decisions to invest in education; aspiration of studying hard; self-selection or self-exclusion of going to university; one's beliefs about the future (Dumais, 2002: 47). Nash (2002) raises a new type of habitus, namely, "educated habitus" and associates it with aspiration, academic self-concept, perceptions of schooling and teachers; and desire to be educated.

The existing research studies which bring habitus into the higher educational domain finally argue that habitus has impact on students' study experience and outcome (Edgerton et al., 2013; Reay, 2004). Among the research studies about how habitus affects students' study outcome, there are three ways that habitus could set its impact on students' study.

The first way in which the habitus affects students' study is by their study aspiration (Christodoulou & Spyridakis, 2017). As Nash (2002: 46) announces, "Students who succeed at school do so because in consequence of their ambitions, academic self-confidence, and positive response to the educated in accordance with a concept of the educated person that continues, despite ambiguities and contradictions, to be transmitted by the school."

The second influence is on how students perceive their place in university (as a specific field) in relation to other people and the venue (Lehmann, 2007). Many research studies demonstrate that working class students, especially the first-generation, feel "they do not fit in the university" or they do not match with the university sphere, including

attitude, network and social skills (Tett, 2004; Lehmann, 2007; Reay, 2003, 2015). Dumais emphasises the significance of the self-selection decision, pointing out that some students would “self-select themselves out of the college-going track on the basis of their views of what is possible and what is not (Dumais, 2002: 47). Reay’s research (2003) also announces that “alongside class-based process of self-selection—the working classes acting to exclude themselves—are equally powerful processes of class-based exclusion perpetuated by the middle classes” (311). Mature students usually feel alien to the university atmosphere; therefore they would select themselves out of involvement in it.

The third way in which habitus affects students’ study is by “shaping one’s outlook on the world, including perceptions of what is possible and preferable in a particular social position” (Edgerton et al., 2013: 304). Students’ preferences and inclinations would influence how they engage with the higher education system, as well as their final study outcome.

The next section will explore the habitus at institutional level, which is the institutional habitus. It will illustrate what institutional habitus means and how it operates in the higher education domain.

3.2 How does institutional habitus operate in the higher education domain?

Institutional habitus has been employed by many researchers to investigate students’ higher education study experience of students from non-dominant groups, including mature students (Weissmann, 2013). By employing the theory of institutional habitus, Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011) point out that there is a paradoxical effect among universities now: on the one hand, they encourage non-traditional students, especially mature students, to enter university, but on the other hand, they seem not bothered to

understand these non-traditional students or change for them, which results in the institutional system being designed for the sake of traditional students and in their favour. Therefore, many institutions still provide inadequate support to mature students (Wardley et al., 2013; Davidson & Holbrook, 2014).

McDonough was the first person to create the concept “organisational habitus” to conceptualize how the dominant group of students form the habitus of universities and leave the non-dominant group of students in an unequal situation, which has been reproduced by the universities (McDonough, 1997). She describes organisational habitus as “the view of the opportunity structure of American higher education officially presented to all students” (1997: 106), and she announces that the habitus of each organization contains four components: the educational resources and support, the educational goal and expectation, the assumption of students’ study aspiration, and the professionalism of the staff, which are combined together and construct the organisational habitus. McDonough’s research, by creating and applying the concept of “organisational habitus”, mainly focuses on the students’ college choice-making, rather than students’ study experience when they enter the university. As well, she does not mention whether or how the institutional habitus could affect students’ habitus and practices.

Instead of keeping on using the concept, “organisational habitus”, Reay applies the concept, “institutional habitus” to mean “the impact of a cultural group or social class on an individual’s behaviour as it is mediated through an organisation” (Reay, 1998: 521). Reay’s concept of “institutional habitus” contains a complex mix of curriculum offer, teaching practices and what students bring with them to the classroom, but also the teachers’ expectations, prejudices and biases (1998: 524–525). Her definition of “institutional habitus” consists of three component elements: “organisational practices”; “educational status” (“the spectrum of the university hierarchy for which the institution

prepares its students”); and “the expressive order” (covers largely intangible but important factors such as expectations, conduct and manners, i.e. pedagogy). As Reay et al. (2001) highlight, institutional habitus is less fluid than individual ones. Reay points out that the institutional habitus, which is marked by the dominant group and is reflected by the institutional structure, affects students’ habitus and their practices. Reay’s research (1998) informs this research in two ways, by identifying that the institutional habitus is reflected by the institutional structure, and that the institutional habitus has impact on students’ habitus and practices, consistent with McDonough’s (1997) claim.

Since McDonough and Reay set the foundation of the concept “institutional habitus”, a few researchers have employed the concept “institutional habitus” to show how institutions contribute to and enforce the unequal situation of non-dominant students, including mature students in higher education (Sissel et al., 2001; Thomas, 2002; Weissmann, 2013).

Sissel et al. (2001: 18) comment, “Because higher education has been anchored in its historical traditions of residential, selective education and because it is based in perceptions of a privileged place and role for young adult leadership development, this environment embraces full-time, residential youth. Little space, voice, and value are given to other groups and in particular those who are the most different from young students: adult learners”. Their research demonstrates clearly the fundamental reason why mature students are tied into an unequal situation in higher education.

The institutional habitus contributes to mature students’ unequal situation in higher education in the way that currently both the institutional and content structures create dispositions that constantly reinforce the study of traditional students as the norm (Weissmann, 2013). Weissmann announces that institutional factors, attitudes and

dispositions contribute significantly to how staff and students behave towards non-traditional students, thus actively contributing to the externalisation of an institutional habitus that excludes the non-traditional from its priority. As a consequence, even if universities are open to students from non-dominant groups, the institutional habitus of most universities is still marked by an emphasis on traditional students and the non-traditional students still suffer a problematic deviation from the norm. Weissmann's research contributes to the knowledge that non-traditional students' unequal situation is caused by the universities' disposition of reinforcing traditional students' study as the norm and applying this norm to non-traditional students' study. Therefore, non-traditional students suffer from this norm and feel difficulty getting involved in university life. However, Weissmann has not specified what aspects of this norm cause the unequal situation and how this norm causes an unequal situation for non-traditional students.

Thomas' research (2002) firstly claims a similar argument by exploring the consequences of institutional habitus in relation to Widening Participation students – mature students as well as students from lower socio-economic backgrounds or students from ethnic minorities, and highlights how the institutional habitus can impact on their experience of ex- or inclusion. “Educational institutions favour knowledge and experiences of dominant social groups (e.g. white, middle-class men) to the detriment of other groups. Hence, the education system is socially and culturally biased, and this is played out in the relations between staff and students, and amongst students” (Thomas, 2002: 431). Since the institutional habitus is in favour of the traditional young students, the institutional structure is formed by their characteristics and needs, which mature students feel they do not fit into and they cannot benefit equally from the institution. Thomas is the first to use institutional habitus to explore mature students' unequal situation as a non-dominant group in higher education. Thomas's research sets

a theoretical foundation for this research, but this research only focuses on how the institutional habitus affects mature students' study practices and fails to pay attention to the way the institutional habitus could also affect mature students' habitus as well (Reay, 1998).

All these research studies above pave the way for further research to continue to explore how institutional habitus affects mature students' study as non-traditional students in the following aspects. Firstly, these research studies point out that the individual university as an institution has its own habitus—the institution's disposition that generates the institution's behaviour as well as practices. Secondly, the institutional habitus is formed and marked by the dominant group and treats the dominant group's preferences and behaviour as the norm. Thirdly, institutional habitus is reflected by the institutional structure and institution's behaviour as well as practices. Fourthly, institutional habitus could affect students' habitus as well as students' behaviour. Therefore, non-dominant students' study is subject to the same norm as dominant students, and they feel it is difficult for them to engage in university life, since the institution's behaviour is for the sake of the dominant group of students (Weissmann, 2013). As a non-dominant group on campus, the mature students are less considered or prioritized; based on this disposition, the university generates attitudes and actions to reinforce mature students' unequal situation and makes it difficult for them to succeed (McTaggart, 2016). This situation could be summarized by McDonough's metaphor, "schools dance to the dominants' tune and filter out those unable to keep time" (McDonough, 1997: 107).

As Thomas announces, "Institutional habitus should be understood as more than the culture of the educational institution; it refers to relational issues and priorities, which are deeply embedded, and sub-consciously informing practices" (Thomas, 2002: 431). The next two sections will review previous research studies about how the institutional

habitus operates to affect the study of non-dominant students, including mature students, both via the institutional practices and via influencing mature students' habitus.

3.3 How does institutional habitus affect students' study via its institutional practices?

As Reay et al. (2001: para.1.2) highlight, the institutional habitus is essentially a "rich internalised core from which everyday experiences emanate"; the everyday university life reflects the institutional habitus and affects students' study. The institutional practices is the reflection and specification of the institutional habitus as Maton announces that "one does not see a habitus, but rather the effects of a habitus" (Maton, 2008: 62).

In order to apply the concept of institutional habitus to understand how different institutional practices impact on students' study experience, Thomas (2002) summarizes several factors which students identify as significant for their study experience in two main aspects, the academic perspective and social perspective. From the academic perspective, the institutional habitus is operationalized as staff-student relationship, attitudes of staff, teaching and learning, and assessment; from the social perspective, friendship, mutual support, social networks are treated as reflections of the institutional habitus. Thomas remarks that since the institutional habitus prioritizes benefiting traditional students and values their requirements, as a consequence, the pedagogy is more like a socialization reinforcing mature students' unequal situation rather than an "instrument of teaching" (Thomas, 2002: 431).

From the academic perspective, there are several kinds of institutional practices identified by other researchers as affecting mature students' study experience. Morrison's research findings also highlight the significance of teacher-student relations

as well as the curriculum offerings and reputation (Morrison, 2009). McTaggart's research (2016) presents that the practices generated by institutions impede mature students' study in the following respects: poor planning of workload, lack of support offered by staff, lack of support service for mature students, and insufficient student knowledge of the available support, all of which reflect the unawareness or lack of understanding of mature students' needs as part of the institutional habitus. Laird and Cruce's research (2009) indicates that developmental gains during Bachelor study are always linked to participation in educationally purposeful activities, but the institutional habitus means that part-time and mature students are prevented from engaging with faculty, since these activities have long been associated with traditional students. This bias against mature students contributes to mature students' disadvantaged and unequal situation in higher education.

The university practices associated with pedagogy are identified by Feldman (2016) as a distinct type of institutional habitus, namely, the pedagogical habitus. Pedagogical habitus can be conceptualised as a layer of habitus formation, which includes the teachers' embodied cognitive, dispositional, and corporeal pedagogical practices that, over time, have become grafted on to their primary habitus (Feldman, 2016). Morrison's research (2009) claims that the curricular provision and the quality of staff-students relations, as two aspects of the institutional habitus, play a significant role in students' study experience

There are also some institutional practices pointed out by previous research which affect mature students' study experience negatively from the social perspective. Laird and Cruce's (2009) research highlights that the campus environment and activities undermine mature students' participation in university life. Some institutions are predisposed to spend less time and energy on activities such as one-on-one student-faculty advising or gathering for out-of-class, academically-oriented meetings or

symposia for part-time students; therefore, these predispositions may create or reflect a “culture of disengagement” (Laird & Cruce, 2009: 307). Those traditional-student-oriented activities and campus atmosphere make mature students feel alien and not willing to participate.

Apart from analysing the institutional practices from the academic and social perspective, Poromaa’s research states that materiality is an important key to understanding the formation of institutional habitus. The institutional materiality sets the scene for pedagogical outcomes and developments. Institutions such as universities with a habitus rich in building, architecture, equipment, and embodied cultural capital tend to cultivate a pedagogy that benefits from these materialities. Pedagogy from this point of view is still a fundamental tool that can compensate with an alternative way of seeing things; it can change thoughts and behaviours but cannot change the material inequalities that put schools and universities at unequal starting points (Poromaa, 2017). Taylor echoes Poromaa’s argument. Taylor (2017: 14) claims that the “educative practices should take into account the bodies, things, spaces and materialities alongside and with the human...given that more and more of what and how we learn happens in and through our dependence on virtual, physical and material artefacts as much as through human instructional frames” . Taylor argues that all learning is spatially located and learning is “in relation-with the nonhuman and more-than human aspects of the world that surround us and with which (or whom) we interact as learning happens” (ibid.).

In summary, the literature above points out the three main dimensions of institutional habitus: the academic dimension, the social dimension and the material dimension. Under the academic dimension, the following aspects have been highlighted: attitude of staff, teaching and learning, assessment, course arrangement, support from staff, tutorial and symposia. Under the social dimension, friendship, mutual support, social

networks, activities, staff-student relationship have been marked. For the material dimension, the physical atmosphere including campus environment, building and facility has been highlighted.

Based on the literature, the institutional habitus has a negative impact on non-traditional students' study, including mature students' study, in terms of lacking support in four ways. The first one is that the institutional habitus tends to prioritize the interests and benefit of the dominant social groups, resulting in non-dominant groups like mature students being overlooked (Reay et al., 2001; Thomas, 2002). Secondly, the institutional structure and pedagogical structure of university are based on full-time traditional students' needs and preference, which makes non-dominant groups like mature students feel it is difficult for them to fit in (Laird & Cruce, 2009; Morrison, 2009; Weissmann, 2013; Feldman, 2016). Thirdly, institutions assume non-dominant groups like mature students do not need special help; therefore they tend not to offer help (Tett, 2004). Fourthly, the institutions do not seem to be concerned about understanding the need and circumstances of non-dominant groups like mature students, thereby maintaining an institution system designed for traditional students (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011).

In addition to the research studies above which specify how the institutional habitus operates and then affects mature students' study experience, many other research studies emphasize that various aspects of the institutional practices generated by institutional habitus contribute significantly to mature students' excluded situation in higher education.

Tett's research (2004) shows mature students are in an unequal and excluded situation in universities because of the uncaring attitude towards mature students generated by the institutional habitus. The timetable for course and activities on campus are based on

the assumption that students are full-time and do not have job or family responsibilities (Tett, 2004; Wardley et al., 2013); the staff work based on the characteristics of traditional students and assume that mature students do not need extra support. Tett argues that the institutions have to integrate mature students into universities by providing more support from tutor throughout the courses. Tett's research highlights that institutions' misguided assumptions and their indifference to mature students' needs is the key to the lack of support from institutions, which is responsible for mature students' excluded situation in higher education. By exploring the excluded experience of joint degree students, Weissmann (2013) demonstrates the following factors which contribute to the externalisation of institutional habitus towards this specific group of students: teaching and learning (coordination between departments, management of expectations, and access to resources), student support and personal development (personal tutor, contact person), social life (representation and group identity) and experience of loneliness. Institutional factors, attitudes and dispositions contribute significantly to how staff and students behave towards mature students, thus actively contributing to the externalisation of an institutional habitus (Weissmann, 2013). He continues to argue that it is the institutional habitus that creates a sense of exclusion for non-traditional students by producing each aspect of the university life for the sake of traditional students.

Marandet and Wainwright (2009) claim that mature students feel excluded from the university because of the lack of provision that acknowledges their needs and the lack of matching between the timetable constructed by the university and their own timetable. The research done by Tett et al. (2012: 258) indicates that mature students are still in a disadvantaged and excluded situation in the higher education context because not only do they lack dialogue with staff, since feedback from the teachers acts as the only way of communication from teachers to mature students; but also the

feedback from their teachers lacks care and “orientation towards learning goals through clear and timely comments where students use feedback to increase their understanding”. Mallman and Lee (2017) highlight mature students’ excluded situation as an international phenomenon, describing their feeling “out of the loop” and “alienated” from university culture, which is caused by the barriers in university that prevent mature students’ academic and social participation in university life.

The next section will present how previous research studies illustrate the impact of institutional habitus on students’ study via influencing the habitus of non-traditional students, including mature students.

3.4 How does institutional habitus affect students’ study via affecting students’ habitus?

Thomas (2002) points out that it is quite significant to investigate mature students’ study by exploring both the institutional habitus as well as mature students’ habitus. Atkinson (2011: 334) claims that once students enter universities they encounter every aspect of the institutional habitus then they generate a degree of match—clash, harmonisation, adaptation, resistance as well as a whole array of emotions (e.g. anxiety), practices (e.g. doing extra homework) and interactions (e.g. making demands of teachers). Thomas (2002) points out that mature students’ higher education experience is the interaction between institutional habitus and their own habitus. More specifically, whether the institutional habitus is compatible with mature students’ habitus or not would make the mature students feel like “fish in water” or “fish out of water”. If mature students feel the academic and social practices in university are inappropriate and they are not prioritized, they may be more inclined to not participate in university life or even withdraw (ibid.).

The institutional forms and collective practices generated by institutional habitus can directly shape the individual's habitus as well as their behaviour, which illustrates that within a specified field, the institutional habitus and students' habitus could interact with each other and students' study is affected by both of them (Burke et al., 2013: 167). Wacquant's argument is consistent with Burke's by saying, "The individual habitus, the idiosyncratic product of a singular social trajectory and set of life experiences that is nonetheless the combination of shared constituents; these individual experiences are selected and stamped by membership in collectives and attachment to institutions" (Wacquant, 2014: 119).

Since the institutional habitus is shaped by the traditional students, regarding attitude, practices and institutional structures, the non-dominant group of students feel the university is alien to them and they class themselves as "others", which prevents them from participating in university life (Tett, 2004). Due to the diversity of the student cohort, non-traditional students suffer the lack of integration, academically and socially, into the institution, due to the incompatibility between their own habitus and the institutional habitus, which affects the totality of their experience in terms of academic, social and emotional well-being (Sheridan, 2011). Sheridan claims that these students should be treated as a part of the entire student cohort instead of a group set apart.

The interaction between institutional habitus and non-dominant students' habitus happens in the way that the practices generated by the institutional habitus encourages the non-dominant groups of students to reproduce their habitus, since they feel they are not supported or welcomed to be involved in the academic and social life of the dominant group of students (Weissmann, 2013). Reay (2003) underscores that it is higher education's inability to deal with diversity and differences, which makes mature students feel they do not fit in; hence they have no willingness to be involved in university life. The organisational and content structure produce practices that

constantly underpin the habitus of the dominant group of students as the norm, which pushes non-dominant groups of students perceive that they are not supposed to interfere with the existing institutional habitus, therefore, mature students reproduce their own habitus, which maintain their inferior situation.

The atmosphere and various aspects of the university life—as the externalization of the institutional habitus—compel them to feel isolated and excluded, which affects their desire to have academic and social integration into university life, as well as their learning experience and outcome (Mallman & Lee, 2017). In the university context, mature students' study experience is accompanied by feelings of uncertainty, tension and ambivalence; and they also experience compartmentalisation and fragmentation, which is perceived by O'Boyle as the result of the tensions surrounding expressive boundaries and in-group conversational dynamics as part of the institutional habitus (O'Boyle, 2015).

As revealed and explained in the above literature, the institutional habitus could affect the study of non-traditional students including mature students not only via institutional practices, but also via influencing students' habitus, hence affecting students' study by students' reproduced behaviours. The two types of impacts both happen when students encounter the institution; in other words, the institutional habitus sets its impact on students' study experience via the interaction between student and institution (Thomas, 2002; Wacquant, 2014, 2016; Tett, 2004; Sheridan, 2011; Weissmann, 2013). Although Bourdieu is criticised for focusing on habitus as durable and largely unconscious, which results in a deterministic explanation, his theory is still perceived by other theorists as allowing for the possibility of agency, which is the conscious decisions made by people in particular circumstance (Smyth & Banks, 2012). However, mature students' agency, which relates to how they position themselves and are positioned within specific contexts, functions through their habitus (Inghilleri, 2005). Therefore this research

explores mature students' study experience from the perspective of habitus in order to see how their study experience is constructed from their interaction with their institutions in the university context.

Since the majority of previous research studies regarding students' habitus and institutional habitus focus on specific aspects of mature students' interaction with their institutions, there is a deficiency in investigating comprehensively how other aspects of institutional factors affect the study of non-traditional students, especially mature students. Based on the insufficiency of exploration of the institutional habitus among the current literature, the next part of this chapter will review the literature about other institutional factors that affect the study experience of non-traditional students, especially mature students, as Laird and Cruce (2009) announce that much literature claims that positive student-institution interaction promotes students' development and persistence. Furthermore, the current literature also illustrates that the institutional habitus could be reflected from students' perceptions (Reay et al., 2001; Reay, 2004), therefore this research employs mature students' perceptions to explore how the institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience. By doing so, a theoretical framework of this research could be drawn out by combining the theory of habitus and institutional habitus, as well as the research regarding the institutional factors that affects the study experience of non-traditional students, especially mature students.

3.5 What other institutional factors affect mature students' study via mature students' interaction with their institutions?

Since this research aims to explore how institutional habitus affects mature students' study, how institutions interact with mature students and what institutional factors

influence mature students' study are significant to be discussed. As very little of the current literature uses the theories of habitus and institutional habitus to explore the study experience of non-traditional students, especially mature students, this research also reviews the literature which investigates what institutional factors affect mature students' study experience via mature students' interaction with their institutions. Hence, the theoretical framework in this research is constructed by combining the research findings from this body of research with the theories of habitus and institutional habitus.

The research studies that focus on mature students' study experience normally categorize the impact of institutions on mature students' study from two perspectives: the perspective of academic integration and the perspective of social integration (Cleveland-Innes, 1994). After demonstrating mature students' distinct features as adults, the following sub-sections will summarize and analyse how the academic and social factors affect mature students' study, based on the current literature.

3.5.1 The mature students' distinct features as adults

The current literature has demonstrated mature students' distinct features as adults in higher education, but the majority of this literature focuses on mature students' objective and visible characteristics because of their multiple roles and various responsibilities in the following aspects. Firstly, mature students usually study part-time, which would limit their time on campus (Laird & Cruce, 2009; Bergman et al., 2014). Secondly, mature students usually have family commitments and job commitments, which often affect their involvement in university life, such as participating in activities (Donaldson & Graham, 1999; Bergman et al., 2014; Erb & Drysdale, 2017). Thirdly, mature students rarely engage with their younger counterparts (Bergman et al., 2014). Many researchers postulate that these external

factors may inhibit mature students from integrating into the academic and social sphere of the institutions (Reay, 2003; Laird & Cruce, 2009; Bergman et al., 2014; Erb & Drysdale, 2017). Briefly speaking, it is quite challenging for mature students to balance their family, work and study responsibilities (Reay, 2003; Bergman et al., 2014).

Apart from these objective and visible features of mature students as adults, there is insufficient literature that investigate mature students from the perspective of their habitus, which is a gap in current literature regarding mature students in higher education.

Mature students would have anxiety and nervousness concerning their worries of their academic ability even before they start their study (Erb & Drysdale, 2017). They usually lack confidence because of their unsuccessful previous study experience, which makes it as imperative for mature students to invest more effort and time on their assignment-finishing activities than they have available, this in turn makes mature students more unconfident about completing the study (Reay & Crozier, 2011; Bergman et al., 2014). Mature students' lack of confidence is also presented in another way that they prefer peer support to seeking support from the staff, because they lack confidence to approach the staff (Heagney & Benson, 2017). Peer support plays a significant role in mature students' study since it could offer mature students not only academic support but also emotional company (ibid.).

Mature students' aspiration to a higher degree is positively associated with their study experience (Bergman et al., 2014). Their educational goals have a significant impact on students' decision-making if they would continue their study. They prefer and intend to learn knowledge they could apply to their daily work, which implies they have a clear study purpose in mind (Donaldson and Graham, 1999). Mature students' return to university is driven by their life experience, because of the perceived benefit of

continuing their study and they have a plan for the life after their graduation, which makes them appreciate the value of their study (Wardley et al., 2013). In terms of educational motivation and aspiration, Donaldson and Graham (1999) point out that mature students usually enrol study for the purpose of work or life transitions, which is different from their younger counterparts.

Many research studies have demonstrated that the sense of belonging has significant impact on mature students' study experience and study outcome, as mature students have a considerably weak sense of belonging (Reay, 2003; McTaggart, 2016; Erb & Drysdale, 2017). At the same time, mature students rarely have emotional ties to their institutions (Wardley et al., 2013). If mature students do not have a sense of belonging, they can easily feel alien and isolated, especially identifying themselves as different from the majority, which could affect their study involvement and study outcome (Johnson and Robson, 1999). The sense of feeling they "stand out" rather than "fit in" could make learning, integration to learning and promising study outcome difficult (McTaggart, 2016). Many research studies underscore that the academic and social support from universities is essential for mature students to achieve their sense of belonging and avoid isolation (Johnson & Robson, 1999; Kuh, 2009a, 2009b; O'Shea & Stone, 2011).

3.5.2 The academic factors affecting mature students' study

Davidson and Holbrook (2014) highlight the significance of academic integration inside and outside the classroom for mature students, since it has impact on mature students' study experience as well as the study outcome; however, unfortunately, many institutions still provide inadequate support for mature students.

The attrition model designed by Bean and Metzner (1985) explains the study experience of non-traditional students. In their model, they point out four sets of factors that affect non-traditional students' study experience, which are background, academic factors, environmental factors, and social integration factors. In terms of academic factors, Bean and Metzner point out the following factors: including study skills and study habits, academic advising, absenteeism, major certainty, course availability. All these factors have direct or indirect impact on academic outcome which will determine the intent to leave by the influence of psychological outcomes (utility, satisfaction, goal commitment, and stress).

Based upon the non-traditional student attrition model designed by Bean and Metzner (1985), Bergman et al. (2014) create a model based on their theory of adult learner persistence in degree completion, by which they draw attention to certain academic factors that affect mature students' study regarding the institutional practices. In this model, the academic factors regarding the institution include institutional support, academic advising, institution support, flexible course options, active learning and prior learning assessment.

Davidson and Holbrook (2014) specify several aspects of what services the institutions should provide: online courses; flexible tutorials; support services; approachable academic instructors and coaches. Laird and Cruce also claim that part-time students' (including mature students') learning and personal development is directly affected by "quality and quantity of the time and energy the student invests in his or her educational activities" (2009: 292), Davidson and Holbrook (2014) also draw the attention to the importance of institutions examining the credit hour completion ratio of mature students, in order to predict their success and offer help on time.

Based on Bernstein's theory that "unequal distribution of power in society is by way of unequal distribution of knowledge through formal education", the curriculum and pedagogy provided by university both reproduce and interrupt social inequalities (McLean et al., 2013b: 264). Also, from the perspective drawn from Bernstein, McLean's research perceives teaching as "transmitting disciplinary knowledge" and "a set of generic 'good practices' principles", which should give students access to what Bernstein called "pedagogic rights" of personal enhancement (McLean et al., 2013a: 32). Their research argues that the extent to which students engage in academic disciplinary knowledge and processes has significant impact on students' study experience and outcome; therefore the "well-informed and thoughtful framing of pedagogy" is undoubtedly important in "supporting students' engagement" (ibid., 43). From the perspective of teaching content, mature students would not prefer to continue their study if they feel their lectures are in conflict with their work to a great extent (Bergman et al., 2014). Bergman argues that minimizing the conflict between courses and work is one of the most significant ways to improve mature students' study experience and outcomes. Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011: 48) point out that the coherence of teaching contents and its consistency with mature students' personal expectations, as well as the integration between the courses and the usefulness of the teaching contents are significant for the meaningfulness of mature students' study experience.

From the perspective of the supportiveness of the institutions, mature students will have a positive study experience if they feel the entire institutions are supportive and especially their instructors and advisors. For mature students, it is significant for their study experience and study outcome for them to perceive their institution is helpful and to be able to take advantage of the support service in their institution as well as from their peers (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). The support mechanisms throughout the

whole process of mature students' study are quite significant for mature students to complete their study successfully (Burton et al., 2011).

From the perspective of the campus environment, Bergman et al. (2014) claim that the campus environment plays a more influential role in mature students' study experience than student entry characteristics or external factors. Laird and Cruce also claim that it is the campus environment that "must provide impetus for students to get involved" (2009: 292). A supportive campus environment is significant for mature students' study experience, since the broader pressure that comes from mature students' external personal life could be mitigated if their needs could be recognized and addressed by the supportive institutions. The academic environment is key to institutional commitment among mature students (Wardley et al., 2013).

Apart from all these factors, Bergman et al. (2014) suggests that the effectiveness of the program should be ensured which guarantees mature students reach Bachelor educational level besides offering them a comfortable study experience.

The current literature has made a great contribution to show the significance of academic integration for mature students, but there is some more work needed. The current research studies have not paid enough attention to how mature students actually integrate academically and how the institutions affect their academic integration. At the same time, very few studies have considered how mature students' own characteristics affect their academic integration in higher education, as well as how academic integration affects mature students' study experience and outcome. Furthermore, there is nearly no research that focuses on how the characteristics of different institutions affect mature students' academic integration, especially from a cross national perspective. Nearly no research has considered how different higher education systems

affect mature students' academic integration. Therefore, this research attempts to investigate these empty areas and fill the gap in current literature.

3.5.3 The social factors affecting mature students' study

The attrition model for non-traditional students designed by Bean and Metzner (1985) points out that the social integration factors include the following: the degree of students' participation in extracurricular activities, peer friendships on campus, and relationships with instructors outside of class; and students' evaluation of the quality of these experience. All these factors have direct or indirect impact on academic outcome which will determine the intent to leave by the influence of psychological outcomes (utility, satisfaction, goal commitment, and stress).

The educational context offered by university for students to develop their intellectual and social engagement on campus is significant for students' study experience and outcome (Ashwin et al., 2016). Gilardi and Guglielmetti claim that it is important for non-traditional students to "reach a level of engagement sufficient to achieve academic success" on campus (2011: 36) and they also clarify that mature students' social integration includes positive relations with their peers as well as other aspects of the academic environment, inside and outside the classroom.

Many research studies point out a typical form of social integration of mature students: the classroom-interaction between mature students and their peers as well as academic staff is their main and primary social integration on campus, which is beneficial for their learning and study experience (Donaldson & Graham, 1999; Kasworm, 2003, 2005; Laird & Cruce, 2009; Price & Baker, 2012). Price and Baker's research (2012: 29) presents that mature students perceive the classroom "as a platform for forming social relationships with peers". Combined with other people's research, Price and

Baker announce the classroom alone could enable mature students to “create learning community” as well as “develop interpersonal relationships” (ibid., 29). However, these authors treat the class as the “fulcrum” of mature students’ study experience, against which, Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011) give their opposite argument by their findings.

Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011: 36) point out several forms of social integration which are meaningful for non-traditional students’ study experience: lectures, learning support services (i.e. library, evening lectures, pod study), interaction with the lecturers outside the classroom (i.e. office hours, tuition), cultural activities organised by the institution or the university. A trend towards socializing through online instruments (i.e. Facebook, forums) is now emerging. They consider these forms of engagement on two levels (ibid., 37): on a behavioural level (in terms of attendance of lectures/classes; interaction with institution members and other students outside the classroom; the degree of use of services) and on a psychological level (the perceived quality of the university experience and includes: student perceptions of social integration; the meaningfulness of the learning experience). Their research points out that there are two types of interaction between mature students and the university: formally appropriate behaviours (attending lectures) and non-classroom relationships along with taking advantage of all opportunities available on campus.

Many research studies remark that the sense of integration by building a good relationship with both institution and peers plays an essential role in mature students’ study continuity and study outcome (Donaldson & Graham, 1999; Kasworm, 2005; Lundberg, 2003; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). Lundberg (2003) also remarks the significance of study-related peer involvement in mature students’ study outcome. Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011) emphasize the “support in learning” as the core of social integration for mature students. Donaldson and Graham (1999) also claim that one significant aspect of mature students’ social integration is their relationship with

their peers and the institution, associated with the teaching and learning process and taking place inside and outside the classroom, which has meaningful influence on their academic outcome as well.

It is important to take the role that the staff and the institutions play into account when talking about mature students' integration. The institutions should show the culture of adaptation and the staff should involve mature students in integration through formal or informal activities (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011) rather than the mature students exploring how to get themselves involved. At the same time, it is the university's responsibility to help the mature students to see the value of investing in building social relationships on campus.

Laird and Cruce (2009) announce that the attitude of institutions is also significant in encouraging mature students to participate in activities on campus; the institutions should encourage mature students to participate in curricular and co-curricular activities. Providing resources to involve mature students in campus life indicates the attitude of institutions. At the same time, the authors also proclaim that "students should know from their first encounters with an institution that they will be encouraged and supported, and sometimes even required, to interact with their institution in specific ways; they should also be made aware of how these activities will connect with their educational goals and ultimate success as under graduates" (ibid., 308). The attitude of institutions is prerequisite for mature students to participate in campus life since a significant aspect of their characteristics is lack of confidence to engage with their younger counterparts on campus (Reay & Crozier, 2011; Bergman et al., 2014; Heagney & Benson, 2017; Erb & Drysdale, 2017).

The out-of-class contact between institution and students has also been proved to have a crucial impact on mature students' study outcome (Laird & Cruce, 2009). Several

research studies have explored the types of out-of-class contact between institution and students. In terms of developing mature students' sense of belonging, the university and institution are supposed to organise activities for mature students in order to feel welcomed and have a good transition into the university life (Johnson & Robson, 1999). The higher level of sense of belonging could enable mature students to have a stronger study motivation and a better social involvement (Erb & Drysdale, 2017).

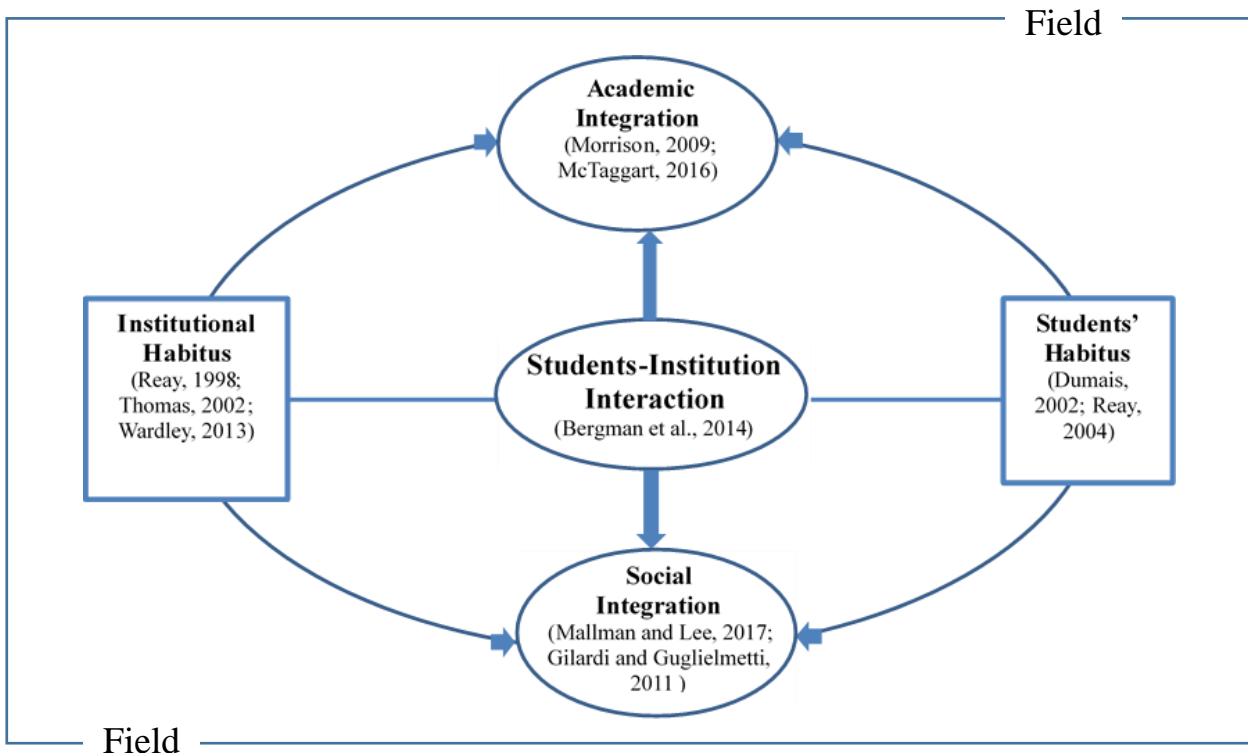
From the research studies presented above, it is clear to see the significance of the social integration for mature students in higher education. However, the deficiencies the current literature regarding the importance of social integration for mature students include the following aspects. Firstly, there are inadequate research studies that focus on the significance of social integration, specifically for mature students. Secondly, not enough research studies pay attention to how mature students perceive the value of social integration and how they actually integrate into university life socially. Thirdly, there is almost no research studies that clarifies the impact of institutions on mature students' social integration. Fourthly, there is nearly no research that focuses on how the characteristics of different institutions under different higher education systems affect mature students' social integration. Therefore, this research will try to investigate these less addressed areas and fill the gaps in current literature.

3.6 The theoretical framework in this research

Based on the literature review above, two main theories are employed in this research including the theory of habitus and the theory of institutional habitus. Given the limited research studies which investigate mature students' study experience by employing these two theories, other institutional factors that influence mature students' study via mature students' interaction with the institutions found in other research studies are also explored in this research. Therefore, this research creates a theoretical framework by

involving the two theories and linking them together with the research regarding mature students' interaction with their institutions. The interaction between institutional habitus and mature students' habitus through the institution-students-interaction is analysed within the field which is the university context. The figure below shows the theoretical framework and the explanation is given beneath it.

Figure 3.1 Theoretical framework



As shown in the figure, mature students' interaction with their institutions is put in the centre, because on the one hand, it is affected by both the institutional habitus (Tett, 2004; Weissmann, 2013) and students' habitus (Lehmann, 2007; Morrison, 2009); on the other hand, it affects mature students' study experience in higher education as a mediator interrelating the impact of institutional habitus and students' habitus (McDonough 1997; Reay et al., 2001).

From the horizontal perspective, the institutional habitus interrelates and interacts with mature students' habitus via mature students' interaction with their institutions. As the literature indicates, the institutional habitus affects mature students' study either by its institutional practices (Thomas, 2002; McTaggart, 2016) or by influencing mature students' habitus (Atkinson, 2011; Burke et al., 2013), and this influence occurs when students are involved in the university and interact with the institution (Bergman et al., 2014). Likewise, mature students' habitus sets limits on their study experience only when they are put in a certain institutional circumstance (Lehmann, 2007).

As presented in the literature, the institutional habitus affects mature students in the following respects. From the academic perspective, the institutional habitus is operationalized as staff-student relationships, attitude of staff, teaching and learning, assessment, and personal development (Davidson & Holbrook, 2014; Bergman et al., 2014); from the social perspective, friendship, mutual support, social networks, and the experience of a sense of belonging are treated as reflections of the institutional habitus (Kasworm, 2003, 2005; Laird & Cruce, 2009; Price & Baker, 2012). In addition, the activities organised by institutions, the available facilities and equipment on campus are also parts of the institutional habitus (Poromaa, 2017; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). At the same time, mature students' habitus affects their study based on the influence of the institutions in the following respects: academic confidence, educational goal, educational motivation and aspiration, sense of belonging (Erb & Drysdale, 2017; Reay & Crozier, 2011; McTaggart, 2016; Heagney & Benson, 2017). All these factors will guide the analysis of the data and support this research to construct the research findings.

From the vertical perspective, as presented by the current literature, mature students interact with their institution regarding the academic integration and the social integration (Cleveland-Innes, 1994; Wardley et al., 2013; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011). At the same time, their interaction with the institutions also affects their academic

integration and social integration into the university life, which are taken as the two aspects for presenting mature students' study experience in higher education in this research.

In this research, mature students' study experience will be interpreted and analysed from both the horizontal and vertical perspectives as presented in the figure above. This research aims to explore, on the one hand, how the institutional habitus affects both mature students' academic integration and social integration via the institutional practices; and on the other hand, how the institutional habitus affects both mature students' academic integration and social integration via influencing mature students' habitus. This theoretical framework will assist the researcher to analyse the data and answer the research questions.

Chapter 4 Methodology

This research investigates mature students' study experience in both England and China from the perspective of habitus as well as institutional habitus and explores how mature students perceive the institutional factors which affect their study experience. This qualitative case study is based on the constructivist paradigm and the data was collected using semi-structured interviews.

This chapter starts with an explanation of the constructivist paradigm, which shaped the research design and the data collection methods (section 4.1). After the philosophical and theoretical position is explicated the chapter turns attention to the researcher's positionality (section 4.2). The following section (section 4.3) contains the following content: a statement of the research purpose and questions (section 4.3.1); a discussion of why qualitative research methodology was employed in this research (section 4.3.2); an explanation of why England and China were chosen as the two countries in which to conduct the research (section 4.3.3); and why semi-structured interviews were employed as the data collection technique (section 4.3.4). The data analysis procedure (section 4.4) and other methodological issues will be elaborated in the rest of this chapter (sections 4.5-4.7).

4.1 The constructivist paradigm

The way a researcher sees something, approaches something and understands something relates to what Guba and Lincoln refer to as the researcher's worldview:

Questions of method are secondary to the questions of paradigm, which we define as the basic belief system or worldview that guide the investigator, not only in choices of method but in ontologically

and epistemologically fundamental ways (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 106).

Guba defines a worldview as “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba, 1990: 17), which is often termed a paradigm (Lincoln et al., 2011). Guba and Lincoln also explain that “a paradigm presents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the ‘world’, the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 107). A paradigm encompasses three elements: epistemology, ontology, and methodology. Epistemology asks, how do we know the world? What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known? Ontology raises questions about the nature of reality. Methodology focuses on how we gain knowledge about the world (Punch, 1994).

The following part explains why the constructivist paradigm is suitable for this research, regarding the epistemology, ontology, and methodology, based on the research aim and research questions.

Schwandt has made a clear statement of what constructivism is:

Constructivist, constructivist, interpretivist, and interpretivism are terms that routinely appear in the lexicon of social science methodologist and philosophers, of which the goal is to understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Schwandt, 1994: 118).

Schwandt goes on to explain that the lived experience and situation-specific meaning is constructed and built by social beings. Creswell (2013) also claims that as long as an individual lives and works in this world, he or she constructs and builds up a view of reality of the world. Since different people live different lives and go through different

routes, their views of the world and their interpretation of their own life experiences could be varied, multiple and also subjective. The sensibility of the constructivist researcher is one of exploration and a desire to interpret the views of different individuals. They are attuned to the complexity and richness of people's perceptions. Thus the opinions and views of the participants are the research object. Each specific view or perspective is constructed in each specific context or situation. As such, it is important for the researcher to draw a cultural and historical picture for understanding participants' construction (ibid.). Individuals construct the social world in which they live and through these make sense of it and interpret it; such constructions can be seen as self-sustaining and self-renewing (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Guba and Lincoln (1994) have given a detailed explanation of the ontology, epistemology and methodology of the constructivist paradigm. Constructivist possesses a relativist ontology. From the perspective of the constructivist paradigm, reality is not an object which exists. Instead, reality is construed in each individual's mind. Therefore the constructions are varied, due to each individual's nature, own experience and social context. Any kind of construction is meaningful and makes sense, because different individuals interpret the world and form their views differently. For the constructivist researcher, the differing constructions are all significant and valuable because from all these constructions, the richness and variability of the world can be seen. Consequently, there is no sense in discussing whether the construction is "true" or not; constructions are just more or less informed and/or sophisticated "realities" (ibid.). Guba and Lincoln go on to show the epistemology of the constructivist paradigm, which is transactional and subjectivist. "Reality" is constructed by each individual in the mind, subjectively. Just as in the popular saying, "for one thousand readers, there are one thousand Hamlets", individuals see and understand the world or reality subjectively and each individual's construction is meaningful. Schwandt also comments that reality is plural

and plastic, by which he means that reality needs to be understood in certain symbolic and linguistic systems. In addition, reality is formed and moulded by human's aim and intention (Schwandt, 1994). People make sense of reality through their own experience and construct it, furthermore they continually modify and re-comprehend the construction when they access more new experiences. Therefore people's construction of reality is a dynamic process which relates to continuing enriching experiences (ibid.). Gergen underlines the significance of language, which is the only potential way for people to see the reality other people construct (Gergen & Gergen, 1991). Based on the ontology and epistemology, the methodology of constructivist should be narrative based. Since reality is constructed differently by different individuals, how can other people, including the researcher, know what is going on in each individual's mind? The interaction between people through language is the only way to find out the things in people's minds, as shown above. Narrative based interchange is therefore the basic and fundamental way to explore an individual's view and their construction.

The objective of this research is to explore mature students' study experience in higher education and to find out what they consider as affecting their study. Habitus and institutional habitus are employed as a research lens to investigate mature students' higher education experience. From the level of ontology, the reality of mature students' study experience and what they perceive affects their study are not objective things that are formed or exist outside people; instead, they are formed in each individual's mind; therefore the constructions are varied due to individuals' nature, own experience, social context. However, this kind of variety is precious, as it can show diversity and allow the voices of different people to be heard. From the level of epistemology, the construction of study experience is subjective and varies between people, which shows that the study experience is constructed subjectively and individually. In addition, any individual's construction of study experience is meaningful and makes sense; any

individual's construction is built up by their own unique perception and understanding. All these things are subjective personal opinions and feelings, which mature students can only generate from their own lives and interaction with each element within the entire higher education context. Hence, from the perspective of methodology, qualitative research design and interviews are suitable for this research since they are dialectical and align with constructivist. Furthermore, based on constructivism, this research holds the position that the institutional habitus is reflected by mature students' perceptions rather than being treated as existing objectively (Reay et al., 2001; Reay, 2004). Mature students' perceptions in this research are treated as the lens of exploring the institutional habitus and how it affects mature students' study experience. The following sections will introduce how the interview was employed as a data collection method and how the interviews were conducted in this research.

4.2 Positionality of the researcher

Punch has highlighted the importance of the researcher himself or herself in the whole research:

The personality of the researcher helps to determine his or her selection of topics, his or her intellectual approach, and his or her ability in the field (Punch, 1994: 86).

The three significant aspects of a research mentioned by Clarke are all influenced by the researcher's preference and capacity. What specific research will be conducted, what methods or approaches will be implemented to collect data, how the research result will be formed and concluded, are all related to the researcher's positionality. Since this research was conducted under the constructivist worldview, the research findings and outcomes, to some extent, are also creations constructed by the researcher

during the inquiry process (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The researcher's personal, cultural, and historical experiences will all shape his/her interpretation of the data. In the following part of this section, the researcher's worldview, life and study experience, research interest and methodological preference will all be introduced.

I was born in the year 1988, at a time when the One Child Policy ruled the urban area in mainland China, so unluckily I was the only child in my family, just like all my other friends. Being the only child in a family was a good thing and also a tough thing at the same time. For the good part, all the adults' love in the whole family poured on me and I was the concern of every family member. However, the drawback was that I also bore all my family's dreams and hopes. My parents were both well-educated and they had a desire for my study and career in the future. They had an image of what kind of person I should become and what kind of job I should do in the future. They started to build up my ambition when I was very young, even before primary school. They not only just asked me or required me to do what they wanted; actually, they guided me and helped me to be successful. For the child to be successful in most Chinese parents' eyes meant the child had good marks in their study, passed all the entrance examinations and entered a reputable and prestigious university eventually. "Entering university" was such a significant thing for most Chinese families, as children would be told from the first day they went to school, and continually afterwards. My family also had this aspiration for me and all I needed to do was study hard to enter university. Since China had a huge population, the job market was so competitive that the requirement for an educational degree was severe for most good jobs. My parents did not want me to work in a restaurant as a waitress or a cashier in supermarket; they thought I was clever so I could have a decent job if I tried my best. I was an understanding person; I understood that what my parents required me to do was not without any reason, and it was actually something for my own benefit; and I also had an ambition for myself and I believed I

could become successful in the future. So there was harmony between my family and I, as we had the same target and we spent all our effort together to make it come true. Since “entering university” was a family duty, parents tend to talk about other children’s “entering university” as both a family topic and as the reminder for their own child not to forget this duty. This also happened in my family.

My first impression about adult higher education was derived from my cousin’s experience. She did not like study and just wanted to have fun during her school days, which was called as “laziness” by her parents. She was 10 years older than me, so when she took her Higher Education Entrance Examination at the age of 19, I was only 9, in the second year of primary school. She did have fun during her school days but her parents’ dream of seeing her “entering university” was unfulfilled—she did not get a high enough score in the Higher Education Entrance Examination to be accepted by any university. However, since she was young then, her parents did not make her work; instead, they let her take the Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination, which was the first time I heard about Adult Higher Education. In my memory, anytime when my uncle and aunty talked about their daughter taking the Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination and studying in university as a mature student, they felt great shame and they even did not want to talk about it. This was easy to understand, because in China, the Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination was not equivalent to the regular Higher Education Entrance Examination; therefore the education and the value of the degree for mature students were not equal to and even much lower than those from regular higher education without doubt. There was a big gap between studying in university as a full-time traditional student through the Higher Education Entrance Examination and studying as a mature student in university through the Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination. “Entering university” as a mature student was not the conventional and traditional sense of “entering university”. At that time, I had the

impression that a being mature student was a bad thing, which would make my parents feel shame; the Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination was a bad thing; all I had to do was to pass the Higher Education Entrance Examination and study in university as a normal traditional student. Interestingly, my cousin's experience made me interested in education when I grew older and I pondered so many questions: why university students could be made into two groups—traditional young students and mature students; why the university could not offer the certificate with the same value to all the students; why people treated not passing Higher Education Entrance Examination as such a big failure; why people felt so ashamed to study as mature students; why people felt shame if studying as mature students; why people would not have any opportunity to study formally in university just because they failed the Higher Education Entrance Examination once; should there be any other opportunities for adults to study in university formally. The older I grew, the more things about mature students I heard, and the more interested I was about these questions. So I decided to study education in university for my first degree.

With this impression of my cousin's experience and the support of my family, I finally passed the Higher Education Entrance Examination and became a student in university, specializing in education. I had gained fundamental knowledge about education in my Bachelor degree studies and I chose to continue to do a Master's study, during which I decided to focus on research about mature students. The new chapter in my understanding of mature students started from the Master's study. Since then, some of my previous questions started to be solved. I approached the national adult higher education policies, gaining knowledge about the purposes of establishment of adult higher education, its function, the intended value of the adult higher education certificate, and how adult higher education was conducted in practice. Then I felt that I should take a look at how adult higher education was conducted in real life. I applied

for a job as a teaching assistant in the Continuing Education Department (the department that takes charge of adult higher education in my Master's university) to give a few lessons to mature students. I have to say that the mature students I taught just came for a certificate that they needed for a job and they did not care much about learning. I also have to say that the education of mature students was to some extent less academic than that for traditional young students, so it was understandable why mature students were not satisfied with the teaching. Some mature students said that they just came to "buy" a certificate and the university just "sold" it, and the university did not care about if they got knowledge or not from the perspective of mature students. As I gained more knowledge and experience, I felt that there was something wrong with Chinese adult higher education. The purpose of establishing this kind of education was not reflected in the practical implementation. Then I started to approach materials about the foreign adult higher education, I found that in the UK, mature students could study together with the young traditional students and they could gain the same degree as the young traditional students received; furthermore, mature students could apply for the university through various different routes and this would not influence the value of their final certificate. This information sounded inspiring to me at that time, and gave me an international view about adult higher education. I started to think how great it would be if I could study in the UK for my PhD degree and do research about adult higher education between both the UK and China. After a deliberate consideration I started to apply for universities in the UK. Luckily for me, I finally made it.

The third chapter in my understanding about adult higher education started when I studied in the UK and gained more knowledge about adult higher education from a global perspective. I have read a lot of literature about adult higher education in the UK, such as governmental papers and research papers about Widening Participation, research about mature students in university, part-time students, mature students as a

marginalised group in higher education, and research about mature students' experience in higher education. With the acknowledgement of the current literature, I found out that it was rare to see research that talked about mature students' study experience in both England and China from a global perspective. Apart from this literature regarding mature students and the educational policy in the UK, I also read literature about cultural capital and habitus and I found out that many researchers employed habitus as a lens to explore mature students' study experience in universities. However, it was also rare to see research that explored how the habitus influences mature students' study in different educational, political and cultural situations. This rarity and lack of research that investigated mature students' study experience from a global perspective, especially exploring the different situation of mature students in both England and China by employing habitus as research lens, inspired me to fill the gap and make my own contribution to the current research.

The description above reflects the three different steps in the building of my understanding about adult higher education and mature students through my life experience. In terms of my worldview, I am convinced by constructivist and trust that "a thousand people have a thousand Hamlets". Different people have different lives and educational backgrounds which will lead them to see the world differently. I have often experienced that, when I say something to a person, what he or she understands and accepts is sometimes different from the information that I wanted to pass. So I am also convinced that knowledge and reality are built up by people in their minds, rather than something that exists "there" objectively. So constructivist is my worldview. Regarding my personality, I am an outgoing person and have the talent for communicating effectively with people. People trust me and are willing to talk with me in a relaxed manner, I can accept and analyse verbal information well and keep on asking deeper questions to get broader information. Also, I believe that people's opinions and

experiences can be best conveyed and understood by language during interactive communication. Therefore qualitative interview is a suitable method for a researcher like me. Hence, this research is qualitative research under a constructivist worldview, supported by interview as the data collection method.

4.3 Research Design

4.3.1 Statement of the research purpose and research questions

Mature students in higher education are still a marginalized group in the higher education context in both England and China (James, 1995; Yu, 2006, 2010; Reay, 2003). Many research studies have presented that mature students in both England and China are still in an unequal situation in higher education and the universities in the two countries have not provided enough support to change this unequal situation (Tett, 2004; Laird and Cruce , 2009; McTaggart, 2016). This research aims to investigate mature students' study experience in higher education in both England and China, to see what mature students' study experience is and what are perceived by mature students as the institutional factors that affect their study.

There are few researchers who employ habitus as the research lens to investigate mature students' study experience and it is rare to see research studies which explore how mature students' habitus and the institutional habitus interact with each other and affect mature students' study experience. Moreover, there is nearly no research which explores mature students' study experience by employing both habitus and institutional habitus and conducting the research in multiple institutions under different cultural and educational contexts. This research aims to explore mature students' study experience from the perspective of how mature students' habitus and the institutional habitus interact with each other and affect mature students' study in different cultural and

educational contexts—England and China. Therefore the main and sub-research questions are designed as follows:

How does institutional habitus affect mature students' study experience from the perspective of mature students in both England and China?

(1) How does institutional habitus affect mature students' study experience via institutional practices in both England and China?

(2) How does institutional habitus affect mature students' study experience via influencing mature students' habitus in both England and China?

(3) How do the institutional habitus and mature students' habitus interact with each other and affect mature students' study experience in both England and China?

4.3.2 Qualitative research

Since the above section has stated that this research was conducted under constructivist, the justification and explanation of why a qualitative approach was taken will be started with an statement from Creswell (2013) that constructivist or social constructivist is such a perspective, and it is typically seen as an approach to qualitative research. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) highlight Nelson et al.'s explanation of qualitative research as the naturalistic perspective and the interpretive understanding of human experience. They maintain that qualitative researchers believe in the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, the construction of social experience, and the meaning of that. Several assumptions are embedded in qualitative researchers' minds: an individual's point of view is valuable and can be gained through interview; contextualised data is more valuable; the description of the social world is valuable.

According to constructivist, since an individual's understanding of the world is gained through his or her own experience, which is subjective, the researcher who adopts constructivist as a philosophical worldview is willing to explore the diversity and complexity of a certain issue, rather than a thin and constricted result. Therefore the words or opinions of the research participants would be the primary resource for the research (Creswell, 2012). Creswell (2013: 4) has given a definition of qualitative research as "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem". Qualitative data is collected in the participants' context and their original words will be the essential foundation.

Many research studies about mature students' experience in higher education and the institutional factors that affect their study experience use qualitative methodology (Baxter & Britton, 2001; Bowl, 2001; Longden, 2004; Reay, 2003; Waller, 2005; Laird & Cruce, 2009; McTaggart, 2016). In these research studies, mature students' own voices are highly valued. The diversity of different mature students' opinions is treated as reflecting various construction of reality. These researchers believe that only through mature students' own words can their own construction of the world be revealed. Further, only through the qualitative research paradigm can the unique and in-depth meaning of their life stories be explored. Since this research aims to explore mature students' higher education experience, as well as discover the influential institutional factors perceived by them, the diversity of individual perspectives is treasured. In addition, only through profound communication between the interviewer and interviewees can the deep meaning and value of detailed life stories be discovered. All the subtle and various subjective feelings can only be explored and touched by qualitative research.

4.3.3 Case study

The justification of why case study is used as research methodology in this research also starts with Creswell's clear statement that "case studies are a design of inquiry found in many fields, especially evaluation, in which the researcher develops an in-depth analysis of a case, often a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (Creswell, 2013: 14). Creswell also treats case study as a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research, or an object of study, as well as a product of inquiry (Creswell, 2012). Case study can be conducted with reference to one case or multiple cases. Stake (1994) explains that the collective case study is the study of a number of cases in order to inquire into a particular phenomenon. The reason why two cases are selected together in this study is that the researcher believes that understanding one case will lead to a better understanding of the other one; the complexities will be better comprehended by analysing both cases, just as Stake says, "A new case without commonality cannot be understood; yet a new case without distinction will not be noticed" (1994: 95). Only by analysis of the merit and virtue of a counterpart, can one's own shortcomings and deficiency be realized and paid attention to.

England and China are selected as the two case countries in this research because of the following reasons. Firstly, there are many differences in terms of higher education in relation to mature students between the two countries: England is a developed capitalist country with a long-established higher education system whereas China is a developing socialist country with a newly-established higher education system; the higher education systems regarding mature students are different in the two countries, as a result of which mature students in the two countries are educated in different ways and are awarded different types of undergraduate certificates. Secondly, there are also some similarities in higher education in relation to mature students between the two countries: higher education massification is taking place significantly in both countries, which

enables more and more mature students to study in higher education and get qualified; higher education massification also causes the surplus accumulation of graduates in the job market in the two countries, which affects mature students' competitiveness; as claimed by numerous studies, mature students in both England and China are still in disadvantaged situation, although the problems and disadvantages they encounter are different. Besides, as two major powers in the world, England and China are cooperating more and more closely in higher education, and the impact of this on mature students' situation in each country will be revealed soon, which makes it more significant to study these two countries together.

Since in England and China, the overall contexts of the higher education systems, the implementation of higher education for mature students, and furthermore the social and cultural backgrounds are all different, mature students' study experience and the factors which they perceive as affecting their study would vary. How mature students' study experience is constructed and what they perceive as institutional factors that affect their study in one country may shed light on the other. The research seeks to find both the commonalities and particularities between the two countries, and eventually aims to get some inspiring results regarding mature students' study experience and their current situation as a global issue. As a constructivist, the researcher will assist the readers to construct their own knowledge and awareness of mature students' study experience in higher education in both countries and build up the researcher's own opinion on it. The readers will form their own conclusion from the vicarious experience offered by the researcher's description and analysis of the selected cases.

4.3.4 Interview as the data collection technique and data collection procedure

4.3.4.1 *The semi-structured interview*

Most qualitative research studies prefer using interview as a data collection method because of two reasons (Peräkylä, 2005): by conducting interviews, researchers can get information which they cannot access by other ways such as people's subjective experience and attitudes; the time distance and space distance could both be harmonized and it is possible for the researcher to reach participants' past events and far away experiences. Miller and Glassner (1997) clarify that information about the social world can be achieved through in-depth interviews. They also suggest that qualitative interviews are a suitable way to understand other people's comprehending of the social world and granting these people's point of view the culturally honoured status of reality. The interview method is one of the most common and useful ways for people to understand their fellow humans (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Interviews can be done face-to-face or by telephone; the format could be structured, semi-structured, or unstructured. The focus of interviews is on both "what" questions (the activities of everyday life) and "how" questions (how people construct and understand their lives) (Busher and James, 2015).

Berg has explained the distinct features and advantages of the semi-structured interview:

These questions are typically asked of each interviewee in a systematic and consistent order, but allow the interviewers sufficient freedom to digress...Researchers thus approach the world from the subject's perspective (Berg, 2004: 61).

Glesne and Peshkin (2011) also suggest that the semi-structured interview is flexible since questions may merge in the course of interviewing and the research could add or replace the pre-established ones.

This research employs the semi-structured interview, which is conducted by asking open-ended and in-depth questions. Also through the semi-structured interview the interviewer can comprehend the multifaceted activities of the individuals in society. In this research, the interview questions were led by a guide which was based on the research purpose and research questions. Since this research aims to explore mature students' experience about higher education and their perception of what the institutional factors that affect their study are, which may vary from person to person, the interview questions had to be varied, due to different personal situations. Meanwhile, the interview questions also had to vary in order to dig deeply and explore further the mature students' views of the institutional factors that affected their study.

4.3.4.2 The selection of the research sites

The research sites were selected in this research according to the research purpose and research questions (Merriam, 1998). They were chosen according to a criterion-based purposeful sampling method. Purposeful sampling is used for studying cases (e.g., people, organizations, events, and communities) and samples which are rich sources of illuminative information will be selected (Patton, 2003; Palinkas et al., 2015).

In this research, two universities were selected in each case country as research sites; therefore the research was conducted in four selected universities in England and China. Aiming to represent the research phenomenon generally, the two research sites in each country are different types and at different levels, which complies with Stake's suggestion that the balance of variety is important (Stake, 1994). Choosing universities

from different levels also enabled wide access to mature students from wide and various social and cultural backgrounds. Thus the diversity of the sample was more likely to be achieved.

In the UK, regarding the Foundation Degree, pre-1992 universities and post-1992 universities have different attitudes towards organizing the Foundation Degree. In the report to the HEFCE conducted by the Foundation Degree (FD) Support Team, the difference in approach and attitude to FDs between the pre and post 1992 universities was been presented as follows.

In the pre-1992 institution, the FD is located in a central unit but it does not appear integrated into the mainstream business of the university whereas in the post-1992 institution the FD is part of a faculty's sub-degree provision and subject to the same Quality Assurance as all other provision (HEFCE, 2002: para 6.5).

Based on the different attitudes towards Foundation Degree presented by HEFCE above, it was necessary to take both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities as UK research sites, based on the research purpose and the research questions.

In China, universities are categorized into two groups: national universities which are funded by and affiliated directly to the MoE and provincial universities, which are funded by and affiliated to the local provinces (MoE, 2016). There are differences regarding the academic level, quality of staff and facilities between the universities that are affiliated directly to the MoE and those affiliated to the local provinces (Dow, 2010; Ying et al., 2017). Therefore it was necessary to involve these two types of universities in this research, as the purpose of this research is to investigate mature students' study experience in higher education.

The second selection criterion was that there should be higher education programmes designed as part-time for mature students in the university and the university accepted mature students as part-time students. The third selection criterion is that mature students can get qualified after finishing the higher education programme and meeting all the graduation criteria. Eisner (1991) indicated that in selecting a site for qualitative studies, access is a key to successful research. Since the researcher has studied in one research site in China, her social network assisted her to complete the research in China. On the other hand, the two research sites in England were also convenient for the researcher to access and conduct interviews.

4.3.4.3 The selection of the interviewees

Mature students are defined by UCAS as students who are older than 21 years old (UCAS, 2016). Therefore the mature students selected in this research are those older than 21 years old in both England and China. Based on the contextual literature review (Chapter 2), this research targeted mature students who were studying for a Foundation Degree and Top-up course in England and mature students studying in “Evening University” in China.

Since this case study involved China and England as two cases, a parallel structure was employed in this research, which means the participants were chosen from similar majors and departments. In England, the number of mature students majoring in education is highest than that in any other discipline (HESA, 2004). Therefore mature students majoring in education were targeted by this research.

Regarding the situation in China, since the minimum degree requirement for being a primary school teacher is a full-time Bachelor degree awarded by the regular higher education system (mature students can only study part-time in university and get a

Bachelor degree awarded by the adult higher education system, as discussed in Chapter 2), the major of early childhood studies is the only one within the education discipline offered as a part-time programme to mature students in the two sample universities. Therefore the interviewees in China were chosen from the mature students who majored in early childhood studies. In order to construct the parallel structure between the two case countries, the interviewees in England were also chosen from mature students who studied the same major. As such, the mature students who studied early childhood education parttime for a Foundation Degree and Top-up course from the two sample universities in England and mature students who studied early childhood education part-time in “Evening University” from the two sample universities in China constitute the sampling pool in this research.

To determine the number of interviewees, several institutional factors were considered. The design of the interview format was for depth rather than breadth. In-depth interviews are essential for understanding mature students’ experiences and providing quality information to develop an interpretation of their experiences. Theories and similar studies also provide guidance in deciding upon the number of participants. Boyd regards two to ten participants as sufficient to reach saturation (Boyd, 2001) and Creswell (2007) recommends long interviews with up to ten people for a phenomenological study. According to recommendations from both Boyd (2001) and Creswell (2007) for this research, it was planned to recruit 10 interviewees from each university (7 interviewees were recruited in one English university, due to the lack of volunteers).

After receiving permission from the gatekeepers (mature students’ programme directors), these gatekeepers from the four selected universities voluntarily helped to recruit mature students by sending emails to the mature students they took charge of. The mature students who replied voluntarily by email were the interviewees in this

research. The invitation emails were sent a few times in order to recruit the expected number of mature students. All the participants willingly and voluntarily joined this research, without any pressure put on them. The figure below gives the basis information of these interviewees.

Table 4.1 Basic information of the interviewees

			Age	Sex	Marital status / child's age	Year of study (F: Finish)
Chinese interviews	National university	E1	35	F	Married 5-year-old daughter	1
		E2	23	F	Married	2
		E3	24	F	Not married	2
		E4	31	F	Married 3-year-old daughter	2
		E5	28	F	Married	F
		E6	29	F	Not married	1
		E7	26	F	Married	F
		E8	28	F	Not married	1
		E9	24	F	Not married	1
		E10	32	F	Married 3-year-old daughter	2
	Provincial university	S1	29	F	Married 3-year-old daughter	3
		S2	25	F	Married 1-year-old daughter	F
		S3	26	F	Not married	F
		S4	25	F	Not married	3
		S5	24	F	Not married	3
		S6	24	F	Not married	3
		S7	25	F	Not married	3
		S8	26	F	Not married	F
S9		26	F	Married	2	
S10		26	F	Not married	3	
English interviews	Post-1992 university	Y1	38	F	Married/ 8-year-old son and 9-year-old son	BA honors
		Y2	24	F	Not married	BA honors
		Y3	30	F	Not married	BA honors
		Y4	28	F	Not married	BA honors
		Y5	42	F	Not married	Foundation Degree, 1st year
		Y6	22	F	Not married	BA honors
		Y7	50	F	Married 20-year-old daughter 23-year-old daughter	Foundation Degree, 1st year
	Pre-1992 university	H1	22	F	Married 2-year-old son	Foundation Degree, 2nd year
H2		52	F	Married	BA honors	

				3 children	
	H3	32	F	Not married	BA honors
	H4	34	F	Not married	BA honors
	H5	44	F	Married 3 children	BA honors
	H6	57	F	Married 1 child	BA honors (finished)
	H7	23	M	Not married	BA honors
	H8	24	F	Married 2 children	Foundation Degree, 2nd year
	H9	26	F	Not married	BA honors (finished)
	H10	22	F	Married 2-year-old daughter	Foundation Degree, 2nd year

4.3.4.4 *The steps of conducting the interview*

Fontana and Frey (2005) demonstrate several steps for conducting an interview which are: accessing the setting; locating the informant; understanding the language and cultural of the respondents; recruiting participants and presenting myself; collecting empirical materials. This research was conducted by following these steps.

Accessing the setting. This research aimed to explore mature students' study experience in higher education so the first step was to know in which way mature students studied in university and what situation and circumstances they were in, so that the researcher could know how to get in touch with this group of people. By searching the module information on the websites of the target universities and by reviewing the literature, the researcher learnt that the mature students came to university only several times during the evening so it was impossible for the researcher alone to get in touch with mature students on campus, except during their lecture time. For this reason it was necessary to think about other ways to get in touch with this specific student group.

Locating the informant. Since the researcher had gone through the first step, finding a suitable informant became the key point for getting in touch with these students. The researcher chose to start from contacting the programme directors who took charge of the mature students. The researcher contacted the programme directors and explained

the research purpose and details of the interview. The programme directors in the four universities agreed to help in recruiting voluntaries. They kindly provided a lot of programme information, which acted as precious contextual information in this research. This kind information also contributed to understanding the language and culture of the respondents, which was the next step.

Understanding the language and culture of the respondents. Based on the information provided by the programme directors, the researcher obtained a better understanding of the characteristics of this mature student cohort as well as how the higher education system worked for mature students, which was presented in the contextual information part (Chapter 2). In terms of language, personal information was respected and the researcher provided a relaxing atmosphere to let the mature students talk more easily. After getting a good understanding of the contextual information and characteristics of the research subjects, the research moved on to the next step, recruiting participants and presenting the researcher.

Recruiting participants and presenting the researcher. Recruiting participants is the key part during the whole data collection procedure. As suggested by the programme directors, the researcher wrote a formal invitation letter and then the programme directors helped to forward it to all the mature students in the target programmes. In the invitation letter, who the researcher was, the research purpose, how the research would be conducted, what kinds of question would be asked, and how participants' personal information would be protected and made confidential were all introduced in detail, in order to comply with the ethical rules. Then the invitation was sent out four times altogether, to get the expected number of participants. After getting agreement for participation from the mature students, the researcher started to conduct the formal interviews, which formed the next step—collecting empirical materials.

Collecting empirical materials. The interview time and location were all chosen by the participants to meet their convenience and mostly they chose to meet somewhere on campus. At the beginning of the meeting, the researcher started by introducing herself, the purpose of the research, and the questions which were going to be asked. After the participants gained a good understanding of the research information and agreed that the interview could be recorded anonymously, the interview commenced. As these were semi-structured interviews, the open-ended questions acted as guidance for the interviewees to talk around certain topics. The researcher acted more as a listener than controller and sometimes followed up the interviewee's answer to ask something further.

The table below shows all the questions which were used to collect interviewees' opinions.

Table 4.2 Interview questions

Basic information	Age	Gender
	Major and study year	
	Marital status	
	Place of birth	
	Address and transport situation	
	Job (detail)	
Pre-university experience	1. Pre-university education experience (stopped at which level/age and why stopped)	
	2. What did you do before entering university and any influence on your study?	
HE study experience	1. Why did you come back university to study?	
	2. Why did you choose this university? What are the selection criteria?	
	3. What preparation did you do before apply for university? Any support gained from other people for your application?	
	4. What do you think about the resources on campus? (Library/cafe/accommodation/society/activity/organization etc.)	
	5. What do you think about your peers? Have you got support from them?	
	6. What do you think about your teachers?	

	7. What do you think about the course and teaching?
	8. Is it difficult to study as a mature student? What are the difficulties?
	9. Have you ever thought about stopping and leaving?
	10. Why do you still remain?
	11. What do you think about your study status and attitude?
	12. What do you think about studying as a mature student?
	13. What is your perception of the value of your degree?
	14. What do you think about finding a job as a mature student?

Particular attention has been paid by the researcher to the language and cross culture issue during the data collection procedure. Since English is the second language of the researcher, the researcher has practiced mock interviews with English friends before conduct the interviews with the interviewees in this research. By conducting the mock interviews, the researcher’s English friends have helped the researcher to correct the interview questions in terms of grammar and make the interview questions understandable for the English mature students. Also by conducting the mock interviews, the English friends helped the researcher to practice oral English, which enables the researcher to communicate fluently with the interviewees in this research. These mock interviews also equip the researcher with the English culture and values, which helps the researcher to understand the interviewees better and avoid offending them.

4.4 Data analysis procedures

Data management and data analysis were integrated together for the initial production of the research conclusion and results. Huberman and Miles have defined data management as “operations needed for a systematic, coherent process of data collection, storage, and retrieval” (Huberman & Miles, 1994: 428); and the description of data analysis is “data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing verification” (Huberman and Miles, 1984 cited in Huberman and Miles, 1994: 428). In this research,

the procedure of data analysis includes data management and data analysis, which are introduced in more detail below.

4.4.1 Data management

Data storage and data retrieval are the fundamental parts of data management, which are significant for researcher to discover what data is available and useful for the research; to use the data easily, flexibly and consistently; to record the analysis process (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Huberman and Miles also underline the five general storage and retrieval functions proposed by Levin in the year 1985, which are: formatting, cross-referral, indexing, abstracting and pagination (Levin, 1985, cited in Huberman & Miles, 1994: 45). In this research, all the data were stored anonymously and safely. All the data were managed and employed based on the research questions and research purpose. Nvivo was employed in this research for data storage and management.

4.4.2 Data analysis

Anticipatory data reduction is a fundamental part of the data analysis procedure, which is involved in the selection of conceptual framework, of research questions, of samples, of the definition of case and of instrumentation (Huberman & Miles, 1994). The purposive selection is significant for the research; the researcher should have a clear idea of what kind of data is relevant to the research questions and research aim, as well as what sort of data should be excluded.

Case analysis contains two different levels of understanding (Huberman & Miles, 1994). The first level is descriptive, which aims to solve the problems about what is going on and how things are proceeding, aiming to provide a reasonable explanation of the target phenomenon. Storytelling is often as a form for answering these sorts of questions. The

second level is the “why” questions. This kind of question intends to explain a certain issue or support the researcher’s statement. These kinds of questions are also intended to make description comprehensible.

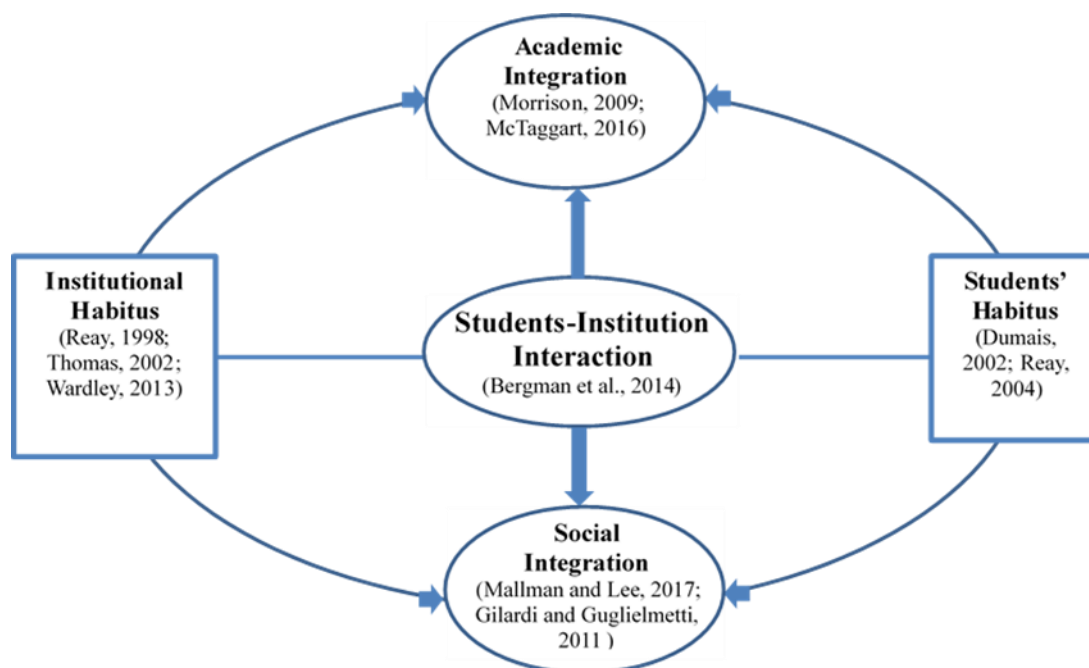
Data display has a big influence on the further data analysis, since data have to be arranged systemically to answer the research questions (Huberman & Miles, 1994). A good data display connects the data together with the analysis, which could help the researcher to achieve a clear picture of the research conclusions. Peräkylä (2005) states that the first step for researcher to analyse their interview is to transfer the interviews into written materials. By reading and rereading the interview transcripts, the researcher tried to pin down the essential themes. Afterwards, the researcher analysed the materials by interacting and integrating the presupposition and the theories.

The theories in a research play a meaningful role. Glister (1978 cited in Huberman & Miles, 1994) claims that appropriate and relevant theories can be applied to interpret, forecast, and understand a given issue; besides, theories are amendable and adjustable. Silverstein (1988) states that there is tension between the particularity and the universal. He claims that each specific case’s particularity should be comprehended and analysed within the bigger picture of general principle. Creswell (2013) identifies two functions of theories in qualitative research: theories are used as a broader explanation for behaviour and attitudes, which also could be fulfilled by the factors and constructions from the new research; the whole qualitative study is an inductive process of building from the data to broad themes to a generalized model or theory. Creswell goes on to demonstrate a step-by-step research procedure, which includes gathering detailed information from participants; forming information into themes or categories; developing the themes or categories into broader patterns, theories, or generalizations; and lastly relating the research to the existing literature. Theories appeared at the beginning of this research as a prior framework helping to design the research questions

and interview questions; and during the data analysis stage. They also helped to guide the researcher to analyse the data and generate the research results. In the data analysis stage, the theories guided the researcher to code the interview material and theorize the data.

In this research, the theories of habitus and institutional habitus were the two main theories. At the beginning of the research, the researcher explored and studied these theories in detail, deeply, with the aim of designing the interview question and using these theories to guide the research. After conducting the qualitative interviews, the researcher began to analyse the data by coding it into different themes, using Nvivo software. In the interview data, mature students talked about various things which influenced their study experience. These institutional factors were coded into different themes, then were analysed based on the research questions and purpose, which was to understand how these institutional factors interacted with mature students' habitus and hence affected mature students' study experience. The theoretical framework below, which was shown in Chapter 3, guided the researcher to analyse the data as well as integrate the data and theoretical framework together for a comprehensive analysis.

Figure 3.1 Theoretical framework



Nvivo software has been employed as the tool for data analysis in this research. After all the interview transcripts have been imported into Nvivo software, mature students' expressions regarding a certain aspect of their study experience have been selected as a certain code; multiple codes regarding one certain aspect of mature students' study experience are categorized under a certain theme. There are hierarchies among the codes and themes such as the mature students' opinions about their "module arrangement" are coded under the theme of "mature students' perception of the pedagogical structure" which is under the theme of "the impact of institutional practice on mature students' academic integration". The qualitative data in this research is analysed by categorizing the codes into different themes under multiple levels. The themes which are selected to be presented in the data presentation chapter are based on the principle that the presented themes could answer the research questions and fulfil the research purpose.

Regarding the language and cross culture issue, particular attention has been paid regarding three aspects during the data analysis procedure. Firstly, the researcher's supervisors have helped to check if the interview transcripts match the interview audio, which prevents the transcript errors. Secondly, the researcher's supervisors have helped to make sure the Chinese data is translated correctly into English by discussing with the researcher about what the Chinese mature students express in the interviews. Thirdly, as multiple case study, the researcher presents the English and Chinese data in parallel from in order to make the data analysis fulfil the research purpose and make more sense to the readers.

4.5 Validity and reliability

External validity could be extended in several ways. Numerous participants in multiple settings could contribute to generalizability (Huberman & Miles, 1994). Besides, multiple settings could help identify the structure that takes hold in some settings but not in others.

Gibbs (2008) points out that qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures. Creswell (2013) suggests various approaches, which this research employed to enhance the researcher's capacity to guarantee the accuracy of the research findings, as well as convince the readers of that accuracy.

The first way to guarantee validity and reliability in this research was triangulation. The data from a single resource might be partial or unilateral. Since this research only took interviews as the data collection method, the interview was the only data resource. However, referring to the interview question design, the researcher asked about a given issue in various ways and avoided the interviewees noticing that. In this way, the

researcher could triangulate the answers that obtained by asking about issues in different ways and using these answers to build a coherent justification for the themes. Since the themes were established based on consolidating various sources of data or perspectives from the interviewees, this process could be claimed as adding to the validity of the study.

Secondly, the research used a rich and thick description to convey the findings. This description could bring the audiences to the real settings and offer the discussion a piece of shared experience. In this research, Chapter 2 was about the different settings of adult higher education in both England and China, which gave the audience a whole picture of who the mature students were and what kind of study atmosphere they were in. Also, due to the various differences of adult higher education in the two countries, the readers need a clear and detailed description of the two different adult higher education systems. Therefore they could comprehend how mature students construct their experience in the two countries. Offering a rich and thick description aimed not only to add to the validity but also to strengthen the readers' understanding of the analysis of the research findings.

Thirdly, the research also applied peer debriefing to increase the accuracy of the account. The researcher located another researcher who also did qualitative research to review and ask questions about this research. By asking and answering questions, the shortcomings of the research could appear and also the researcher could have a precious opportunity to absorb other people's opinions in order to improve the research.

Qualitative reliability refers to the researcher's methodology and approach being in accordance with which other researchers and various projects employ (Gibbs, 2008). Yin suggests that the qualitative researcher should record as many of the steps of the

procedure as possible, so that others can follow his or her procedure (Yin, 2009). This research took several recommendations from Gibbs to guarantee reliability.

First of all, the researcher transcribed the interviews carefully and double checked to make sure there was no obvious mistake. After the transcription had been checked by the researcher, the researcher also invited other PhD students to help to double check if the transcription was consistent with the interview recording. Secondly, during the process of coding, the researcher deliberated in making sure that the definition and meaning of the codes and themes were consistent. The researcher made clear notes of all the definitions of the codes and themes and went back to the definition at whenever when a new code was made. The researcher also double-checked if all the items which have been inputted under one theme agreed with each other. This process was undertaken several times until all the coding was finished. Most importantly, the researcher's supervisors also helped to cross-check the codes and to find the most fitting codes and themes.

4.6 Qualitative generalization

Gibbs (2008) indicates that since the purpose of qualitative research is to show the diversity and complexity of the world, rather than generalizing results to other individuals or sites outside the research context, generalization is limited in qualitative research. The value of qualitative research is to discover particularity, rather than making generalizability. However, when case study is conducted, especially several cases, some broader theories could be generalized, which could shed light on other similar contexts (Creswell, 2013).

In this research, the particularity of mature students' study experience in higher education in both England and China is revealed. The audience of this research could

have a clear view of this specific situation and an understanding of this specific group in each context. In terms of generalization, the findings and research results could shed light on similar contexts, for example, different universities which provide higher education for mature students. Therefore the universities could consider the research result based on their own situation and take advantage of it. Generalization of qualitative research means the audience uses the research result flexibly to benefit themselves. Therefore the result does not mean to mirror any context. Since mature students belong to a particular cohort in higher education, there are some common features among them which could be used by the audience, according to their own specific situation.

4.7 Ethical issues

One important distinguishing feature of social science from natural science is that research participants in social science are human beings, so the proper ethical concerns are essential for protecting the participants from potential harm. Fontana and Frey (2005) summarize the three ethical rules for conducting interviews which are informed consent, right to privacy and protection from harm.

Christians (2000) expands the rules into four guidelines, which direct inductive majority-result research studies. The first one is called informed consent. An individual's autonomy has to be confirmed during the whole process of the research; any participant has the right to know the purpose and the expected outcome of the research. In addition, the freedom of the participants to join in the research needs to be guaranteed, which means their voluntary participation must be based on the full knowledge of the research. Regarding privacy and confidentiality, research participants' identities must be protected and hidden; personal information must be concealed.

In this research, several steps were taken to protect the participants ethically. Since this research looks into mature students' personal life as well as higher education experience, to find out if there is any influence on their study experience, there might have been something the participant did not like to recall. In terms of ethics, the researcher formed the interview questions as open-ended and avoided sensitive vocabulary. The researcher also phrased and formed the research questions carefully and thoughtfully to help ensure accuracy, and comprehensibility. The researcher discussed the questions with the research supervisors, who helped to make sure the interview questions were appropriate to use. In addition, since English is not the researcher's first language, the researcher asked some local friends to proofread and double-check if the questions were accurate and matched the research purpose. During the recruitment period, the researcher sent an invitation letter to the gatekeepers who helped the researcher to recruit participants. Then the gatekeepers forwarded the letter to the mature students to ask for volunteers. In this letter, the researcher explained clearly the research object, the value of the research, the interview questions, the length of the interview, and the privacy and confidentiality of the data storage. By sending this informing letter, the voluntary participants were treated as aware of the research information. Aiming to offer convenience to the participants, the researcher asked the participants to freely choose any time and place they preferred to have the interview. During the interview, the researcher did not start to record the interview until permission was granted by the participants. Most of the interviewees agreed to recording, the intention to record had already been noted in the invitation letter. In conducting the interviews, the researcher informed the participants that they could refuse to answer any question which they did not want to talk about and they could stop and end the interviews at any time they wanted to. No names of the interviewees or the names of any person in their social network would be asked or mentioned by the researcher. In terms of privacy and confidentiality, no names of the participants were recorded or mentioned in the data; all

the names of interviewees were replaced by code names in the transcripts. The data were kept safely and stored secretly with a password and participants were assured that this information would not be shared with other people in any way.

Chapter 5 Individual Profiles of Four Mature Students in Both England and China

This chapter presents individual profiles of the four mature students involved in this study, including two Chinese mature students, one each from the two selected Chinese universities, and two English mature students from the selected English universities. These individual profiles of each student constitute essential data which focuses on the people involved in this qualitative research and gives the reader an impression of what their characteristics are as adults and how they view their study experience. Despite the abundant data to select from, the stories from these four mature students are representative in probing the impact of the institutional habitus on mature students' study experience and study outcome. These profiles present the distinguishing features of mature students in England and China, as well as illustrating the diversity of the mature students in each country. Both the fragments and wholeness of stories are accorded importance by Waller (2005, 2006; Waller et al., 2014), which guides this chapter to pay attention to both mature students' previous educational and work experience in order to show their characteristics as adults, and their current learning experience in higher education, which demonstrates the influence of institutional habitus.

Each profile is an anonymized portrait—a pseudonym is employed in each profile. Every profile is presented using the same section headings, which are as follows:

1. Basic personal information
2. Personal life situation and study aspiration
3. Impression of studying as a mature student
4. Researcher's impressions of participant

The reason why these four mature students were selected for profiling, out of a total of 37 participants, is because each represents a distinctiveness regarding the various aspects of the impact of institutional habitus on mature students' study experience and study outcome, including the access system, pedagogical structure, student-staff relationship, sense of belonging, study achievement and other aspects. By looking at each case profile, the reader will have a sense of what mature students' characteristics are and how they perceive their study experience, which will help the reader to have a thorough understanding of how the institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience in both England and China. Since education was chosen as the discipline which both the English and Chinese mature students study in this research, 36 out of the total 37 interviewees were female, and for this reason the four interviewees profiled in this chapter are all female. Since the four mature students profiled are all female, apart from their features as adults, how gender affects their study motivation and experience could also be seen from their profiles.

5.1 The participants in England

5.1.1 Participant 1: Jess—higher education for the sake of self-fulfilment

Jess could be taken as an example of those mature students who return to study purely aiming for self-realization and self-fulfilment.

5.1.1.1 Personal current life situation

Jess was a 52-year-old female mature student from university H. She had finished her Foundation Degree, and was currently studying for a BA Honours degree. One of her daughters lived next door to her and her other children all had left home, so she now lived with her husband. She was a teaching assistant in a primary school. She had to work from Tuesday to Friday and had flexible working time on Monday, so it was very convenient for her to have lectures on Mondays.

5.1.1.2 Personal life story and study aspiration

Jess finished her schooling in 1978 with O-level grades and the CSE—certificate of secondary education. She finished secondary school then started work. There were several reasons why she did not continue to study for a higher level after secondary school. First of all, she did not have the confidence and she did not think she was capable of studying in university. Secondly, her parents just wanted her to get a job instead of going to university. Moreover, during that time Jess's mum gave birth to Jess's sister, so her mum needed Jess's help to look after the little girl as well. Therefore

Jess had to work and look after her sister at that time. On top of that, since there was no one in her family who had been to university, university was not something her family or herself considered. She thought university was not the thing for her. Her parents were interested in her study, but they were unable to help. Also university was never encouraged by her parents.

It was her children who brought her the interest and opportunity to work in the early childcare area. When Jess had her own children, she was very interested in how they developed and wanted to know more about children's development. When her elder daughter started to go to play group, Jess was involved as a parent helper. Then she got more involvement and training. After her daughters went to primary school she got a job as teaching assistant. Her progress in working as a teaching assistant in primary school came from her interest and involvement in her own children's development.

Several reasons encouraged Jess to return to study in university. First of all, she always wanted to improve herself. The longer she worked in the early childhood area, the more motivation she had to improve herself. She wanted to challenge herself and see what she could achieve. Secondly, her confidence built up the more work she did, until she thought she was confident enough to study in university for a Bachelor degree. The third reason was that she finally got her own free time. She said she would feel guilty if she spent much of her time on study instead of looking after the children, even though she had had the idea of studying in university for quite a long time. As a mum, her most important concern was to take a good care of the children, so her personal aspiration

had to be put aside. Now her girls were all independent, she could at last manage her own time. The most encouraging reason was that, since she saw her own girls could go to college to study, she started to think she could do this as well. She was greatly inspired by the children and she made up her mind to have a go at studying in the university.

She just had promotion in the early childcare area within recent years, which she thought happened too late in her life. She felt a little bit regretful that she did not get a degree when she was young. She said she had already got a stable position in her job, so there would not be much promotion based on her job role now, which meant no matter whether she gets her degree or not, her salary would not change. Therefore neither promotion nor a rise in salary were the motivation for her to return to study; improving herself was the main reason.

5.1.1.3 Impression of studying as a mature student

Jess highly praised the courses in university. Jess said that the courses in the Foundation Degree and the courses in the Top-up year had different focuses and goals. The courses in the Foundation Degree were more about applicable and practical knowledge which she could apply to her daily work whereas the courses in the Top-up year were more theoretical, which “opened my mind”, as she said. The course in the Top-up year enabled her to think more theoretically and more professionally. Jess said she really

had benefited a lot from the courses and she could realize her improvement. The academic improvement enabled her to feel more confident about herself.

Apart from the high praise of the courses, Jess also thought highly of the teachers. She said all the teachers were full-time academic staff on campus and they were very professional in early childhood education. Apart from the expertise, Jess said these teachers really cared about her. When she struggled with her study, she could go to the teachers to ask for help at any time she needed and the teachers were always patient and caring. Jess really had a high opinion of both the courses and the teachers.

Due to her age, Jess had always felt she was too old to be present in university. She said the students on campus were a similar age to her children and she felt quite isolated when she was apart from her peers who were a similar age to her in her class. Besides, she felt she just came to the course and went home, she had nearly no other involvement in university life, as she perceived that university life was for the younger ones but not for people her age.

5.1.1.4 Researcher's impressions of participant

Is it ever too late to realise your dream? The researcher will say no after the interview with Jess. From Jess the researcher saw a very positive life attitude and an aspiration of self-realization. This was a shock for the researcher, based on the cultural and social background where she came from. When the researcher talked with Jess, she felt with a big shock, how beautiful it was to realise a dream, no matter how old the person was.

The researcher enjoyed talking with Jess and she could definitely feel the aspiration and positive life attitude Jess had. Jess never felt that she was too old to study, she thought people could study at any time they wanted to and age should not be a problem which stopped anyone from improving. She was quite happy that she could have her personal free time now to do what she really wanted to do. She enjoyed every small achievement from the study and she was becoming more and more confident.

Jess represents the study attitude and experience of mature students aged more than 40 in this research. Different from the younger mature students in this research, most of the senior mature students in this research demonstrated a positive perception of their study experience. They perceived studying in higher education as for the sake of their self-improvement, so they cherished each opportunity to improve and they were more aware of their own development, rather than criticizing the unsatisfactory aspect of the education provided by the university.

5.1.2 Participant 2: Jessie— higher education for the sake of changing life situation

Jessie is an example of a group of English mature students in this research who missed study opportunity when they were young and realized that study was important for changing their life situation at a mature age; therefore they came to study and get a qualification.

5.1.2.1 Personal current life situation

Jessie was a 22-year-old female mature student from university Y. She currently had finished her Foundation Degree and was doing her BA Honours. She was single and lived alone, working as a part-time senior nursery worker.

5.1.2.2 Personal life story and study aspiration

Jessie said she did not do well in her GCSE's, then she went straight to Six Form College and got a BTEC qualification in travel and tourism. After that she did a Business Administration Apprenticeship at a Training Centre. Then she went to do a childcare apprenticeship. She did her level 2 and level 3 apprenticeships and after she was qualified she did a level 3 management qualification in childcare. Afterwards she came to do her Foundation Degree. She said each year she had done something different, continuously. She got an NVQ level 2 in business administration, but she did not really like that. She worked in a shop for a while and later she gave up that job. After her cousin had a baby she realized she really liked the baby so she thought she would be interested in working in the childcare sector. Jessie thought doing an apprenticeship in early childhood was a good option because it could get her qualifications and allow her to work at the same time.

Jessie's purpose for studying in university was to change her job and get out of the nursery sector, because she did not agree with Ofsted and the outside bodies. She thought she was expected to do a lot to show the government, rather than for the actual

child. Also, she was not satisfied with the low salary. She had a big financial burden from her family, because of which she had to find a higher paid job. However, at the moment, she did not want to be a teacher, neither did she really know what other jobs she wanted to do. She thought possibly she would like to work with young people, but she did not exactly know. She had applied for a job just recently, as a youth mentor, and she thought that looked quite interesting. She perceived that this job could be quite well suited to her and better paid than being a teacher. This job would be part-time so she could keep on studying for her degree alongside working.

Jessie had applied for a “proper university course” (as she called it) before she applied for the Foundation Degree. However, since she did not have all the required UCAS points, she could not get access to those courses. Jessie thought it would look better to do a “proper university course” than a Foundation Degree. She perceived the Foundation Degree that she was doing as more like an access course rather than a “proper university course”. It was not really a full course, in her opinion, so she thought that it would not be the best route. Another reason why she wanted to do a “proper university course” was that she felt she was quite young, but she was classed as a mature student. She thought if she went to university to do a “proper university course” after Sixth Form College, she could have a bit more of a social lifestyle with the people at her age, whereas she perceived the Foundation Degree was more for mums who went back into education.

5.1.2.3 Impression of studying as a mature student

Based on Jessie's life experience and study aspiration, studying in university was treated as a way for her to find a better job and change her financial situation. In addition, Jessie felt she was not as successful as her friends, so she wanted to gain more knowledge and make herself more intelligent by studying in university; therefore, improving herself was another study motivation.

When she talked about her study experience, she pointed out that there were differences in the teachers' professionalism. Some teachers were very professional, but some seemed not to know much about what was really going on in nurseries. The things taught by these teachers could not benefit her much. In addition, some teachers, she perceived, did not care about her much and might not even know her name. She felt she had a frustrating experience with some of those teachers. Once, when she asked a question to a teacher, the answer given by the teacher was, "Go back to look at the PowerPoint", which made her feel very annoyed and disappointed.

She was also not satisfied with the arrangement of activities and events in university since she felt there was not much provided for mature students. As she only came to university in the evenings and at weekends, she felt there were almost no extra-curricular activities for her to participate in, which made her feel isolated and excluded.

5.1.2.4 Researcher's impressions of participant

Jessie was quite a responsible and independent student. She had a very strong and distinct personality. She had her own unique opinion on everything and did not want to tolerate anything she did not like. She said she was rebellious when she was young. She did not like studying and did not like school when she was younger. However, she soon realized that education and qualification were quite important if she wanted a good job and for potential development in the future.

During our talk she mentioned many times that she did not really know what she wanted to do, which could also be shown from her study and work experience. She had continuously done many different things but she still did not know what she wanted to choose as a career. Besides, Jessie had a big financial burden from her family and she had to pay a big amount of debt. This financial burden was a good trigger, from a positive perspective, which pushed her to change from a rebellious girl to a hard-working girl seeking a good job. Thus studying in university became an opportunity for her to get a better job and earn more money, which did not simply mean getting knowledge. She perceived the qualification would bring her to a better life situation and support her to do the things she wanted to do.

In her eyes, the Bachelor degree meant both her self-improvement and a tool which could assist her to find a good job. Jessie is a representative of the younger mature students, since her perception of higher education was quite prevalent among the

English interviewees aged 20 to 40 in this research. Jessie also perceived that as a mature student she could not be involved in university life and she felt isolated and excluded, which was also mentioned many times by other younger mature students in this research. Jessie's study experience illustrates how mature students' study experience is affected by both their perceptions of higher education and their study mode as mature students.

5.2 Participants in China

5.2.1 Participant 1: Hui— higher education for the sake of further promotion

Hui represents the type of mature students in university, who have already got professional knowledge in early childhood education and a permanent job in kindergarten but came back to study for a qualification for the sake of future promotion.

5.2.1.1. Personal current life situation

Hui was a 23-year-old young female mature student from University S. Now she was in her second semester of the first year. She worked in kindergarten. She was married but had not got children. Her parents-in-law usually came to her house to help her with housework, which enabled her to have more personal free time.

5.2.1.2. Personal life story and study aspiration

Hui went to college after graduation from high school and studied early childhood education for two reasons: firstly, she did not perform well in the Higher Education Entrance Examination so she did not reach the score needed to be accepted by a university; secondly she liked children and wanted to work as a kindergarten teacher. She started to work in a kindergarten in 2014, directly after she graduated from college. She retook the Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination in October 2014 and studied early childhood education as a mature student.

Since she had a college level qualification in early childhood education, she had already got a permanent job in a kindergarten. The reason she came to university was to get a Bachelor degree and benefit from it for job promotion in the future. It was a requirement of her kindergarten that the teachers should have Bachelor degree or even a higher degree; this was not a rigid obligation, but linked with wage and job promotion. There was no possibility of achieving promotion in her kindergarten with only a college degree. Since Hui was quite young, she said she needed a degree to enable her to have potential promotion and development in the early childhood sector.

Hui had taken the Self-taught Examination during her college study and had passed exams in 5 of the 13 subjects. However, eventually she could not keep on studying and gave up this type of higher education study. In Hui's opinion, among the three common adult higher education study forms (Self-taught Examination, Night University and

Online Distance Learning, see Chapter 2), the Self-taught Examination was valued the most because the students had to study everything all by themselves, without any teaching; the second one was Night University; and Online Distance Learning was valued the least. Therefore the Night University become the relatively achievable and valuable way for Hui to have a Bachelor degree.

5.2.1.3 Impression of studying as a mature student

The distinguishing feature of Hui as a mature student was that she did not spend much effort or pay much attention to her study, which represented the situation of the majority of Chinese mature students in this research. Since she had studied early childhood education at college, she could pass the exams effortlessly and she perceived that she could not learn new knowledge as she felt the teaching content in Night University repeated what she had learnt in college. Therefore, as she said, it seemed that she just came to the lecture mainly for the attendance-check and took the final exam. She did not listen to the teachers most of the time and she did not study in her spare time. She did not care much about her study.

Her evaluation of the current education in university was compared with her previous study experience in college and she had quite a low evaluation of her study experience in university. Compared to the teachers in her college, she felt the teachers in university were not professional, since a big part of the teachers' cohort were current postgraduate students and retired teachers. She had taken many skills related courses in college (such

as piano and dancing courses) which professionalized her to work in kindergarten but she perceived the course taught in university as not useful; more importantly, she perceived the teaching content as quite out-dated. She said most of the things taught in university were the stuff she had learnt in college; therefore she felt she could not learn much that was useful in university. She claimed that she seemed as if she was using her personal spare time to in exchange for a degree, for which she did not expect much, due to the quality of the lessons and teachers. She claimed that she could not use the resources on campus, including the library and Wi-Fi and she was not allowed to participate in university activities, which made her feel quite isolated and excluded.

Hui had a few former classmates who were studying with her in the same university currently, so she did not have a very strong desire to expand her social network in the university. However, she expressed a wish to get information about different kindergartens and to learn about the working experience in kindergartens from her classmates, whom she called a “resource”. When Hui chatted with other classmates who were also kindergarten teachers, she liked to ask how other people did their job and learnt from their experience, aiming to apply it to her own work. Hui perceived her classmates’ working experience was more valuable and useful than what was taught by the teachers in university, and she believed that she benefited more from her classmates’ working experience than from the lectures. She would also ask her friends in other classes for exam information, which would benefit her to pass the exams more easily. She emphasized the importance of the company of her peers, since she felt the lectures were so boring. She said it was quite important to have friends staying together and

chatting with each other, which could make the time in university go quickly and be less tiresome.

5.2.1.4 Researcher's impressions of participant

Even though Hui just went to college rather than university when younger, she did not have any regret. She loved children and her dream was to work with children; therefore she chose to study early childhood education on her own initiative and willingly. She enjoyed working as a kindergarten teacher very much. Besides she had an ambition for her work as well. She loved her job and had a talent for it; also she wanted to perform well in her job and potentially gain promotion in the future.

Since she studied early childhood education in college, she found that the things taught in Night University overlapped with what she had already learnt, so she could not achieve any new knowledge there. The whole point of studying Night University, for her, was getting the qualification. She did not think she was wasting her time listening to the repeated material because what she cared about was the “future job promotion” rather than the study process. Therefore even if she was not satisfied with the teaching and other aspects, she still accepted the education in university without too much complaint.

Hui represents the majority of Chinese mature students studying in the Night University in this research, as most of Hui’s opinions and perceptions of her study experience were expressed by many other mature students in this research. From their perceptions, it

could be seen that the Chinese mature students were in a disadvantaged situation, as they perceived that they could not benefit from either their course or from university life. However, the most significant impression to the researcher is that these Chinese mature students accepted their disadvantaged situation as unchangeable under the wider Chinese educational context. At the same time, they had given up expecting to benefit from the education provided by the university, but turned their focus to learning from each other. They perceived university peers, rather than the lectures or the lecturers, as the main “resource” both for self-improvement and for passing the exams.

5.2.2 Participation 2: Jie— higher education for the sake of gaining a job

Jie represents the type of mature students who want to change their jobs to work in kindergarten, therefore they come for both the professional knowledge and the qualification.

5.2.2.1 Personal current life situation

Jie was a 31-year-old female mature student from University E. Now she was in the second semester of the first year. Jie currently did not have a formal job and was running a small business online, selling clothes. She was married and had a 3-year-old daughter. Jie’s parents-in-law usually came over to take care of the child when she had lectures. Her purpose in coming back to study was to get a Bachelor degree in early childhood education and find a permanent job in a kindergarten. Since the age limit for applying for a permanent position in a kindergarten is 35, according to the regulations in most

public kindergartens in the city where Jie lives, she was really driven and working hard to gain all the qualifications required by kindergartens before the age of 35.

5.2.2.2 Personal life story and study aspiration

Jie finished her study at college level, majoring in administrative management in the year 2006. After her graduation she found a job as administrative staff in a company and she worked in administrative posts in various companies until 2014. She got married in 2008 and gave birth to her daughter in 2012. In 2014 she left her previous job because she thought there would not be any promotion opportunity for her in that company. After she left the administrative job she just took care of her child at home, during which period she got the idea of working in kindergarten for the first time. She took the Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination in the October of 2014. Now she was studying in university for the Bachelor degree in her first year.

Jie came from a rural area on the outskirts of a southern city in China. Jie's father was a sailor and her mum was a farmer, both were educated to middle school level. Her father worked far away from home for the most of the year so he did not have time to pay attention to Jie's study. Besides he did not have any requirement or expectation of her study either. Since her mum did not have much knowledge, she just punished Jie every time her grades did not satisfy her, but she never helped Jie with her study or asked Jie if she was facing any difficulty in her study. In Jie's view, the reason why her mum pushed her to get a good grade or good study performance was that her mum wanted to

protect her dignity when other parents talked to her about children's study. Due to this upbringing, Jie was very rebellious and did not want to follow any advice from her parents. Her mum had asked her to study early childhood education before she took the Higher Education Entrance Examination, but she just rejected anything her mum said. Also, because she came from a rural area, she did not know there was an Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination which could enable her to study in university as a mature student, until she came to an urban area to work. So in her heart she still viewed being a teacher in kindergarten as her dream, since she liked children so much. When she found out she could study in university as a mature student and work in a kindergarten later, she felt that she could make her dream come true. Jie thought she had to study all by herself at this age, rather than going to university after high school, due to the lack of parental education when she was young.

Even though the wage in kindergarten was much less than her previous wage in companies, Jie still had a very strong desire to work in kindergarten. Firstly, working in kindergarten meant she could have more personal time to look after her daughter. Even though the working time in kindergarten started at 7 am, she could finish and go home at 4 pm, which was very convenient for her to pick her daughter up from kindergarten or from primary school in the near future. Secondly, her life would be more secure and stable if she could be a permanent member of staff. Since all the companies she worked for previously were private enterprises, this meant it was possible for her to lose her job suddenly, without warning. She hoped she could be a

permanent member of staff in kindergarten and her wage could be higher if she worked hard and get promotion.

5.2.2.3 Impression of studying as a mature student

When Jie talked about her study experience, she talked a lot about the lack of practical skills in the courses. Since Jie had never studied early childhood education, she really needed the practical skills for teaching in kindergarten, such as playing the piano and drawing, but the university did not offer such courses or training. Since the majority of kindergartens required these skills, it would still be difficult for Jie to find a job in kindergarten even she graduated from the degree courses. The second thing Jie felt dissatisfied with in the study was the lack of useful content in the lectures. She said the teaching content was too theoretical so she could not link it to her practical work and she could not apply what she learnt in her daily work practice. Compared to her classmates who had already studied early childhood education in college, she felt she had to spend more effort on passing the exams and getting qualified. She kept on mentioning how tiring it was to study as a mature student who had no relevant knowledge base. Therefore Jie had to ask her classmates about their working experience, and learn from them about how to work in kindergarten, as well as gain the professional knowledge. Jie said she could not get help from the teachers, so she had to rely on her classmate to learn the things she needed. In her mind, her classmates were the important “resources” for her to realize her goal.

Besides, Jie emphasized that she felt quite inferior to traditional full-time students. Jie perceived herself as the “eliminated one” from the Higher Education Entrance Examination, who could not be educated equally with the traditional full-time students. Furthermore, Jie perceived her degree was valued less in society than the full-time degree, as people perceived full-time higher education as authentic.

5.2.2.4 Researcher's impressions of participant

Jie was very eager and desperate to find a permanent job in kindergarten, and the researcher could feel how anxious she was, since she wanted to get everything done before 35. Since she had never learnt anything related to early childhood education, for example, singing, dancing, drawing and especially playing the piano, she felt it would be very difficult for her to find a job in a kindergarten because all these skills were required as basic skills by most of the kindergartens.

Jie was very hard-working, and probably the most hard-working student among all the interviewees. She spent a long time to prepare before took the Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination and she spent a long time studying nearly every day. Since she had made up her mind to take early childhood education as her life-long career, she studied very hard and concentrated carefully on what the teacher said in class. She had a very strong commitment and aspiration to her study. She had never thought of stopping studying, since studying in the university now meant changing her life for the future.

“Classmates” in the university meant more than pure friends, and were treated as “resources” by Jie. Since she could not learn the skills required by kindergartens from the courses, she had to ask her classmates for help with both knowledge and practical skills. She also wanted her friends who were currently working in kindergarten to help her find a job when she got the degree. Furthermore, she also expected to ask them for help after she started to work in kindergarten as well, since she anticipated that she would meet many problems in the real context. For this reason, she always said that her friends in university were very important to help her in her current and future development. Since she was involved in a group made up of 10 mature students, she thought only one of them could become her real “friend” and perceived other people just as a social network to rely on.

There was a positive influence on her daughter due to her study habit. Every time Jie studied at home, her little girl would take a book and sit beside her. Jie was very happy about this, since her whole purpose in working in kindergarten was to benefit her little girl’s future development. Also, due to her own lack of proper parental education, Jie was determined to try her best to give her daughter a good education and home environment.

Jie represents a group of the Chinese mature students in this research who perceived higher education and the qualification as a tool for them to achieve the job they wanted. Many other people who had a similar study motivation claimed that their peers in university were important “resources” for both their current and future life, so they

showed a strong desire to expand their social networks and collect these “resources”. This kind of strong desire for relying on each other also illustrates the lack of support from the university.

5.3 Summary of the profiles of the two English and two Chinese mature students

These two English and two Chinese mature students were selected for profiling because the life stories of each of them reflect a synergy of different factors contributing to their study experience in higher education as mature students. These factors, such as mature students’ previous academic background, their study aspiration, their perceptions of their institutional practice and their feelings about being mature students on campus were interdependent, mutually-influenced and acted on each of the mature students to construct their study experience and outcome in distinctive ways. Some issues emerge by looking at the two English and two Chinese profiles:

Firstly, all four mature students had job and family commitments, which gave them limited time for their study and made them struggle with their study. As stated by all four mature students in the two countries, they had to rush to their lectures after work, and they had to juggle between work, family and study in order to squeeze time for their study. Their work and family commitments cost them much energy and made them less energetic to study or to do their assignments. In addition, the part-time nature of their study made them feel it was difficult to ask their teachers for help. This problem

was more severe for the Chinese mature students as they perceived the separation between the regular higher education system and the adult higher education system, which made them feel they were not cared about enough by the university.

Secondly, there are both similarities and differences in why these mature students did not study via the traditional route to higher education when they were young. Rebelliousness was mentioned by both English and Chinese mature students, and it was also a theme that appeared prevalently among other English and Chinese mature students. These mature students expressed regret for their rebelliousness during their youth and they had come back to university to study when they realized the significance of higher education at a mature age. There are also difference in why these mature students did not study via the traditional route to higher education at a younger age. As shown by the two English mature students in this section and also shown by many other English mature students in this research, the feeling that “higher education was not the thing for me” was mentioned many times. Since there was no one in their family who had been to university previously, many English mature students’ families showed no expectation for them to go to university, and they did not have that aspiration either. However, for the two Chinese mature students and nearly all the other Chinese mature students in this research, “failing the Higher Education Entrance Examination” was the main reason why they did not go to university via the traditional route after their high school graduation.

Thirdly, there are also similarities and differences regarding mature students' motivation to study in higher education. Both the English and Chinese mature students expressed that higher education was for the sake of a job. Some of them wanted to use their knowledge and qualification to find a job and some of them wanted to use their knowledge and qualification to gain further promotion. However, a difference was that "self-realization" was mentioned by many English mature students, especially older ones, but it was rarely seen among the Chinese mature students, regardless of age.

Fourthly, more similarities and differences could be seen in mature students' higher education study experience in the two countries. Both the English and Chinese mature students felt they could not participate in the university in the same way as their younger counterparts and they felt quite isolated in the university environment. Besides, both the English and Chinese mature students emphasized the importance of their peers in university but the Chinese mature students perceived their peers more like "resources", an idea that appeared in the majority of Chinese mature students' narratives. The two Chinese mature students mentioned the support and help of their extended family (especially parents-in-law) which was also been mentioned by many other Chinese mature students, but support from extended family was rarely mentioned by the English mature students. Regarding the study outcome, the two selected English mature students, as well as many other English mature students in this research, perceived they had achieved self-fulfilment, confidence and competitiveness in the job market. On the contrary, the two selected mature students, as well as most of the other Chinese mature students, perceived themselves as excluded from the regular higher education system.

They feel their degree awarded by the adult higher education system could contribute to their further personal development to a limited extent, but the wider society still valued them academically lower than the traditional students in the regular higher education system, which made them feel not confident or competitive.

The two English and the two Chinese mature students' profiles present a vivid picture which shows how mature students' study experience in higher education varies in different social and educational contexts in the two countries. These four profiles provide a picturesque understanding for readers to comprehend the data in the next chapter.

Chapter 6 The Impact of Institutional Habitus on Mature Students' Study Experience in both England and China: Presentation of Interview Data

In this chapter, the data presented concerns the way in which the institutional habitus influences mature students' study experience through mature students' interaction with the higher education context based on mature students' perceptions. Due to the different higher educational systems in England and China, this chapter presents mature students' perceptions of their study experience in the two countries separately, so section 6.1 provides the data regarding the English mature students' perceptions about their study experience and section 6.2 presents the data regarding how the Chinese mature students perceive their study experience. After presenting the situation in each country, there is a short comparison which illustrates how the institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience in the two countries by presenting the various factors perceived by mature students in a comparative format, which is section 6.3.

This order and structure of data presentation corresponds to the research questions and purpose. To be more specific, there are two main sections in each country's context which answer the first two sub research questions of this study. The first main section in each country's context concerns the influence of institutional habitus on mature students' study experience via the institutional practice based on mature students' perceptions. The second main section in each country's context presents how the

institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience via influencing mature students' habitus based on mature students' perceptions.

The comments from each mature student are followed by a line reference in order to locate the data in each student's background. More specifically, the reference information includes the country they are from, name code, gender, age, marital status and their year of study. The two Chinese universities which the Chinese mature students come from are named E and S; the two English universities that the English mature students come from are named H and Y. Each mature student is given a name code which contains the letter that represents their university and a number. For example, H4 means the fourth interviewee from university H. Therefore, a line reference like "England, H2, female, aged 52, married, Top-up year" means this mature student is an English mature student, from university H, the second interviewee, aged 52, married, and she was in her Top-up year at the moment when she was interviewed.

Based on constructivism, this research holds the position that the institutional habitus is reflected by mature students' perceptions rather than being treated as existing objectively (Reay et al., 2001; Reay, 2004). Mature students' perceptions in this research are treated as the lens of exploring the institutional habitus and how it affects mature students' study experience. The conceptual framework of this study helps and guides the researcher to sort out the complexities in the interview data and shape the discursive interview data in a constructive and systematic way. Based on the conceptual framework, the institutional habitus is defined "as the impact of a cultural group or

social class on an individual's behaviour as it is mediated through an organisation" (Reay, 1998: 521), and the habitus of mature students refers to "a system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practice" (Bourdieu, 1979: vii).

According to the theoretical framework, the influence of institutional habitus on mature students operates in two ways, via institutional practice (Reay, 1998; Thomas, 2002; Tett, 2004; Smyth & Banks, 2012) and via influencing mature students' habitus (Atkinson, 2011; Burke et al., 2013; Weissmann, 2013), which makes it possible to present the data in order to reflect the research aim and argument of this study. The themes which are selected to be presented in the data presentation chapter are based on the principle that the presented themes could answer the research questions and fulfil the research purpose. Furthermore, as a multiple case study, this chapter presents the data in both England and China in a parallel form therefore the data which cannot fulfil the parallel data presentation form will not be selected and presented in this chapter.

6.1 The impact of institutional habitus on mature students' degree study experience in England

This section focuses on how the institutional habitus affects the English mature students' study experience, based on their perceptions in this research. It first presents how the institutional habitus affects English mature students' study experience via institutional practice, based on mature students' perceptions, then illustrates how the institutional

habitus affects mature students' study experience via influencing their habitus. The interview data illustrates that the English mature students in this research have little academic integration and little social integration into the university life; the majority of them perceive that the university fails to involve them enough in university life, academically and socially, and at the same time most of the mature students in this sample do not feel they belong to the university and therefore contain themselves within the society they build up together with other mature students.

6.1.1 The impact of institutional habitus via institutional practice

This section reveals how institutional habitus affects the English mature students' study experience via the institutional practice, based on mature students' perceptions in this research. The data in this section resonates with the principles of institutional habitus theory (see chapter 3.3). As Reay et al. (2001: para.1.2) highlight, institutional habitus is essentially a "rich internalised core from which everyday experiences emanate"; the everyday university life reflects the institutional habitus and affects students' study. Interview data illustrated in this section aims to answer the first sub research question. More specifically, the interview data shows that the institutional practice affects mature students' study experience in two ways. The first one is how the institutional practice affects mature students' academic integration, which is presented in section 6.1.1.1; the second one is how the institutional practice affects mature students' social integration, which is shown in section 6.1.1.2. The interview data illustrates that the English mature students in this research perceive that even though they could benefit from their study

in higher education, various aspects of the institutional practice still contribute more to their unsatisfactory study experience academically and socially.

6.1.1.1 The impact of institutional practice on mature students' academic integration

This section focuses on how mature students perceive the impact of institutional practice on their academic integration. Based on the interview data, the English mature students in this research point out two main factors which affect their academic integration: the pedagogical structure (presented in section 6.1.1.1.1) and the support from teachers (presented in section 6.1.1.1.2). Based on mature students' perceptions in this research, these are the two main factors that have a negative impact on their academic integration and contribute to their disadvantaged study experience.

6.1.1.1.1 Mature students' perception of the pedagogical structure

One significant way in which the habitus operates is the pedagogical structure (McTaggart, 2016; Feldman, 2016). Based on the interview data, the pedagogical structure is perceived as a significant factor that affects mature students' academic integration and study experience. The most prevalent comments on the benefit from their study experience among mature students in this research include the following aspects: mature students could apply what they learn in the university to their work sensoria; they feel they become more intelligent from having their courses; and they feel more confident about themselves in both daily life and in the workplace. Mature

students' positive comments on their study experience could be represented by the narrative below.

I do reflective learning at university and that was introduced to work. And whereas other people (at work) was not really sure of how to do it and how to get ending from it. Whereas I have already done it at university then I was able to explain it to all those and help them do it and it helped me. Because I do it at university and at work so it strengthened that knowledge of it. I feel I am more smart and confident. (England, H3, female, aged 32, single, BA Honours)

Apart from similar benefit mentioned by some mature students, the majority of mature students in this research gave their opinions regarding the unsatisfactory aspects of the pedagogical structure. Regarding mature students' perceptions, three issues in terms of the pedagogical structure were identified as the factors that contribute to their study difficulties and unsatisfactory study experience, which are alternative module arrangement, the perceptions of teaching and tutorial time as being inadequate, and the distinction and gap between the Foundation Degree and BA Honours degree.

First of all, the majority of the English mature students in this research claim that the alternative module arrangement makes their study more difficult and costs more study effort. Mature student H1 explains how this "alternative module arrangement" works and she also gives her opinion about this kind of module arrangement.

Because we only have one lecture a week, it alternates what lecture it is in each week as we do 3 modules a time. Because we only do one lecture a week, one week will be one module, the next week is another module. So that is when it gets confusing. Then when you are working as well because you are trying to do it based on your work, it is harder to link it in to each module. It gets confusing to remember which one it was the previous week. When you are constantly changing the module you are doing every week it is really confusing. (England, H1, female, aged 22, married, second year of Foundation Degree)

Mature student H9 echoes this point by saying:

It was hard because every other week it was a different lecture, because they alternated with different modules and things, so that was quite difficult because you would not get to the other one for a couple of weeks. Because they used to give you, like, 3 assignments at a time and you have got so much work to do, plus working as well, and the dissertation as well as them, it is just it was a lot. It was hard. (England, H9, female, aged 26, single, Top-up year)

This problem does not just happen in one university, the mature students from the other university also point out how difficult their study is because of this kind of module

arrangement. Mature student Y3 gives her comparison between the arrangement of their modules and the arrangement of the traditional young students' module in order to point out how this module arrangement makes mature students' study harder.

But for us we come on a Thursday and we have three lectures back to back. Then for me personally I go away from those, work on a Friday, have to do all my university work on the weekend because I work Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday before I come to university on a Thursday. Whereas I know some of the younger ones have the three lectures spread out across the week which means that they can then prepare and then finish their work afterwards. (England, Y3, female, aged 30, single, Top-up year)

Mature student Y4 also points out the difficulty of doing three modules in one go, since the module in the Top-up year is more academic already.

The Bachelor's degree is more academic. I think for someone who is working full time it is hard to do your work and three modules all in one go and to get them all done. (England, Y4, female, aged 28, single, Top-up year)

The interviews above illustrate the first issue which affects mature students' study experience based on their perceptions in this research. Since mature students just have lectures once a week, plus they work full-time during the week. This type of alternative

module arrangement really imposes more difficulties on them and makes them confused with the content of each module.

The second issue perceived by mature students in this research as influencing their study is the inadequate teaching and tutorial time. A large number of mature students in this research perceive that their teaching and tutorial time is not enough and they feel they could learn better if they had more teaching and tutorials. Mature student H8 gives her comments about the teaching time as follows:

I do not think we get enough teaching time, but at the same time, that is understandable because we are at work, but I feel like because we only go to university one day a week, I just think it is condensed into one lecture. I do not think we get enough what we need. (England, H8, female, aged 24, married, second year of Foundation Degree)

Mature student H8 announces that she does not think that she is offered enough of what she needs by the university. There are quite a few mature students in this research who also point out that they do not think they get enough teaching and guidance from their modules. Many other mature students announce that it is really not enough for them to have a potential study result by just having one lecture a week. Apart from the inadequate teaching time, mature students H10 and Y4 give their comments on the lack of tutorials.

They do not tend to do that [tutorials] at university – you do your lecture, then you go. We do not really have any one-to-one or anything like that. We do not really have any group tutorials when you get to sit down with your lecturer to discuss things. We are only there one evening a week though. (England, H10, female, aged 22, married, second year of Foundation Degree)

Mature student H10 claims that she not only does not have either one-to-one tutorials or group tutorials; what mature students have is only one lecture a week. From her comment it is possible to see she is not satisfied with this lack of tutorials and only one lecture per week, which is all she can get from the university academically. Mature student Y4 gives her comments on the lack of tutorials, which reveals the significance of the tutorials to her.

I think tutorials are good. I mean they help me. I do not have that many because it is hard to get in for the tutorials. But they are good in a way like XXX (teacher's name), I messaged him last week and there were not any tutorials left that he had booked but he has fitted me in. Some are informative, some teachers are not as informative. (England, Y4, female, aged 28, single, Top-up year)

Mature student Y4 states both the helpfulness of the tutorial to her and the difficulties of having tutorials. The perception from mature student Y4 also reveals that it would

be easy to get tutorials from some teachers than others. It seems to be frustrating and disappointing for mature students, as they do need tutorials but it is hard to get them.

The third issue argued by mature students which affects their study is the format of their study programme. As stated in Chapter 2 which is the contextual literature review, the mature students in this research take their Foundation Degree programme first then continue to do their Top-up course to get the Bachelor degree. This format of their study process, as the combination of two degree programmes, makes their study more difficult especially in the Top-up year. The interviews from mature students Y3 and Y4 explain how the combination form of study makes her study more difficult.

The thing that I think is unfair about here is that the younger students, the marks on all their assignments for year two and year three is what deems their classification whereas ours has solely gone on this year (the Top-up year). So the pressure is on us more to get the percentages and get the classification of your degree. So if I do really badly on one, that will lower my whole first to a two-one. Whereas some of the younger students may be able to have a wobble on one, because if they have done really well last year their average is better. Because we did a Foundation Degree, only our scores from this year count. Which is hard. (England, Y3, female, aged 30, single, Top-up year)

Mature student Y4 echoes this point by saying:

The Foundation Degree is done and finished. Whatever points and credits you have got from that do not count towards your Bachelor. It is like starting again. So in a way we have kind of got to do more to bump up our points to get the Honours. I think it is quite hard to do it in one year when you are a mature student and working and have a family life. It is a lot. (England, Y4, female, aged 28, single, Top-up year)

As mature students Y3 and Y4 state, since the Foundation Degree and the Honours degree are two distinct programmes, they perceive that they have only one year to complete their study at Bachelor level compared to the young traditional students, who have three years to do that. The majority of the mature students in this research perceive that it is very stressful and demanding to complete the study towards the Bachelor degree just in one year, as they need to get credits in each module in order to have a good classification in the Honours degree.

Apart from the stress and pressure caused by the distinction between the two programmes, most of the mature students also point out that there is an academic gap between the two separate programmes. Mature students in this research perceive that the focuses and academic requirements in the two programmes are different, and there is a lack of transition between the two programmes, which makes them struggle with

the more academic-oriented teaching in the Top-up year. Mature student Y3 gives her opinions regarding this issue as follows:

I think sometimes like this year (Top-up year) it is harder compared to how work-based the Foundation Degree was. The group of us that sits in our classes sometimes struggle with the academic terminology whereas the younger students understand it because they have been taught that in years previously and we have not. (England, Y3, female, aged 30, single, Top-up year)

Most of the mature students in this research perceive that there is no transition or transitional progress between the two separate courses, which makes the mature students find it quite difficult to adjust to the teaching and digest the theories at the beginning of the Top-up year. In addition, they perceive that they have not gained specific guidance from the teachers or university about how to transfer to the Bachelor degree study or how to deal with the academic-oriented workload in the Top-up year. They have to rely on themselves and learn from their own experience. The interview below from mature student Y7 addresses this problem.

I think it was difficult getting the hang of at first how to do the assignments and how to set it out the structure of it. I think that what I did find difficult. I think as times gone on you learn from your first one so by my forth one I got a really good quite good marks so you

learn from each model of what you think you could do better on. That is how you progress. I did find the work hard and I did find the theory behind it I could not quite get my head around it. I think I have just had to read more and that is what I do. (England, Y7, female, aged 50, married, first year of Foundation Degree)

Based on mature students' own words in this research, the alternative module arrangement, the inadequate teaching and tutorial time and the gap between the Foundation Degree and the Honours degree are three unsatisfactory aspects in terms of the pedagogical structure. These three aspects make mature students feel that the study is not organised reasonably by the university, which makes the study difficult to manage. Besides, they think they have not received enough support and guidance from the university. As a result, in their minds, they perceive themselves as in a disadvantaged situation compared to their younger counterparts in the university context, in terms of the pedagogical structure of their degree programmes. In addition to the pedagogical structure, mature students in this research also perceive that the insufficient support from their teachers also makes their study difficultly, which is presented in the following section.

6.1.1.1.2 Mature students' perception of the support from staff

In regard to the teachers, the English mature students in this research point out two issues that they perceive as affecting their study, which are the teachers' teaching

attitude and their willingness to help. Many current research studies also highlight that the teachers' teaching attitude and their willingness to help are ways in which the institutional habitus has significant impact on mature students' study experience (Thomas, 2002; McTaggart, 2016; Weissmann, 2013; Heagney & Benson, 2017). The majority of the mature students in this research feel that there are some teachers who lack an appropriate teaching attitude, which results in affecting their study interests and the amount of knowledge that they can obtain from lectures. Based on mature students' perceptions, teachers' lack of willingness to help not only drives mature students to struggle with their study when they have problems, but also makes the mature students feel they are not valued by the teachers.

In terms of the teachers' teaching attitude, the majority of mature students from the two universities in this research claim that there are some teachers who just read the content on PowerPoint rather than giving an explicit explanation of what the lecture is about. Also, some teachers do not organise time for discussion and asking questions, which means mature students' questions cannot be answered in the class. The interviews below illustrate mature students' opinions regarding their teachers' teaching attitude.

Some of them just read off PowerPoints and they will not expand so like so if you do not understand something and you tell them they will be like, "It is on the PowerPoint." So I just have not felt that they have been very good to be honest. Probably they prepared the PowerPoint but they were not prepared to go off on any tangents to

explain, they just stuck to the PowerPoint and that was it. So a lot of us did not find them very useful to be honest. (England, Y6, female, aged 22, single, Top-up year)

Similar to mature student Y6, many other English mature students in this research also feel it is quite disappointing to be told “it is on the PowerPoint” when they ask their teachers questions. They perceive that this kind of teaching attitude cannot help with solving problems but makes them more confused instead. The interview from mature student H2 below shows how confused she feels when the teachers do not give clear explanation or explicit guidance.

It depends on who it is, like certain lecturers will give you more details than others. Which is understandable as some people write down what they [teachers] say word for word and they put it in the assignment then they will know that they said that. But, no, they tend to hold back sometimes and they think that they are helping you think for yourself but it does not, it confuses you more. (England, H2, female, aged 52, married, Top-up year)

As illustrated in the interviews, the majority of the English mature students in this research perceive that teachers’ teaching attitude makes them more confused and causes them to struggle with their study. In addition to the teachers’ teaching attitude, the

mature students also claim that some teachers' lack of willingness to help also affects their study, which is shown in the interview below.

No actually [not all of the teachers are willing to help]. It depends. Some are, some are not. The course director does not respond to messages very well. She does not reply. But some of the lecturers are very supportive. They will print out assignment guidelines with what you should include but the others will just say, "Read your module handbook". (England, H10, female, aged 22, married, second year of Foundation Degree)

As mature student H5 states, some teachers are not inclined to offer help. Students perceive that comments such as "It is on the PowerPoint" and "Read your module handbook" are both frustrating and disappointing. Teachers' lack of willingness to help drives mature students to rely on each other and get guidance from each other, which is revealed in the following interview.

Some of them I think are not so great. A couple of the lecturers I feel are very regimented in their ways, so they are not open to flexibility or adaptations – you do it this way, you do it this way, and I do not like that. I would rather ask my friends for help rather than the teachers. (England, H7, male, aged 23, single, Top-up year)

The interviews above present mature students' perceptions regarding their teachers' teaching attitude and their willingness to help. As illustrated in interviews, mature students in this research feel they do not get enough guidance or support from their teachers therefore they turn to their classmates and friends for help. The mature students' disadvantaged situation in this research could be seen to a certain extent from this perspective. In a later section (6.1.1.2.2), how mature students rely on each other and support each other will be presented in more detail, after this section reveals how the teachers' lack of a responsible teaching attitude and willingness to help make it difficult for mature students to get support from their teachers.

6.1.1.1.3 A brief summary

Section 6.1.1 is about how the institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience in terms of their academic integration (Thomas, 2002; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011; Smyth & Banks, 2012). Two aspects are pointed out by the mature students as factors that influence their study experience based on mature students' own words, which are the pedagogical structure and the support from teachers. As perceived by the majority of mature students in this research, the alternative module arrangement, the inadequate teaching and tutorial time, and the gap between distinct Foundation Degree and Honours degree are three aspects which put their study in a disadvantaged situation.

Apart from that, there are some teachers perceived by the majority of mature students in this research as not having a responsible teaching attitude and lacking willingness to help, and this makes mature students feel more confused with their study and find it difficult to ask their teachers for help. As a result, the majority of mature students do not ask their teachers for help and turn to their friends. Teachers' lack of a responsible teaching attitude and willingness to help not only cause study problems to mature students, but also have further impact on mature students' relationship with the teachers, their perception of being mature students in university and their sense of belonging to the university, which will be presented in later sections. Based on mature students' perceptions in this research, most of the mature students feel the pedagogical structure and the teachers' lack of support, which are aspects of the institutional practice generated by institutional habitus (Weissmann, 2013; Feldman, 2016 Heagney & Benson, 2017), contribute to their study difficulties and disadvantaged situation.

6.1.1.2 The impact of institutional habitus on mature students' social integration

Higher education can be defined as a "field", in which there is a struggle for position. Thus mature students not only need a learning environment that is inclusive and accepting of difference, but they need similar social relations (Thomas, 2002; Weissmann, 2013). Based on the interview data, the study experience in higher education of the English mature students in this research refers to two aspects, their academic integration, which was presented in the previous section, and their social integration, which is illustrated in this section. According to mature students' own

words in this research, their opinions about their social integration in higher education are about three aspects: how they perceive the university fails to involve them in university life (presented in section 6.1.1.2.1), how they perceive their relationship with the teachers (presented in section 6.1.1.2.2) and how they get support from their peers (presented in section 6.1.1.2.3). The main opinion among the majority of the English mature students in this research is that the university fails to involve them in university life and they are not known much by the teachers; therefore they turn to rely on and support each other.

6.1.1.2.1 The university fails to involve mature students socially

Many mature students in this research announce that they do not have much social integration into university life and they perceive that one of the reasons for this situation is that the university does not do much to involve them in university life. The first aspect the mature students point out is that there is almost nothing available for them to participate in when they are on campus. The interviews below show how mature students perceive this issue.

No, I have done no social activities. Because we are on a night we do not hear much of the societies or activities. (England, H1, female, aged 22, married, second year of Foundation Degree)

Mature student H10 echoes this argument by saying:

Because the Foundation Degree is based for people who are working, and do not have time during the day to attend, so I think that a lot of the students studying in the evening would go to evening workshops, but there is none available to go to. I am paying a lot of money and I am not using the whole, because there is workshops I could go to, but they are all in the daytime and I cannot go during the day. (England, H10, female, aged 22, married, second year of Foundation Degree)

Marandet and Wainwright (2009) claim that the mature students feel excluded from the university because of the lack of provision that acknowledges their needs and the lack of matching between the timetable constructed by the university and their own timetable. From the interviews above, it is possible to see that the activities including academic activities and social events on campus are all scheduled based on traditional students' timetable, which makes them unavailable for mature students. In addition, during the time when mature students are on campus, academic and social activities that the mature students would like to participate in are not provided. The interview from mature student H7 vividly shows how mature students perceive the university when they are on campus.

In the winter, we are never in university in daylight. We are only ever at university at night time. So it is a completely different feeling – it is quiet, there is not really any students around, whereas during the

day, I know it is packed – there are students everywhere you look.

(England, H7, male, aged 23, single, Top-up year)

According to the words from mature student H7, the campus seen by mature students is quite different from that seen by their younger counterparts. The majority of time when mature students come to university is during the night and the campus is quiet, with not many people. This timetable separates mature students and normal university daily activities and makes mature students a distinct group who feel it is difficult to have integration into the normal university life. Apart from the timetable, many mature students still perceive that the university has not done enough to involve them in university life, which could be seen from the interview below.

Quite often they (referring people on campus) hand out leaflets, and if I have my little boy with me they do not hand me one because they look at me and they think, “No, she is not going to come” so I do not think there is a lot of effort to get mature students involved. We did not get anything about the activities. (England, H8, female, aged 24, married, second year of Foundation Degree)

As claimed by mature student H8, the university has not made much effort to involve mature students in university life. Based on the argument from mature student H8, it is possible to see that the university, including teachers and traditional students, has an assumption that the mature students have no interest or need to participate in university

life. This assumption may drive the university not to provide activities for mature students specifically, and the university may also feel it is not necessary to involve mature students in activities.

Because of both mature students' timetable and the lack of effort spent by the university to involve mature students in university life, the majority of mature students feel that they just "come and go", which is shown by the interview below.

I think because we are not here all the time around the campus we are less likely to get involved in it. But because the people on my course and I only come in once a week, we just go to the lessons and then go home. We do not really have any social life around here. Sometimes we go to the Student Union bar to get a drink during break and then we go back to classes so we do not really feel like a student as such. It is more like just come and go. (England, Y2, female, aged 24, single, Top-up year)

Based on the interview above, the majority of mature students in this research perceive that the university contributes to their lack of integration into university life academically and socially. The institutional habitus makes it difficult for mature students to participate in either academic or social activities on campus in terms of the activity timetable and purpose (Tett, 2004; Laird & Cruce, 2009; Heagney & Benson, 2017). This lack of integration into university life has it further impact on mature

students' perception of being mature students on campus and their sense of belonging to the university, which will be illustrated in more detail in a later section.

6.1.1.2.2 Mature students' perception of the relationship with teachers

Another aspect mentioned by mature students in this research when they talk about their integration into university life is their perceptions about their relationship with their teachers. Many of the mature students perceive that they are not known by a certain number of teachers in university, which is shown in the following interviews.

When I started my BA Honours degree this year, I struggled at the beginning a lot with the heightened work and everything. And I think because the tutors did not know me and did not know how anxious I was, they were not able to help me. And they almost made me feel worse about myself without meaning to, but they did. (England, Y3, female, aged 30, single, Top-up year)

The perception of mature student Y3 reveals that being known by the teachers is quite significant for mature students. Mature student Y4 also expresses a similar opinion by saying:

I do not actually know whether they really know you. I do not think they get enough time to, when you are only here one day a week. I think it is important to be known by the teachers, because with that I

think they do not always realise and they forget that you are a mature student and that you work at the same time. I think that is what they forget as in they still expect you to do the same as what any other student does. (England, Y4, female, aged 28, single, Top-up year)

Apart from mature student Y3 and Y4, many other mature students in this research also feel that they are not known by the teachers, and many mature students feel that, because of this, they have more study difficulties. Many other mature students also give their opinions about the significance of being known by the teachers, as shown below.

It is definitely important that the teachers know me, that there is a relationship there. I think it helps to provide a better understanding of each other and how each other works. I think it is really important. Relationships is the main thing. I think it would help a lot more, because, when I am struggling trying to work, when I feel like there is some lecturer I cannot contact because they kind of will not respond to you, whereas others that you get to talk to, you feel like you can contact them. You have got support there. (England, H1, female, aged 22, married, second year of Foundation Degree)

Mature student H1 emphasizes the importance of being known by the teachers by repeating “importance” twice; many other mature students also have the same perception, such as mature student Y2:

I think it is important to build a relationship with the teachers, because you have a bit more of a connection if that is the case. So I think when you do establish a relationship it becomes easier and you are more likely to learn better because you understand them.

(England, Y2, female, aged 24, single, Top-up year)

Mature student H9 argues that being known by the teachers shows the care from the teachers, saying:

I think it is important to be known by the teachers. If you are not it can give you – it could make you think, “They do not really care”. I think it is important for them to know who everyone is. (England, H9, female, aged 26, single, Top-up year)

The majority of mature students in this research perceive that being known by the teachers is quite significant. Being known by the teachers means the teachers could be aware of mature students’ study and life circumstances; therefore the teachers could offer appropriate help and support. Even though the majority of mature students in this research perceive that having a good relationship with the teachers is quite significant, a lot of them perceive that they are not known by the teachers, let alone constructing a good relationship. To a certain extent, being not known by the teachers and having a weak relationship with teachers contributes to mature students’ disadvantaged situation in university (Weissmann, 2013; Morrison, 2009; O’Boyle, 2015).

The next section presents how mature students in this research perceive their peer support in the circumstance that they cannot participate much in the university life and many of them are not known by the teachers.

6.1.1.2.3 Mature students' perception of peer support

Many research studies have claimed the significance of peer support for mature students' study in higher education, which is an important way that how institutional habitus operates (Thomas, 2002; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011; Burke et al., 2013). When mature students in this study talk about their study experience in higher education, they emphasize the significance of their peer from whom they get not only academic guidance, but also company, understanding and encouragement. Many English mature students in this research claim that peer support is significant for them to complete the study, and many mature students announce that it is their peers who stop them from dropping out.

In terms of the academic guidance, the majority of English mature students in this research state that their peers not only help them in understanding the teaching content, but also guide them to do the assignments. The interviews below illustrate mature students' perceptions in this research.

I think we all just spur each other on and kind of help each other. And if you do not understand what the lecturer is saying somebody else can kind of digest it and speak to you how we normally speak to each

other. And I think that is really important, that you have that rapport with the other student classmates. (England, Y1, female, aged 38, married, Top-up year)

Similar to mature student Y1, mature student Y5 says:

It like not just learning from your tutor but it learning from one another and other people's experiences, and sharing ideas and practical advice you know what works for them and you know good ways of working. So it is not just a matter of [reading a] book or [learning] from your tutor but from people gaining on the course through this with you this journey. (England, Y5, female, aged 42, married, foundation year)

The interviews above reveal that the tutors are not the only people the English mature students in this research could learn from. Their peers' opinions, ideas and experiences could all benefit them and help them to understand better what is taught in the modules. Apart from these two mature students, many other mature students in this research also claim that the academic guidance from their peers is important because sometimes it is difficult to ask the teachers to help, which was shown in the previous section (6.1.1.2), so they could have a better understanding about the things in lectures that they are confused about from their peers. In addition to the academic support given by their

peers, mature students also point out the significance of having company and sympathy from their peers.

Regarding the importance of having the company of peers, the mature students in this research express the following perceptions:

Having friends around you like it is all part of the like being at university I think. It is important that there is a group of you that can talk and close because it is not just helping you through university, so it is having those strong bonds I think that is quite important. (England, H1, female, aged 22, married, second year of Foundation Degree)

Echoing what mature student H1 says, mature student H9 emphasizes the importance of the sympathy and company of her peers.

Everything, because they know exactly what you are going through. I did mine with XXX, and XXX (names mentioned) who works here but she is off, so it was nice for them to know exactly you are working and you are doing the study and they do know exactly what you are going through, they know exactly what feelings you have towards stuff, they have just got that overall understanding of everything, so it is nice to have them. (England, H9, female, aged 26, single, Top-up year)

Encouragement, which is mentioned by nearly every mature student in this research, is perceived as another significant contribution by their peers. The majority of mature students in this research claim that they have often felt unable to carry on their study and it is their peers who encouraged them to fight together and conquer the difficulties together. The following interviews illustrate how important the encouragement of their peers is for mature students in this research.

Everything, absolutely everything. XXX (name mentioned) herself would, they just know absolutely everything, what you are going through, so they can give you the emotional support, the physical, they can pick you up when you are at your lowest, "Come on, get up, let us get on". They can help you with the academic side and they can give you everything. (England, H9, female, aged 26, single, Top-up year)

Mature student Y1 describes a very vivid experience which shows how at one time she thought she could not finish and how her peers encouraged her to carry on:

When I first started the BA. One of the lecturers went off sick, so it was really difficult. We had different lecturers coming in, we missed a couple, and for me, I got to start writing my assignment and I thought "Oh my goodness, what am I writing?" We did not have a clue what we were doing. And I thought "Do you know what? Do I

really need to be here? Can I really do this?” And then we all got together, my social group here and said “We can do this.” We kind of all just spurred each other on and just did it really. That was a low point really with the lecturer going off sick. It was not very good but we have got through it and we all passed it. (England, Y1, female, aged 38, married, Top-up year)

In addition to the majority of the mature students in this research pointing out the significance of being encouraged by peers, many of them also claim that peer support decreases the likelihood of dropping out, and some mature students announce that peer support did actually stop them from dropping out when they had nearly made the decision to do so. The interview below illustrates how peer support contributes to decrease the risk of dropping out.

So I think there would have been a higher likelihood of me dropping out if I did not have my close friends with me, because we all pushed each other, and we all competed against each other. In assignments, we would all fight the higher mark, or we would all just pushed each other. We would go to the library together, or we would stick together in lectures, or during group tasks we would group together. So, I think I would have struggled without them. (England, H7, male, aged 23, single, Top-up year)

Mature student H1 is one of the mature students who actually wanted to drop out in this research. Mature student H1 uses her experience to show how her peers helped her to carry on her study.

I very nearly wanted to drop out, like, I messaged my friend, like, “That is it, I am giving in, I am not doing it anymore.” And she was like, “No, we can do it, we can preserve.” And I did, I passed. We tend to try and help each other. Like if we are struggling, we will try. It tends to be that we’ll all struggle on different things so we will all try to help each other on things. Like one person is better at one thing than another, so we will try and help each other like that. (England, H1, female, aged 22, married, second year of Foundation Degree)

As revealed in the interviews above, the mature students in this research encourage each other and support each them to overcome the difficulties and carry on their study. As revealed in mature students’ own words, they fight together as a group and rely on each other academically and mentally. As shown in the previous sections, mature students in this research feel it is not easy for them to build a good relationship with their teachers or get enough support from their teachers, so that peer support become more important to them.

6.1.1.2.4 A brief summary

This section is about how mature students in this research perceive their social integration into university life. Three aspects have been mentioned by the mature students, which are their perceptions about how the university involves them in university life, their relationship with their teachers and peer support.

Based on previous research studies (Thomas, 2002; Smyth & Banks, 2012; Burke et al., 2013; Heagney & Benson, 2017), the institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience from both academic and social perspectives, which influences mature students' academic and social integration in higher education. Regarding their perceptions about how the university involves them in university life, the majority of mature students in this research perceive that the university has not done enough to involve them in university life. Based on mature students' experience and perceptions, not only has the university not provided activities suitable to their timetable on campus to participate in; but also the university assumes that they do not have an interest or need to participate in university life. In terms of the relationship with teachers, most mature students in this research perceive that it is difficult to build a good relationship with teachers because they perceive that they are not known by many teachers, even though most mature students in this research perceive that it is important to have a good relationship with the teachers.

According to the perceptions expressed in this research, peer support is significant for them, as a source of not only academic guidance but also moral support, which maintains them in university. Many mature students in this research claim that the encouragement of their peers is important for their continuation in study, especially those who have actually considered dropping out.

6.1.2 The impact of institutional habitus via affecting mature students' habitus

This section is about how the institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience via influencing mature students' habitus. The interview data illustrated in this section aims to answer the second sub research question. The data in this section resonates with the principles of institutional habitus theory (see section 3.4). Bourdieu defines habitus as “a system of durable, transposable dispositions which functions as the generative basis of structured, objectively unified practices” (Bourdieu, 1979: vii). As claimed by Reay (1998), the institutional habitus operates in two ways, via the institutional practice and via affecting students' habitus. Burke's research illustrates how the institutional habitus affects students' habitus. His research claims that the institutional habitus can directly shape individuals' habitus as well as their behaviour, which illustrates that within a specified field the institutional habitus and students' habitus could interact with each other and students' study would be affected by both of them (Burke et al., 2013). Atkinson (2011) claims that once students enter universities they encounter every aspect of the institutional habitus then they generate a degree of match—clash, harmonisation, adaptation, resistance as well as a whole array of

emotions (e.g. anxiety), practices (e.g. setting extra homework) and interactions (e.g. making demands of teachers).

More specifically, three themes according to mature students' own words are presented: mature students' perception of being mature students on campus (section 6.1.2.1), their sense of belonging (section 6.1.2.2), and their expectations of university life (section 6.1.2.3). The interview data illustrates that the majority of English mature students in this research perceive that the university atmosphere and university life are still alien to them so they exclude themselves from university life and contain themselves within the social group that they build up with their peers. The interview data below illustrates participants' perceptions regarding these three aspects under the influence of the institutional habitus.

6.1.2.1 Mature students' perception of being mature students in university

This section presents how mature students perceive the experience of being mature students in university. The range of age among the English mature students in this research is from the early twenties to late fifties. Many younger mature students, especially those in their twenties to thirties do not feel they are "mature", even though they know their programme focuses on mature students so they do not have a particular feeling of being "mature students" on campus. However, the majority of mature students from the forties to fifties claim that they feel they are old and should not be

present in university. The interviews below illustrate these mature students' perceptions regarding being mature students on campus.

I always thought I was too old. I always thought no, that is for youngsters. Occasionally, when I am trying to write an essay, and looking at things like “no I cannot do this”. Occasionally, I will look at some of the students and think you are the same age as my children. I had not studied for a good, well twenty odd years, and it was scary to think that I am doing this and I am old. And will people laugh at me, will people look at me as if “you should not be here”? I think that was mainly because I would feel awkward walking into a class of younger people who I do not know. (England, H5, female, aged 44, married, Top-up year)

Mature student Y5 who is in her early forties also has the feeling that she “shouldn't really be here”, saying:

I think there does not seem to be many older people here so I do feel strange when I go like into cafeteria on my own or into library on my own so I do feel a bit I should not really be here sort of in a way. I am not a very confident person so it is barriers. (England, Y5, female, aged 42, married, foundation year)

Many other mature students mention that it is awkward or not comfortable to stay with the younger students, but mature student Y7 uses “intimidating” to show how she feels on campus, which is shown in the following interview.

Sometimes when I stay with the younger ones, you know cause you are an adult and like maybe you think ooh what are you doing here back at university? I just go I just do my work and go to the library you know. You just want to be treated like everybody else, do not you? It a bit intimidating sometimes. (England, Y7, female, aged 50, married, first year of Foundation Degree)

Apart from feeling too old, many mature students in this research also feel that other people cannot understand their difficulties and efforts. For example, mature student H9 expresses her opinion by saying:

I think they (refers to students and teachers in university) still do involve you in everything. Sometimes I think people look at it like you are not really doing it, but they do not realize how hard it is when you are working. They think, “She is not really at university, she is only there one day a week” but then the amount of work you do is the equivalent of doing full time because you have got three assignments on at a time, semi-dissertation towards the end. (England, H9, female, aged 26, single, Top-up year)

The perceptions above reveal that some English mature students in this research feel uncomfortable being with younger students on campus and they tend to question whether they should really be here. Some mature students perceive that people still have wrong perceptions towards them, as people tend to assume that it is easy to study as a mature student. How the mature students in this research feel about being mature students on campus reveals that they feel there are still perceptions among people that mature students are not the right people to be present in the university scenario and their study is quite easy (Atkinson, 2011; Reay, 2004).

6.1.2.2 Mature students' perception of their sense of belonging

Thomas (2002) points out that mature students' higher education experience is the interaction between institutional habitus and their own habitus. More specifically, whether the institutional habitus is compatible with mature students' habitus or not would make the mature students feel "fish in water" or "fish out of water", which is also described by Reay (2015) as "a feel for the game". Reay (2003) underscores that it is higher education's inability to deal with diversity and differences, which makes mature students feel they do not fit in; hence, they feel that they lack of a sense of belonging to the university. When mature students in this study talk about their study experience in university, the majority of them do not think they have much sense of belonging to the university. They claim they do not participate in university life as they have quite limited time on campus. The interviews below shows how mature students perceive their sense of belonging.

I think it is difficult for mature students to involve into university life.

I am not part of any club or anything, so I do not really know anything else about the university. Sometimes I thought, “You know what? I do not care about that lifestyle – I would rather focus on my career and my qualification”. Back then, I did feel a little bit isolated.

(England, H7, male, aged 23, single, Top-up year)

Mature student H5 and many other mature students in this research have the same feeling, which could be seen from the interview below:

I do not feel much I belong to the university because I only come on an evening for my classes. I do not have anything to do with the university during the day. So I feel like I am part of my course, I do not necessarily feel like I am part of the whole campus. (England, H5, female, aged 44, married, Top-up year)

Mature student Y7 also echoes this opinion by saying:

I do not (have sense of belonging) maybe because you only come once a week. I think if you were here every day you would do. I think I do not feel like a student, I only feel like I am doing a course. (England, Y7, female, aged 50, married, first year of Foundation Degree)

The interviews above reveal that the English mature students in this research do not have much sense of belonging to the university, and many other mature students feel the same. Their explanation of their lack of sense of belonging is that they have limited time on campus and they do not participate in university life apart from their modules. As illustrated in section 6.1.1, the institutional habitus of the university contributes to mature students' insufficient integration into university life academically and socially, via the institutional practice. As mature students in this research say, since they do not have much involvement in the university life, they do not feel they belong to the university much. As Tett (2004) claims, since the institutional habitus is shaped by the traditional students regarding attitude, practice and institutional structures, the non-dominant group of students feel the university is alien to them and they class themselves as "others", which then makes them feel they do not belong to the university. The atmosphere and various aspects of the university life—as the externalization of the institutional habitus—makes the mature students feel isolated and excluded, which affects their desire to have academic and social integration into university life, and also drives them to exclude themselves from university life (Lehmann, 2012; Mallman and Lee, 2017).

As this section is about how the institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience via influencing mature students' habitus, the next section is going to present mature students' expectation of participation the university life.

6.1.2.3 Mature students' expectation of social life in university

This section presents mature students' expectation and perception of involvement in university life. As illustrated in section 6.1.1, the institutional habitus of the university contributes to mature students' insufficient integration into university life academically and socially via the institutional practice. However, as illustrated in the theoretical framework in this research, the institutional habitus affects mature students' not only via the institutional practice but also via influencing mature students' habitus (Reay, 1998; Thomas, 2002). Many research studies have demonstrated that the institutional habitus affects mature students' expectation of university life; hence, it affects mature students' study experience and outcome (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011; Dumais, 2002; Burton et al., 2011; Heagney & Benson, 2017). How mature students think about participating in activities on campus in this research is significant. The interviews below demonstrate that the majority of mature students in this research have little interest in or expectation of social involvement on campus. The mature student H10 express her perception by saying:

I do not experience the full use of the university, I still do not know my way round. Even though I am young, I feel too old for that. I am quite settled down, so I do not feel I need to experience the full university life. I am really busy anyway. I am not bothered about the university life. I just use what I need. (England, H10, female, aged 22, married, second year of Foundation Degree)

Apart from mature student, H10, many other mature students in this research also claim that they do not care much about being involved in university life, such as mature student H7:

I am not bothered about the university lifestyle. I want to gain experience, knowledge, background and a degree, and so far, I have achieved three out of those four. (England, H7, male, aged 23, single, Top-up year)

Many other mature students in this research claim that they not only do not have much interest in involvement in university life, but also they do not have much need of university life. The mature student H5 expresses her perception by saying:

I do not need the university life type of thing. I need the qualification; I need the education. I think it may be important for the younger students because a lot of them are a long way from home and you need that extended family and friendship. Whereas my home is here, my family are here and my friends who I am on the course with, some of them I actually work with, so I have got that anyway, outside of the university. (England, H5, female, aged 44, married, Top-up year)

The perception of mature student H5 illustrates two main reasons why mature students do not expect much involvement in university life. The first one is that their main goal of participating in higher education is to obtain the degree and education; the second

reason is that they already have their own social network outside the university, so they do not have a strong requirement to build a social network on campus, as their younger counterparts do. Many mature students in this research claim that instead of getting involved with other students in university, they prefer to stay with their peers who are in the same situation as themselves. The mature student H8 gives her opinion by saying:

I do not think I need it (university life). I think as well because I have had children, I am more mature than a normal 24 year old will be, so I do not think I would have a lot in common with a younger student who had no responsibilities, whereas on my course, there are people with children, there are people my age that have more in common with me. (England, H8, female, aged 24, married, second year of Foundation Degree)

Mature student Y3 echoes this perception:

I think because I live here and I am from around here, I do not need to build up social networks do not you. I do not need that because I have that already around me in XXX (name of a place mentioned). And in terms of my course that I am doing, the people that I have met on the course, we communicate outside of university anyway to help each other so we have kind of created our own little society. (England, Y3, female, aged 30, single, Top-up year)

The perceptions of participants in this research reveal that mature students do not have much interest in or expectation of university life, since many of them claim that their priority in study is the education and degree. Apart from this main goal, the majority of mature students in this research also perceive that the university life does not fit them as mature students, since they perceive those activities are particularly for younger students. In contrast, they prefer to stay with their peers who have more in common with themselves. As a result, mature students exclude and isolate themselves from the traditional university life, which they perceive as not fitting them and build up their own society to support each other. Weissmann (2013) points out this interaction between institutional habitus and non-dominant students' habitus from another perspective, that the practices generated by the institutional habitus reinforce the non-dominant groups of students to reproduce their habitus, as they feel are not supposed or welcome to be involved in the academic and social life of the dominant group of students. The mature students' self-exclusion reveals that the institutional habitus affects mature students' habitus and makes them feel they do not fit in, so they have less expectation on participating in university life.

6.1.2.4 A brief summary

This section presents how the institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience via influencing their habitus in three ways, based on the interview data: mature students' perception of being mature students in university, their sense of belonging, and their expectation of social life in university. The interview data

demonstrates that most of the mature students in this research feel the university life and atmosphere are alien to them since they perceive them as designed for their younger counterparts and not appropriate for themselves as mature students. Therefore they exclude themselves from involvement in university life and stay together to build their own society. This section illustrates that under the entire atmosphere of the university, mature students' habitus is not only affected by the institutional habitus of the university, but also interacts with the institutional habitus. Their actions not only reflect the influence of the institutional habitus but also their response to the institutional habitus. As they feel alien and not fitted to the university atmosphere, they choose to exclude themselves and isolate themselves from mainstream university life.

As shown in this section, mature students' self-exclusion from university life reveals that the mature students participating in this research are still in a disadvantaged situation. The majority of mature students in their forties and fifties feel uncomfortable on campus, and most of the mature students in this research feel they do not have much of sense of belonging, regardless of their ages. Based on these two feelings, the mature students in this research tend to stay away from the university life which they perceive as not appropriate for them and constrain themselves in their own-built society.

6.2 The impact of institutional habitus on mature students' degree study experience in China

This section focuses on how the institutional habitus affects the Chinese mature students' study experience based on their perceptions expressed in this research. The interview data illustrates that because of the distinct Chinese adult higher education system, which is parallel to the regular higher education system, even though the Chinese mature students in this research have their lectures in universities, they perceive that they are not entitled or allowed to benefit, academically and socially, in the same way as their younger counterparts and they feel they are excluded and unequal. In contrast to their English counterparts, the exclusion, segregation and inequality that the Chinese mature students in this research suffer from is not limited within the university context; they suffer from exclusion, segregation and inequality in society outside the university because of the value of their degree as well. The Chinese mature students suffer from both inequality inside the university context and extended inequality in society after they graduate.

Due to the higher education massification, regular higher education flourishes and there is a large number of graduates with Bachelor degrees in Chinese society, which causes adult higher education—the creation of a specific historical period for the purpose of compensating for the insufficiently developed regular higher education—to lose its value (Chen et al., 2017; Chen, 2016). Based on the Chinese mature students' perceptions in this research, there is a vicious circle constructed by the reputation of the

adult higher education system in society and the quality of education provided by adult higher education. As perceived by the Chinese mature students in this research, the unsatisfactory education provided by adult higher education creates a negative reputation in society, and this negative reputation in turn decreases expectations of adult higher education to improve the quality of the education provided. Therefore, mature students become the victims of this vicious circle, and they suffer from exclusion and inequality both inside the university context and in society.

There are two sub sections to demonstrate how the Chinese mature students in this research perceive their excluded and unequal situation, both inside the university context and in society. The first sub section reveals how mature students in this research perceive their excluded and unequal situation from the perspective of how their habitus operates. The second sub section illustrates the mature students' perceptions about how the institutional habitus contributes to their excluded and unequal situation by the institutional practice.

6.2.1 The impact of institutional habitus on mature students' broader exclusion and unequal situation via affecting their habitus

This section is about how the institutional habitus affects the Chinese mature students' study experience via influencing mature students' habitus. Interview data illustrated in this section aims to answer the second sub research question. As claimed by Edgerton et al. (2013), the habitus at individual level is "the set of learned preferences or

dispositions (styles of thought and action) by which a person orients to the social world. It is the internalized interpretive framework through which one perceives the social world and one's place within it, and correspondingly calibrates one's aspirations and appreciation related actions/ practice" (Edgerton et al., 2013: 305). The data in this section resonates with the principles of institutional habitus theory (see section 3.4). The data reveals that the Chinese mature students' habitus operates in four dimensions: mature students' perception of the value of their degree (section 6.2.1.1), their perceptions of being mature students (section 6.2.1.2), their study aspiration (section 6.2.1.4), and their perceptions of their sense of belonging (section 6.2.1.4). All these four dimensions of mature students' habitus are affected by the institutional habitus and via the interaction between mature students and the university. The interview data illustrates that the majority of the Chinese mature students in this research perceive the value of their degree as lower than that of the degree of their younger counterparts; they feel inferior to their younger counterparts and they do not have much sense of belonging to the university. All these issues construct their negative study experience and they feel they are excluded and unequal within the university and in society. The interviews below show mature students' perceptions regarding these four issues.

6.2.1.1 Mature students' perceptions of the value of their study

This section presents how the Chinese mature students in this research perceive the value of their study. Due to the different educational focus and practice of the regular higher education system and the adult higher education system (shown in Chapter 2),

the majority of mature students in this study perceive that the degrees awarded by the two distinct systems are evaluated differently by society, which affects their perception of the value of their degree. The interviews below show how the Chinese mature students in this research perceive the value of their degree.

The degree awarded by the adult higher education system is different from the degree given via the full-time regular higher education system. The full-time higher education is formal and authentic; the adult higher education is kind of further education. The degree is less academic and the requirement for awarding it is not that restrict. Within the early childhood education area this diploma is recognized; but there are so many jobs that only approve the full-time degree and it is impossible for you to get a good job by owning the diploma from the adult higher education system. (China, E10, female, aged 32, married, second year of degree study)

Mature student E2 echoes that by saying:

The qualification we are awarded has “part-time adult higher education” written on it, whereas “full-time higher education” is written on the full-time students’ qualification. When people especially employers see the diploma, they can tell the difference and know our degree is not authentic or formal. Based on this unequal

educational system, what we have is further education, like a training, work-based training. (China, E2, female, aged 23, married, second year of degree study)

Apart from mature students E10 and E2, nearly all of the Chinese mature students in this research have the same perception that the value of their degree is different from that of the degree awarded to their full-time younger counterparts. Many mature students also talk about how the society, especially employers, evaluate the value of their degree, which is shown in the interview below:

When we go to a job interview, the employer would differentiate the applicants who got the degree from the adult higher education route from those who have the full BA Honours' degree from the full-time regular higher education system. We know we are not competitive with the full-time students and we feel inferior about ourselves. But to study as mature students is the only way we could choose since we cannot study full-time. We are the victims of the higher education system. (China, E9, female, aged 24, single, first year of degree study)

The interview above illustrates that employers evaluate mature students' degree differently from their younger counterparts' degree, and treat the two groups of students unequally. Mature students perceive they are inferior to the full-time younger students academically and they are not able to compete with them. Most of the mature students

in this research perceive that it is the dual higher education systems that construct such a difference and make them the victims. In terms of the differences in the isolated and excluded situation of mature students in both England and China, the mature students in England are isolated in the university but the discrimination against mature students in China also happens in society, including in the employment market and in social situations (Chen, 2015; Zhao, 2016). The next section shows how mature students in this research perceive being mature students in university, which illustrates mature students' lack of confidence and their sense of inferiority.

6.2.1.2 Mature students' perception of being mature students

Students' perception of their position in higher education is an important aspect which shows how the institutional habitus affects their habitus and hence engenders their self-perception (Lehmann, 2007, 2012; Weissmann, 2013). The majority of the Chinese mature students in this research have a negative feeling about being mature students in university. Many of them feel they are "at a lower level" than the full-time mature students, and a lot of them call themselves the "ones eliminated from the regular higher education system". The sense of inferiority is mentioned by most of the Chinese mature students in this research. The interviews below demonstrate the Chinese mature students' perceptions of being mature students in this research.

We think we are different from the traditional young students.

Obviously we are at a lower level than them from the academic

perspective. We feel inferior to them. Sometimes we can meet these students on campus when we have courses on Sunday, what they talk about, what they think about, what they care about are really different from us. They are students with much more knowledge, we are just obsolete and eliminated from the regular higher education system. But we cannot take the higher education entrance exam again to study as full-time students, we can only study in this way. (China, E3, female, aged 24, single, second year of degree study)

Mature student E5 gives a similar opinion by saying:

Being a mature student on campus in this era means you are eliminated from the Higher Education Entrance Examination, which means you cannot study well enough to become a full-time student at Bachelor level; it means your previous academic performance was so bad. We admire those young traditional students so much. We feel self-abasement and self-inferiority. We do not feel confident about ourselves because adult higher education does not have a good reputation among the society. (China, E5, female, aged 28, married, graduated)

Due to the low recognition and bad reputation of adult higher education in society, perceived by the Chinese mature students in this research, most of these students do not

have confidence in their degree on themselves. As many mature students express, since they cannot take the Higher Education Entrance Examination again to study as full-time students in regular higher education because of their full-time job and family commitments, studying as mature students is their only way to improve their qualifications. As presented in the data, the Chinese mature students in this research perceive that the Chinese dual higher education systems generate discrimination and segregation between the regular higher education system and the adult higher education system, on top of which, the institutional habitus of the university engenders this lack of confidence and sense of inferiority among the Chinese mature students in this research.

Many mature students in this research explain how the unsatisfactory state of adult higher education was built up in China. Among them, the mature student E9 gives her explanation as follows:

I think there is a vicious circle in the adult higher education system.

The quality of teaching given by adult higher education is quite low which is known by the society and us students, so the society and employers do not think highly of our degree. Because the adult higher education has an unsatisfactory reputation in society, it does not have motivation to produce good education. I just feel there is a vicious circle which drives both the reputation and quality of adult higher

*education to get worse and worse. (China, E9, female, aged 24, single,
first year of degree study)*

Like mature student E9, many other mature students in this research also perceive that the performance and the reputation of the adult higher education cause each other to deteriorate. As result, mature students become the victims since they cannot have either a good learning experience during the study process or a degree which is recognized equally by the society and employers.

As shown in the previous section (6.2.1.1), the Chinese mature students could benefit from their degree to a limited extent, as their degree is recognized and accepted in the early childhood education sector, but the wider society still value their degree lower than the full-time degree. The interview data in this section illustrates that most of the Chinese mature students in this research have negative perceptions and feelings about being mature students in university. The institutional habitus stimulates and increases their sense of inferiority. The discrimination and lower recognition of the value of their degree in society, especially by employers, trigger their negative feeling about being mature students, especially their sense of inferiority. The Chinese mature students' unequal and disadvantaged situation is not limited within the higher education context; it also happens in society and the job market more broadly, which is different from the exclusion suffered by their English counterparts (Zhao, 2016; Chen et al., 2017). This negative feelings of being mature students also affects their expectations of study and university life, which is demonstrated in the section below.

6.2.1.3 Mature students' expectation or aspiration for their study

The study aspiration and expectation, as a significant aspect of students' habitus, has been claimed in many research studies to have substantial influence on students' study experience and outcome (Nash, 2002; Edgerton et al., 2013). The interview data shows that most of the Chinese mature students in this research do not have much expectation or aspiration for their study. The reasons for this situation concern two aspects: firstly, most of these mature students feel they cannot learn much that is useful or new from their teachers and lectures; secondly, they also feel the unsatisfactory reputation of their qualification in society decreases their passion for study. The interviews below demonstrate these mature students' perceptions.

I just want my qualification. I expected to learn more at the beginning of my study but I just got disappointed by the teachers and lectures so I do not expect much now. (China, S7, female, aged 25, single, third year of degree study)

Like mature student S7, most of the Chinese mature students in this research claim that the teachers and lectures disappoint them and weaken their expectation and passion for their study. As shown in the previous sections, most of the Chinese mature students in this research are not satisfied with the teachers and lectures as they feel they cannot benefit much. On the other hand, the unsatisfactory reputation and value of their degree

also stimulates them to have less expectation of their study, which could be seen from the mature student's words below.

The degree has bad reputation among the society. No matter how much I strive or how much effort I spend, my degree is still looked down on by other people, so it is pointless to have aspiration for my study, (China, S9, female, aged 26, married, second year of degree study)

Based on this feeling about being mature students in university, the majority of the Chinese mature students in this research claim that they do not have much expectation of their study, since the value of the degree is perceived as not competitive by both themselves and the society. Apart from mature students' lack of study aspiration, most of the Chinese mature students also do not have much expectation of their university life. Since they perceive they are not entitled to participate in the university life, they feel there is no point in having expectations of university life. The interview below illustrates the prevalent perception among the Chinese mature students in this research, that they do not have expectations of university life.

I have no expectation of my university life because I know I am not able to have that. Studying as mature students means you cannot have the traditional university life. But as I feel embarrassed to stay with the traditional students I would not get involved with them even if I

could have the university life. I just come for the lectures and expect nothing else. (China, E2, female, aged 23, married, second year of degree study)

Like mature student E2, most of the mature students in this research claim that because of the lower-recognized value of their degree and the unequal way the university treats them, they do not have expectations of university life, since they perceive they are not entitled to have it at the first place. As shown in the interview data, under the influence of the institutional habitus, especially via the institutional practice (Reay, 1998; Weissmann, 2013; Heagney & Benson, 2017), most of the Chinese mature students in this research do not have much expectation of either their study or their university life. The next section illustrates how mature students in this research perceive their sense of belonging in the university context, under the feeling of being mature students in university.

6.2.1.4 Mature students' perception of sense of belonging

One significant way in which the habitus operates is in the way people perceive their place in a specific field in relation to other people and the venue (Lehmann, 2007), which affects students' sense of belonging and other further behaviours (Mallman & Lee, 2017; Lehmann, 2007; Reay, 2003, 2015). In this research, when the Chinese mature students talk about their sense of belonging to the university, the majority of

them claim that they do not feel they belong to the university; instead, they feel quite excluded and isolated, which can be seen from the interview below.

I do not have a sense of belonging and I do not feel I am a student in the university either. Because I cannot use anything on campus nor can I take part in any activity. I only come once a week and only for two or three hours. I just feel the university is a training institute rather than a university. I know there is a difference between the adult higher education system and the regular higher education system in the university. (China, E7, female, aged 26, married, graduated)

Mature student E5 echoes this perception by saying:

I do not have a sense of belonging since I know nothing about the university. There is nothing we can participate in and we have nothing to use. There is only one classroom we can use among the entire university. We are excluded from the university as we are the students in the adult higher education system. We do not know the teachers and the teachers do not know us. We have no involvement in the university life. (China, E5, female, aged 28, married, graduated)

In addition to mature students E7 and E5, most of the mature students in this research perceive that they do not have much sense of belonging. The interviews above illustrate that mature students' excluded and isolated feeling is constructed by their lack of academic and social integration into university life. Mature student S8 also gives her perception of her lack of sense of belonging by saying:

I do not feel I belong to the university. The university is the place for regular higher education rather than for the adult higher education that we have. We are outsiders here. I have a sense of neglect rather than a sense of belonging. The university does not treat us in the same way as it treats the full-time traditional students. We are just taught physically in this place. (China, S8, female, aged 26, single, graduated)

As mentioned before, most of the Chinese mature students in this research perceive that the university is the venue of regular higher education and the domain of traditional younger students; and they perceive themselves as outsiders in the university. Even though many Chinese universities organise adult higher education programmes, the mature students in this research still perceive that the universities' main duty and responsibility is regular higher education and less attention and care are paid to adult higher education. Based on the Chinese mature students' perceptions, various aspects of the institutional habitus, such as their relationship with teachers and their accessibility of the resources, imply that the mature students are treated unequally from

the full-time traditional students and they are not thought highly of by the university. This incompatibility and separation between the two systems in one university scenario makes mature students have a very ambivalent and complex self-recognition. Most of them perceive that they are not entitled to have equivalent academic and social integration into the university with their younger counterparts, and they feel that they are more like outsiders in the university, even though they study in the university physically. Mallman and Lee (2017) highlight that the atmosphere and various aspects of the university life—as the externalization of the institutional habitus—compel mature students to feel isolated and excluded, which affects their desire to have academic and social integration into university life, as well as their learning experience and outcome. Mature students' perceptions of their sense of belonging, in this research, demonstrate that the institutional habitus of the Chinese university is in favour of the traditional students and the separation of the two higher education systems excludes mature students from involvement in university life, which is perceived as being dominated by traditional students.

6.2.1.5 A brief summary

The sections above presents how the institutional habitus has an impact on the Chinese mature students' study experience via affecting their habitus in this research. Based on the interview data, most of the Chinese mature students in this research point out four aspects of how their habitus operates under the influence of the institutional habitus:

their perceptions of the value of their degree, their feelings about being mature students, their study aspiration and expectation, and their sense of belonging to the university.

Most of the Chinese mature students in this research perceive the value of their degree to be lower compared to the degree awarded to full-time traditional students, which is caused by the unsatisfactory teaching quality perceived by these mature students and the lower evaluation of their degree in society. Besides, the Chinese mature students in this research perceive that there is a vicious circle between the unsatisfactory education provided by the adult higher education system and its poor reputation in society, as each undermines the other. The poor reputation of adult higher education causes most of the mature students in this research to have a sense of inferiority and lack of confidence. Since they perceive their academic and social integration into university life is constrained by the university, most of them feel they have a sense of neglect rather than a sense of belonging.

All these aspects presented above illustrate how the institutional habitus affects mature students' study via influencing their habitus. Compared to their English counterparts, the Chinese mature students in this research suffer from exclusion and inequality not only within the university context, but also in society more broadly, including the job market. Since the two higher education systems and the two types of degree are valued differently in society, the mature students in this research perceive that they are differentiated by society from full-time traditional students. The exclusion and discrimination they suffer from extends outside the university context to the society.

They are treated unequally not only within the university context but also in society, which gives them a sense of inferiority and lack of confidence, not only while they study in university but also in the society after they graduate.

6.2.2 The impact of institutional habitus on mature students' excluded situation via the institutional practice

As the Chinese mature students in this research perceive that there is a vicious circle between the unsatisfactory education provided by the adult higher education system and its poor reputation in society, this section reveals how the institutional habitus affects the Chinese mature students' study experience via the institutional practice, based on the perceptions expressed in this research. The interview data illustrates that the Chinese mature students in this research perceive that they are excluded from university life, academically and socially, as they target traditional younger students who belong to the regular higher education system, while the mature students perceive that they belong to the parallel adult higher education system. Based on the Chinese mature students' perceptions, they feel that they are not entitled to and are prevented from participating in university life, including participation in activities and the usage of resources on campus. The Chinese mature students perceive they are not allowed to participate in university life on equal terms to their younger counterparts.

Consistent with the argument of Laird and Cruce (2009) that it is the institutional habitus that prevents mature students from engaging with faculty by its institutional

practice, McTaggart (2016) reveals that the practice generated by institutions barriers mature students' study and causes exclusion from both academic and social integration. The interview data illustrated in this section answers the first sub research question. More specifically, the interview data shows that the institutional practice affects the Chinese mature students' study experience in two ways. The first one is how the institutional practice prevents the Chinese mature students from academic integration, which is presented in section 6.2.2.1; the second one is how the institutional practice prevents the Chinese mature students from social integration, which is shown in section 6.2.2.2.

6.2.2.1 The impact of institutional practice on mature students' academic integration

This section focuses on how the Chinese mature students perceive the impact of institutional practice on their academic integration. Based on the interview data, the Chinese mature students in this research point out four main factors which affect their academic integration: the university's attitude towards supporting them (presented in section 6.2.1.1.1), their limited access to the resources on campus (presented in section 6.2.1.1.2), the pedagogical structure (presented in section 6.2.1.1.3), and the support from teachers (presented in section 6.2.1.1.2). Based on mature students' perceptions, because of the segregation between the regular higher education system and adult higher education system, the university prioritizes the full-time traditional students and takes serving them as its main duty, which causes the mature students be neglected. This neglect is revealed by the four aspects that mature students pointed out above,

which prevent mature students from having satisfying academic integration and contribute to their disadvantaged and unequal situation in the university.

Compared to the English mature students' situation, while the pedagogical structure and the teachers' support are also criticized by the Chinese mature students, the way these factors function and how they affect mature students' academic integration are different. The sections below illustrate in detail mature students' perceptions regarding how these factors affect their study.

6.2.2.1.1 Mature students' perceptions of university's attitude of supporting their study

Sissel et al. (2001: 18) commented, "Because higher education has been anchored in its historical traditions of residential, selective education and because it is based in perceptions of a privileged place and role for young adult leadership development, this environment embraces full-time, residential youth. Little space, voice, and value are given to other groups and in particular those who are the most different from young students: adult learners". Their research demonstrates how the university's attitude and disposition ties mature students into an unequal situation in higher education. Based on the Chinese mature students' perceptions in this research, because of the independence and distinctiveness of the adult higher education system, as well as its separation from the regular higher education system, the university has different attitudes towards the two systems, which causes it to pay different attention and devotion to the two systems (Ji, 2013; Liu, 2016; Ma et al., 2014). The Chinese mature students in this research

perceive that the university prioritizes regular higher education and pays more attention to it, which is interpreted by the mature students as the root of their neglect and dissatisfaction. Besides, the mature students in this research also claim that the university's neglectful attitude is the fundamental reason for other aspects of its disappointing performance, such as their limited access to resources, the perceived problematic pedagogical structure and the perceived lack of support from the staff.

Based on the Chinese mature students' perceptions of the value of their degree and their feeling about being mature students, most of the Chinese mature students in this research perceive that the university does not think highly of them and does not want to spend effort on improving their study experience. The majority of participants perceive that their unsatisfactory study experience is the result of the university's neglect and lack of willingness to spend effort on their study. The interviews below demonstrate mature students' perception regarding this issue in this research.

The university prioritizes the full-time traditional students rather than us. Those full-time students are the dominant and authentic students in university and the university does not think highly of us. The university does not care about us or want to spend much effort on us. (China, S7, female, aged 25, single, third year of degree study)

Mature student S8 echoes this argument by saying:

The university takes serving the full-time students as its main job and it does not consider much about us. We can feel the neglect. But we can understand that since we are just taught in the university physically and the university is the domain of regular higher education system. (China, S8, female, aged 26, single, graduated)

Like the two mature students above, many other mature students in this research also perceive that the university pays more attention and expands more effort on the full-time students' study rather than theirs. Mature student E8 gives her perception about the deeper reason for this situation by saying:

I think because the university is part of and funded by the regular higher education system, the full-time traditional students are the main objects to serve. Organizing the adult higher education is just their subsidiary job, so they will not give the equal attention or effort to us. So the university does not want to spend much effort on improving the quality of education for us. (China, E8, female, aged 28, single, first year of degree study)

As perceived by mature student E8, organizing adult higher education is not the main job of the university, which decreases the university's willingness to spend more effort on improving the quality of adult higher education and inclination to spend more effort on improving mature students' study experience. The university's attitude towards

organizing adult higher education is perceived by the majority of the Chinese mature students in this research as the deep reason for its unsatisfactory performance, including mature students unequal and limited access to the resources on campus, which is shown in the section below.

6.2.2.1.2 Mature students' perception of access to the facilities on campus

Poromaa's research (2017) states that materiality is an important key to understand the formation of institutional habitus: the materiality sets the scene for pedagogical outcomes and developments. Institutions such as universities with a habitus rich in buildings, architecture, equipment, and embodied cultural capital tend to cultivate a pedagogy that benefits from these materialities. The majority of Chinese mature students in this research perceive that even though they have their lectures on the university campus, because they are mature students belonging to the adult higher education system, they are not allowed to use the resources on campus equally with their traditional counterparts, since they perceive that the resources on campus belong to the regular higher education for the purpose of serving the traditional students. There are several aspects showing how mature student cannot benefit the same from the resources on campus.

Mature students firstly mention that they had no idea about what they could use on campus at the beginning of their study, which is shown by the interview below.

In the opening ceremony, they told us that we have a handbook about all the things in university but we do not really read it. Apart from that nobody really told us about what we can use on campus. When we come we just go directly to the classroom and we have no idea about anything else. (China, E5, female, aged 28, married, graduated)

Secondly, most of the mature students in this research believe that that they are not entitled to use the facilities on campus because they are mature students belonging to the adult higher education system. Mature student E1 gives her own experience as follows:

I am not entitled to use the facilities which are provided for full-time traditional students such as that we can enter the library but we can only read books insides and we are not allowed to borrow books and take them out. Our student card is different from the full-time traditional students' so we cannot use our student card to pay for the food in the canteen. We cannott use the Wi-Fi on campus; we cannot use the university website either, because we cannot get access to the internet by using our student number. Because of our mature students' identity. (China, E1, female, aged 35, married, first year of degree study)

Mature student E7 gives a similar perception, saying:

I cannot use the facilities on campus because I am a mature student.

The university provides the resources for the full-time traditional students, not us. I just come to my lecture using the classroom, nothing else. (China, E7, female, age of 26, married, graduated)

The interviews above reveal that most of the Chinese mature students in this research perceive that their access to facilities is very limited. Based on mature students' own words, being classed as mature students is the reason that they are not entitled to get full access to the facilities and resources in the university. As perceived by mature students, although they study in university with their younger traditional counterparts, they still belong to the adult higher education system; therefore they cannot benefit from the resources equally with their younger counterparts, since the facilities on campus are perceived as provided for the traditional students as part of the higher education system.

As Poromaa's research (2017) states, materiality (including facilities and equipment) is an important key to understand the formation of institutional habitus, which sets the scene for pedagogical outcomes and developments. Based on Chinese mature students' perceptions in this research, this limited access to study resources severely constrains their study interest and has a negative impact on their study experience, which also

reveals how the institutional habitus contributes to the disadvantaged and unequal situation for mature students in the Chinese context.

6.2.2.1.3 Mature students' perception of the pedagogical structure

As viewed by the most of the Chinese mature students in this research, the pedagogical structure designed by the adult higher education system is unsatisfactory and has a negative impact on their study experience. There are three aspects which are criticized by the majority of the Chinese mature students in this research: the unbalanced module allocation in each semester, the inadequate teaching time, and the outdated teaching content. These three aspects lead nearly all the mature students in this research to perceive the education given by adult higher education as of low quality.

Firstly, most of the Chinese mature students in this research feel the distribution of modules in each semester is unbalanced, as the university arranges too many modules in some semesters and few modules in others. This imbalance in module arrangement causes more pressure to mature students during the fully packed semesters and they find it difficult to manage their study, which could be seen from the interview below.

There is an improper arrangement regarding the module allocation.

There was just one module last semester but there are five modules this semester. This unstable module arrangement really causes us a big pressure and burden because we could be too busy to handle the

exams when there are five modules. (China, E2, female, aged 23, married, second year of degree study)

Most mature students in this research feel that the number of modules during the fully packed semesters is excessive. They claim that they need to spend too much time on the lectures, which makes them feel exhausted and drained. The interviews below illustrate how much time these mature students have to spend each week.

The time for the modules is not very convenient for us since we have our full-time job. We have modules on Tuesday night and Thursday night from 6 pm to 9 pm and we have a module on Sunday for a whole day, which is too much. (China, E4, female, aged 31, married, second year of degree study)

Mature student E5 echoes this by saying:

Many of my classmates just get sick because there are 5 modules in this semester, which is horrible. We rush to the university when we finish work and it is nearly 10 pm when we arrive home. We have to go to work at 7 am the next morning. We do not have our own time for rest on weekends since we have lectures at weekends again. The modules are just too many. (China, E5, female, aged 28, married, graduated)

Another problematic issue raised by mature students is the contradiction between the overwhelming module time and the inadequate teaching time in each module. The majority of mature students in this research mention that since they have to get a certain number of credits to be qualified, the university arranges numerous modules for them, which leads to each module having limited teaching time.

The university only arranged three days for completing one module, within which the last half day is for the exam. So we only have two and a half days for finishing one module. What can the teachers teach and what can we learn during such a short time? So the teachers just pour tons of information to us and cannot go into detail of the knowledge. What we really can learn and digest is really limited.

(China, S2, female, aged 25, married, graduated)

Mature student S4 gives a similar opinion, saying:

The degree award is based on our credits so we have to get a certain number of credits, which means we have to have a certain number of modules during the limited time. The university just arranges a big volume of modules but each module just has a few lectures. Some modules only have two lectures, then we have exams. We really cannot learn much from the limited lectures. It is pointless to only get

*massive amount of credits with low quality lectures. (China, S4,
female, aged 25, single, third year of degree study)*

What is said by mature students above reflects the problem and contradiction between the amount of excessive modules and the inadequate teaching time. Many mature students in this research argue that they feel it would be more reasonable if the university could increase the credits for each module, allocate more teaching time for each module and cut the number of modules, so they could have more teaching time for each module, rather than rushing to finish an overwhelming number of modules without a deep understanding of any of them. As a significant aspect of the institutional habitus, the module arrangement reflects that mature students' special situation and their own benefit have not been taken into good account by the universities (Thomas, 2002). The mature students' own words in this research reflect that the module arrangement imposes more difficulties on their study and has a negative impact on their attainment of knowledge.

Thirdly, apart from the module arrangement and inadequate teaching time, the majority of Chinese mature students in this research perceive that the curricula and teaching content are outdated. Since the majority of the Chinese interviewees work in kindergartens and they have already studied early childhood education in their higher vocational college before coming to study in university, their primary perception of the university curricula is that they repeat what they were taught in college; therefore they feel the modules are not useful and they cannot learn much that is new.

Nearly all the things taught in university I have learnt before when I was in senior vocational college for three years. The textbooks used in university are the same as the textbooks we used in college; the subjects are similar. They just teach everything I have learnt before. But for me personally, I really cannot benefit much. (China, S10, female, ages 26, single, third year of degree study)

Mature student E5 echoes this argument, saying:

The teaching content is the same as the stuff taught in my college study so many years ago. The modules are just repeated and the teaching content is nearly no different from the college level. More important, there is no updated content, nearly nothing new. (China, E5, female, aged 28, married, graduated)

Apart from the repeated teaching content, mature students complain about another feature of the curricula, which is that the theory taught in lectures is not applicable to practice so cannot be applied to the real work.

The modules in university are not applicable. The class management and activity organization they taught cannot be applied in nursery. After I have been studying here for two years I do not think I have improved. (China, E7, female, aged 26, married, graduated)

Mature student S1 makes a similar comment, saying:

I think many things the teacher taught in class are not correct; in other words, the things they taught are impossible to apply in the real world. Some teaching methods and activity organizing skills taught in the university really cannot be applied in the real world and they are also outdated. (China, S1, female, aged 29, married, third year of degree study)

The unbalanced module distribution, the inadequate teaching time in each module and the outdated teaching content perceived by the majority of the Chinese mature students in this research cause most of them to have an unsatisfactory study experience and low evaluation of the higher education given by the adult higher education system. These three aspects of institutional practice generated by the institutional habitus makes mature students feel that the study is not organised reasonably by the university, which makes the study difficult to manage. The majority of the Chinese mature students in this research cite these three problematic issues to demonstrate their disadvantaged and unequal situation in the university. In addition to the pedagogical structure, mature students in this research also perceive that the teachers' lack of expertise and sufficient support also make their study difficult, which is presented in the following section.

6.2.2.1.4 Mature students' perception of the support from the staff

Recent research studies (Tett et al., 2012; Mallman and Lee, 2017; Heagney & Benson, 2017) announce that mature students are still in a disadvantaged and excluded situation in the higher education context because not only do they lack the dialogue with staff, since feedback from teachers is the only way of communication from the teachers to the mature students; but also the feedback from their teachers lacks care and orientation. Regarding the teachers, most of the Chinese mature students in this research are dissatisfied about three issues. The first one is that there are many part-time teachers and current postgraduate students giving lectures, who are perceived by mature students as unprofessional; secondly, the teachers do not have a diligent teaching attitude but use attendance-check to force mature students to come to the lectures; thirdly, most teachers are perceived as not willing to interact with or support mature students. These three issues regarding the teachers strengthen mature students' perception of their disadvantaged and unequal situation in university.

Firstly, in terms of teachers' expertise, the majority of mature students in this research claim that nearly all their lectures are given by part-time teachers or current postgraduate students, whom they perceive as not professional and lacking in expertise. The interviews below illustrate mature students' perception regarding this issue.

The teachers' age and educational levels are so different. Some teachers are nearly or already retired; some are current Masters'

students on campus. I think most of the teachers are not professional and we have nearly no teachers who are full-time academic staff on campus. (China, E10, female, aged 32, married, second year degree study)

Mature student S10 gives a similar opinion, saying:

I think the teachers are not full-time teachers in the university because they do not know much about the university. The university just hired them somewhere outside university. Some old teachers are really boring. They do not know the new situation of kindergartens and they just teach things which are really outdated. (China, S10, female, aged 26, single, third year of degree study)

Most of the mature students in this research are not convinced of or satisfied with the teachers' expertise and capacity. Many of them feel disappointed by being taught by postgraduate students and retired teachers. Some mature students claim that they lost most of their interest in study when they first met these unexpected teachers. The lack of professional academic staff, which is a significant part of the institutional habitus, reveals again how the institutional habitus maintains and strengthens the disadvantaged and unequal situation of the Chinese mature students in this research (Thomas, 2002; Tett, 2004; Weissmann, 2013; Feldman, 2016).

Secondly, apart from the teachers' teaching competency and expertise, most of the Chinese mature students in this research are disappointed with the teachers' teaching attitude as well. Most of the mature students mention that "muddling along" is the prevalent status among the majority of the teachers and the teachers do not pay much attention to either the mature students or their teaching. The majority of mature students in this research point out that there are some teachers do not teach carefully or diligently in class, which is shown in the following interviews.

Just one third of the teachers have a good attitude. The other teachers just muddle along. The teachers just talk randomly in class, they do not care if what they say is wrong or not. They know we don't want to listen to them so the teachers just tell us we can do anything as long as we do not talk. (China, S10, female, aged 26, single, third year of degree study)

Mature student S9 echoes this by saying:

Sometimes they just talk to themselves randomly far away from the content in the book, which is quite boring. There is nearly no teacher who would like to interact with us; they just read the PowerPoint or book. They do not care if we are sleeping or eating in our place as long as the sound we make does not cover their own voice. They just

muddle along. (China, S9, female, aged 26, married, second year of degree study)

The majority of Chinese mature students in this research perceive that many of their teachers do not care about their study or pay attention to the teaching. Most of the teachers are perceived as not having done enough preparation for their lectures and not teaching diligently and carefully. Most of the mature students perceive that teachers' "muddle along" attitude affects the teaching quality and their learning interest, which makes them unable to learn much from the lectures. In addition to teachers' "muddling along" attitude, most of the mature students in this research claim that teachers' class management is also problematic. Most of the mature students claim that they have no interest to come to the lectures because of the low-quality teaching but they are forced to come by the attendance-check. The interview below illustrates how the attendance-check works:

I think the university just uses the attendance-check to force us to come to university rather than making the modules attractive. Since the teachers do not teach diligently and the teaching content is outdated, we have no interest to come to the lectures and we just want to take the final exams. But the university claim that we cannot take the exam if we skip more than a third of the lectures of each module so the teachers check the attendance rigorously. We are forced to

come by the attendance-check. (China, E5, female, aged 28, married, graduated)

Many other mature students in this research also claim that if there were no attendance-check, they would not come to the lectures, since they perceive they cannot learn much that is useful from the lectures and the lectures are not attractive to them. Mature student E8 gives her opinion regarding the difficulties caused by the attendance-check by saying:

The study is not difficult but the attendance-check is so tiring. Some teachers check the attendance at the beginning of each lesson so we cannot be late, otherwise we will be recorded as “absent”, since the member of staff who checks the attendance leaves as soon as she finishes the check. But I finish my work very late and I rush to the university, I try my best but I am unable to not be late. If I am late and the member of staff has finished checking attendance, I will be very disappointed and angry. We are adults, we have so many “have-to-do” things. I wish the system could be more flexible. (China, E8, female, aged 28, single, first year of degree study)

Based on mature students’ own words, most of the mature students in this research criticize this unsatisfactory situation whereby adult higher education does not use useful and appealing modules to attract mature students to come to university, but uses the

attendance-check to push them to come instead. The majority of mature students in this research also complain about the problems and difficulties caused by this attendance-check which is perceived as not appropriate for mature students.

Thirdly, the majority of Chinese mature students in this research announce that teachers' willingness to offer support is quite significant for their study, but they feel that most of the teachers do not have much willingness to offer help or care to them, which is shown by the interviews below.

The teachers do not care if I understand what they say or not, neither do they care about if their teaching is useful for us. When we ask them questions their attitude is not supportive and they just tell us it is all in the PowerPoint, indifferently. If we have problems we just ask each other for help rather than the teachers, because the teachers do not want to help. (China, E2, female, aged 23, married, second year of degree study)

Mature student E4 echoes this by saying:

There is just one teacher, a postgraduate student, who asked if we understand or not. Apart from her there is no one who cares about if we have problems or not. The teachers have no interaction or communication with us. We can realize that they do not want to have

much to do with us from their attitude. (China, E4, female, aged 31, married, second year of degree study)

Apart from teachers' lack of willingness to offer support, mature students point out that it is also difficult to ask the administrative staff for help. Although mature students are taught in university, their study and other administrative issues are managed by the adult higher education system. Most of the mature students in this research declare that the administrative management is problematic and confusing, which makes their study even harder. The interviews below illustrate mature students' perception of the administrative staff.

The management of adult higher education in university is confusing and messy. It seems like there are no specific people take charge of us. There is nobody to inform us when a lesson has been rearranged or cancelled. If we have a problem we do not know who to ask. (China, E7, female, aged 26, single, graduated)

Mature student S6 gives her comment on the counsellor in her class by saying:

We have a counsellor but we do not think she is full-time staff in university. When we ask her a question she never knows [the answer]. She always tells me she has to ask somebody else and sometimes there is just no reply from her. The whole system is just messy. (China, S6, female, aged 24, single, third year of degree study)

The words above show that these participants perceive the administrative management within the adult higher education system as not clear. Although the universities that recruit mature students set up a distinct college called either “Open College” or “Continuing College” or “Distance Learning College” which is established for managing mature students’ academic and administrative affairs (Li, 2008; Lin, 2018), mature students still feel they cannot find the right administrative staff to ask for help. Specifically, many mature students in this research announce that information delivery is disorganised, especially when there is a change in module time or something about the exams, which gives them many unexpected troubles.

As an essential aspect of the institutional habitus, the teachers play a vital role in mature students’ study experience (Thomas, 2002; Tett, 2004; Morrison, 2009; Weissmann, 2013). As perceived by the majority of Chinese mature students in this research, most of their teachers fail to deliver a good education and offer good support to them in various aspects. This situation reflects how the institutional habitus has a negative impact on mature students and maintains them in disadvantaged situation in the Chinese context.

6.2.2.1.5 A brief summary

Section 6.2.2 above reveals how the institutional habitus maintains and strengthens the Chinese mature students’ disadvantaged and unequal situation by affecting their academic integration in higher education (Thomas, 2002; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011).

The pedagogical structure, the support from staff and access to facilities all reveal how mature students' benefit and interest have been neglected and overlooked by the university.

As claimed by the majority of mature students in this research, the modules they have are neither new nor useful for them, so they cannot benefit much; they are forced to come to the lectures by the rigorous attendance-check rather than being attracted by high-quality modules; these modules, moreover, are perceived as given by unprofessional teachers with an uncaring attitude, which decreases the value of the module as well as mature students' learning interest. The teachers are perceived as not giving much attention or effort to preparation and teaching the modules, as well as not having much willingness to offer support and help to the mature students, which affects mature students' study by putting them in an isolated situation. This isolation is also confirmed and underlined by their constrained access to the facilities and resources on campus, since most of the mature students in this research claim that they are not entitled to benefit from the facilities and resources on university campus in the same way as their younger counterparts. All these aspects draw a vivid picture of what an unequal and disadvantaged situation the institutional habitus creates for mature students in China, which is perceived by most of the mature students in this research as the result of the university's attitude towards organizing adult higher education.

The next section will illustrate how the institutional habitus affects another aspect of mature students' study experience—their social integration.

6.2.2.2 The impact of institutional practice on mature students' social integration

Mallman and Lee (2017) highlight mature students' excluded situation as an international phenomenon, describing their feeling of being "out of the loop" and "alienated" from university culture, which is caused by the barriers in university that prevent mature students' academic and social participation into university life. While the previous section showed how the Chinese mature students in this research perceive their academic integration in university, this section illustrates how they perceive their social integration in higher education. According to mature students' own words, their opinions about their social integration in higher education are about three aspects: how they perceive the university fails to involve them in university life (presented in section 6.2.1.2.1), how they perceive their relationship with the teachers (presented in section 6.2.1.2.2) and how they get support from their peers (presented in section 6.2.1.2.3). The main opinion among the majority of the mature students in this research is that, due to the distinct adult higher education system, they perceive that they are not entitled to participate in the university life, and they have no interaction with their teachers, so they have to rely on their peers and support each other.

6.2.2.2.1 Mature students' perception of participation in university life

Laird and Cruce (2009) claim that the developmental gains during the undergraduate study are always linked to participation in educationally purposeful activities, but it is the institutional habitus that prevents part-time and mature students from engaging with

staff, since these activities have long been associated with traditional students. Most of the Chinese mature students in this research announce that they do not have much social integration into university life and they perceive that one of the reasons for this situation is that they are neither informed about nor allowed to participate in academic or social activities. The Chinese mature students in this research perceive that they are not entitled to take part in activities for the same reasons that they are not entitled to use the facilities and resources on campus: since they belong to the adult higher education and all the resources and facilities in university are perceived as provided for the younger traditional students rather than themselves. The interviews below illustrate mature students' perceptions regarding their participation in activities.

Nobody has told us if there is any activity we can participate in. We have nothing apart from our lectures. On the other hand, we do not think we are able to participate either because we are mature students. We do not think the university sees us as its students, neither does it want to serve us. (China, E2, female, aged 23, married, second year of degree study)

Mature student E6 echoes that by saying:

We feel that the university treats us mature students differently from the traditional young students. We feel that we are excluded from the activities. Nobody tells us what we can participate in and there is no

way for us to get the information either. (Chinese, E6, female, aged 29, single, first year of degree study)

From the Chinese mature students' own words above, it is possible to see that both the university and adult higher education system are responsible for mature students' exclusion from participating in academic and social activities. Linking back to the previous section, the incompatibility between the adult higher education and the regular higher education system in the university context is responsible for these mature students' limited academic and social integration. The majority of the Chinese mature students in this research perceive they are not treated equally to their younger counterparts, since they belong to different higher education systems. The incompatibility between the two systems has a negative impact on not only mature students' academic integration but also their social integration.

Many research studies have underscored the significance of participation in activities on campus, which could offer mature students a sense of belonging and their study continuity and study outcome (Lundberg, 2003; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011; Erb & Drysdale, 2017). However, the Chinese mature students' situation in this research illustrate that the institutional habitus puts them in a disadvantaged and unequal situation, where they are not entitled or invited to benefit from these activities, which affects their social integration on campus.

6.2.2.2.2 Mature students' perception of the relationship with teachers

The relationship between students and teachers has significant influence on students' study involvement and experience, as well as their self-confidence and study motivation (Busher et al., 2015; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011; Swain & Hammond, 2011). However, most of the Chinese mature students in this research claim that their teachers barely interact with them or care about them.

The first thing mentioned by the majority of mature students in this research when they talk about the relationship between their teachers is that there is nearly no interaction between themselves and their teachers, since they feel they do not know the teachers and they feel that they are not known by the teachers either. The interviews below illustrate how mature students perceive their relationship with their teachers in this research.

The teachers do not know who I am. The teachers just leave after the lesson so there is no time for them to get in touch with us. And I think they may suppose that we do not need to talk or ask them for help. I have never talked to my teachers. If I have questions I would like to ask my classmates for help. (China, E10, female, aged 32, married, second year of degree study)

Mature student S10 echoes that, saying:

I know the teachers but the teachers do not know who I am. There are too many people, more than 80, in my class and I do not think the teachers would like to know who we are. They do not care about me personally or my study. I think they feel we do not need their help or care either since we are adults. (China, S10, female, aged 26, single, third year of degree study)

Since, as mature student S10 mentions, there are more than 80 students in each class, it is difficult for the teachers to know many of them. Moreover, most of the mature students in this research perceive that the teachers have an assumption that the mature students do not need their help, so the teachers feel they do not need to pay much attention to the mature students. The majority of Chinese mature students in this research perceive that the teachers are not willing to get to know them, talk to them or ask about their situation; they perceive there is nearly no interaction between them and the teachers.

The teachers, as a significant element of the institutional habitus, have significant impact on mature students' study (Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011; Heagney & Benson, 2017). The lack of willingness to build a promising relationship with mature students reveals that the teachers lack a sense of responsibility for their students, which shows mature students' unequal and disadvantaged situation in university, based on the perceptions expressed in this research. In addition, as Tett's research (2004) has shown, the staff and the institution tend to have an assumption that the mature students just

come to get qualified, so they may not need more support or help, which also happens in the Chinese context and maintains mature students in this research in a disadvantaged and unequal situation.

6.2.2.2.3 Mature students' perception of peer involvement on campus

Most of the Chinese mature students in this research perceive that their peers contribute a lot to their study. They benefit from their peers both academically and emotionally. Since the majority of mature students in this research claim that they cannot benefit from the academic and social activities on campus, and most of their teachers are perceived as not willing to care about them, their peers are perceived as the only people they can rely on.

Regarding academic support, since most of the mature students in this research perceive that they are not able to get enough support from their teachers, they claim that their peers have contributed a lot to their study.

My classmates help me a lot. If I miss out a lesson they will lend their notes to me. If I have problems about exams they can tell me what the teachers say about the review scope. And if the lesson's time is changed, they could remind me. They all help me a lot. (China, E1, female, aged 35, married, first year of degree study)

Mature student E8 echoes this argument by saying:

I have a friend in another class, we help each other with study, since for the same module we have different teachers, and these two teachers give different review scope, which is confusing. So we tell each other what the teacher says about review scope so I can have a more accurate review scope to memorize, which could enable me to get a higher score in the exam. (China, E8, female, aged 28, single, first year of degree study)

Most of the Chinese mature students in this study claim that the support they need most is help for them to get higher scores in the exams. Different from the English context, the Chinese mature students need to take exams for each module, so they support each other to review and memorize the content on which the exam questions are based. Therefore, support for passing the exams from their peers was highly regarded by the majority of mature students in this research and seen as the support they need most.

Apart from the academic support and help, the majority of mature students in this research also get encouragement and moral support from their peers, which is perceived as quite significant for their completion of their study.

Having each other's company is quite important. Since the study itself is already so stressful and boring, having these friends around me can make me feel happy and relaxed. We can talk about our work and some personal issues, which is very nice. I think the company

they give me and sharing about their work experience is very important. I can benefit more from their work experience than the teaching. (China, E1, female, aged 35, married, first year of degree study)

Mature student S1 emphasizes the significance of the company of her peers by saying:

There are some friends I know from my college time in my class now. We have not met for many years until we started studying in university. I feel every Sunday is our party time. We stay together all day. We talk with each other in class if the teaching is useless and not helpful. Their work experience is more useful than what the teachers say. Meeting each other is so enjoyable and we really like to come to university because we want to see each other. (China, S1, female, aged 29, married, third year of degree study)

Since most of the Chinese mature students in this research have a relatively low evaluation of the teaching content and the teachers' expertise, as shown in the previous sections, they suppose that they would find it more difficult and tough to keep on coming to the university if they did not have the company of their peers. Indeed, most of them are more attracted by talking with their peers than by the course or the teachers. The majority of mature students feel that they can get not only joyful time together as a break from their work and family commitment, but also the benefit of each other's

working experience, which is perceived as more useful and helpful than the teachers' teaching. According to mature students' own words above, since they cannot participate in the academic or social activities in university, nor can they construct a potential relationship with their teachers, their peer involvement is the only way for them to have social integration in the university context.

Based on mature students' perceptions reported above, their peer support reflects and compensates for the insufficient support from the teachers and the institutions, as sometimes the mature students cannot find the staff to ask for help and they perceive the staff as not interested to help voluntarily. Even though many research studies have underlined the significance of peer support (Lundberg, 2003; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011), in the Chinese context, the peer support is treated by mature students as their sole source of help, which reflects the disadvantaged situation caused by the institutional habitus.

6.2.2.2.4 A brief summary

This section reveals how the institutional habitus affects the Chinese mature students' social integration in university in this research. As mature students belong to the adult higher education system, they perceive that the activities on campus are organised by the regular higher education system to benefit the traditional students. Even though mature students are taught on the university campus with their younger counterparts, most of the them in this research perceive that they are not allowed to benefit from the

activities on campus equally with their younger counterparts, since the institutional habitus is shaped by the traditional students who are the dominant group on campus (McDonough, 1997; Sissel et al., 2001; Weissmann, 2013; Heagney & Benson, 2017). Because of the incompatibility between the two higher education systems, the university is perceived as building up actual barriers to exclude and prevent mature students from involving in university in the same way as their full-time younger counterparts. Due to both the class size and the biased assumption from the teachers that the mature students do not need more support, most of the mature students in this research perceive that they are not known by the teachers and do not have a good relationship with them. Most of the Chinese mature students in this research highlight the significant support and help of their peers, both academically and emotionally, which reflects and compensates for the inadequate support from the staff and institution. All these aspects underscored by mature students reveal how the institutional habitus creates and exacerbates the Chinese mature students' disadvantaged situation in higher education by affecting their social integration.

6.3 Summary

This chapter presents the interview data of this research, demonstrating how the different institutional habitus in both England and China affects mature students' study experience via both the institutional practice and affecting mature students' habitus.

Via the institutional practice, the institutional habitus affects mature students' academic integration by the pedagogical structure, support from staff and access to educational resources on campus. The institutional habitus affects mature students' social integration by activities on campus, peer involvement and the student-staff relationship. Via affecting mature students' habitus, the institutional habitus affects mature students' perception of the value of their degree, their feelings about being mature students on campus, their sense of belonging to the university, and their study expectation. Regarding the various aspects above, even though the institutional habitus in the two countries operates and functions differently, both of them contribute to mature students' disadvantaged and unequal situation in higher education in the two countries, based on mature students' perceptions expressed in this research.

In England, although mature students in this research perceive that they are entitled to participate in the university life equally with their younger counterparts, the institutional habitus still makes the university alien to them via the institutional practice and via affecting mature students' habitus; hence, they exclude themselves from engaging in university life and contain themselves in the society they built up together with peers. In contrast, due to the dual higher education systems in the same university context in China, there is separation and distinction between the regular higher education system and the adult higher education system. The incompatibility between the two higher education systems is perceived as building up actual barriers to exclude and prevent mature students from involving in university in the same way as their full-time younger counterparts, which makes the Chinese mature students feel excluded and

isolated from the university. Besides, the segregation between the two higher education system and the institutional practice leads to mature students' isolated and unequal situation being extended out of the university context to society, as they perceive they are treated unequally by the society, especially in the job market.

Mature students' study experience in the two countries in this research reveals that both the English mature students and the Chinese mature students in the two countries are in a disadvantaged and unequal situation in higher education, which is a result of the institutional habitus of the university, which is still marked by the traditional students. However, the exclusion and disadvantages that the English mature students in this research suffer from are mainly in the university; while for the Chinese students, the exclusion and inequality are extended out of the university to the wider society. The next section will present the conclusion of this study and give a more theoretical explanation of the data in this research.

Chapter 7 Discussion: Mature students' exclusion in higher education— institutional habitus and student habitus

In the preceding chapters this study has outlined a particular framework of mature students in both England and China in relation to the interaction between the institutional habitus and mature students' habitus. This chapter will discuss the main ideas and identify the study's key issues.

The major findings of this study suggest the appropriateness of the metaphor of “dance to the dominants' tune and filter out those unable to keep time” (McDonough, 1997: 107), which reflects the incompatibility between institutional habitus and mature students' habitus in both England and China. This incompatibility between institutional habitus and mature students' habitus affects mature students' academic and social integration, resulting in their unequal and disadvantaged situation in higher education in the two countries. Because the different higher education systems in the two countries treat mature students in different ways, this research defines the exclusion that the English mature students suffer from as “soft” exclusion, whereas the exclusion that the Chinese mature students suffer from is “hard” exclusion; but both the English and Chinese mature students generate self-exclusion from the alien university atmosphere.

The institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience in two dimensions: via the institutional practices and via affecting mature students' habitus. Via institutional practice, as perceived by mature students in the two countries, both the pedagogical structure and the institutional structure are marked by the full-time traditional students, which affects mature students' academic and social integration into the university life, due to their characteristics as adults and the pattern of their part-time programme. In this situation, mature students in the two countries perceive that they have experienced exclusion and segregation created by the university. Via affecting mature students' habitus, the institutional practice causes mature students to have negative perceptions and experiences regarding their feelings about being mature students, their expectations of university life and their sense of belonging to the university. These negative perceptions and experiences causes mature students in the two countries to generate their own self-exclusion from involvement in university life.

Due to the different higher education systems in England and China, the ways in which the institutional practice generates exclusion and segregation perceived by mature students, and the way mature students exclude themselves from university life are presented in different ways. In England, mature students perceive that they are entitled to be fully involved in university life academically and socially, equally with their younger full-time counterparts; but because they feel the university life is alien to them and does not fit them, they are not willing to have much academic and social integration apart from their lectures. In contrast, in China, due to the dual higher education system, even though the mature students have their higher education physically in the regular

higher education domain—the university, they have limited involvement in university life academically and socially because they belong to the parallel adult higher education system, which is independent and segregated from the regular higher education system. Furthermore, since the Chinese mature students feel inferior and not confident about themselves, they choose to avoid involvement in a university life that is dominated academically and socially by traditional younger students. In contrast to the English mature students, the exclusion and inequality that the Chinese mature students suffer from extends outside the university context to the wider society because of the lower perceived value of their degree and the education provided by the adult higher education system. Even though the ways in which universities generate exclusion among mature students and the way mature students construct their own self-exclusion different in the two countries, the universities in both countries still “dance to the dominants’ tune and filter out those unable to keep time” (McDonough, 1997, 107).

The institutional habitus and mature students’ habitus interact with each other via mature students’ interaction with their institutions and both the institutional habitus and mature students habitus affect mature students’ academic and social integration in university. The institutional habitus plays out in the pedagogical structure and the institutional structure. Mature students perceive that both the pedagogical structure and the institutional structure exclude them from integrating into the university academically and socially (Busher et al., 2015). On the other hand, mature students’ habitus plays out in mature students’ feeling about being mature students on campus, their expectations of university life and their sense of belonging to the university, which

drive the mature students to exclude themselves from integrating into university life academically and socially. Mature students' interaction with their institutions is the medium via which the mature students' habitus encounters the institutional habitus. The incompatibility between the institutional habitus and mature students' habitus causes both the English and Chinese mature students' isolated and disadvantaged situation in higher education.

The following sections will provide a more detailed discussion of the issues surrounding this conclusion.

7.1 Institutional habitus: “dance to the dominants’ tune”

The first sub conclusion in this research is that the institutional habitus in both England and China is still marked by and in favour of the dominant group—the traditional young students (Weissmann, 2013; Wardley et al., 2013; McTaggart, 2016; Feldman, 2016), and maintains mature students as a non-dominant group in a disadvantaged and unequal situation via the institutional practices, which affect mature students’ academic integration and social integration. According to the data, the institutional habitus plays out via the institutional practices in two dimensions: the pedagogical structure and the institutional structure. The sub-sections below give more detailed discussion regarding this conclusion about the different situations in England and China respectively.

7.1.1 The institutional habitus in English higher education system creates a “soft” exclusion of mature students

The Widening Participation strategy, especially the Foundation Degree programme in England targets different groups of people who cannot engage with higher education in the traditional way such as the A-levels, with the aim of helping mature students to enter higher education through alternative routes (HEFCE, 2000). Based on this purpose, the Foundation Degree programme offers approachable and affordable entrance requirements, flexible delivery modes, and Top-up courses leading mature students to an Honours degree. This programme seems as though it is designed for the sake of mature students’ access and the convenience of their study in higher education. However, when this agenda is put into practice, as perceived by the mature students in this research, the education provided by the university still makes them feel excluded and many educational practices are viewed as not considering mature students’ characteristics appropriately. The institutional practices generated by the institution are perceived as designed based on the institution’s preference and its perceptions of what

would please mature students, rather than an understanding of what mature students' actually need or what mature students could benefit from. This unsatisfactory institutional practice by the university reflects that the institutional habitus of the university is still not in favour of mature students or inclined to understand mature students' characteristics and requirements.

Since this research takes place in China and England as two cases to explore mature students' study experience from a global perspective, as a comparison to the Chinese situation, the exclusion described by the mature students in England is described as "soft exclusion". "Soft exclusion" in this research means that the institutional practice generated by the university in England seems to be aimed at facilitating mature students' study and not to require much of their personal time to be on campus, but such institutional practices mean mature students experience exclusion and lack of integration into the university. "Soft" exclusion also implies that the English mature students do not doubt that they are allowed to be involved in university equally with their full-time counterparts; but they feel the university is alien and not in favour of them so they feel they are excluded and segregated.

Regarding academic integration, the English mature students in this research perceive that the pedagogical structure of both the Foundation Degree and the Top-up courses poses study difficulties to them. First of all, they claim that there is no transition between the two programmes, as they feel the Foundation Degree is more work-based whereas the Top-up courses are too academic and theoretical. Due to this lack of transition, the English mature students perceive that they suffer unexpected academic pressure in the Top-up course, especially because of the pressure caused by the insufficient programme length of the Top-up course. McTaggart (2016) notes that the practices generated by institutions, especially poor planning of workload, present barriers to mature students' study. Thirdly, the English mature students in this research

perceive that the pedagogical structure fails to provide enough academic support and guidance, as they claim that they do not have enough teaching time and tutorial time in each module. In practice, the so-called “flexible study” time advocated by the government and university contributes to mature students’ lack of academic integration and isolation.

Regarding social integration, the English mature students in this research perceive that the institutional structure fails to involve them in the university life and makes them feel isolated. As a result, they have to build up their own society and rely on each other. Firstly, mature students only come to university during evenings or weekends, but they perceive that there is little activity organised during these times. On the contrary, during the time when the majority of activities take place on campus, mature students are at work, so it is impossible for them to even think about participating in those activities. Mature students also perceive that the university has an assumption that the mature students have less interest or need for participating in university life. They perceive there is hardly any activity organised for mature students and there is no organization formed for this student cohort. As many research studies indicate, the institutions prioritizing traditional young students is demonstrated by how the timetable of activities is scheduled based on traditional students’ preference (Tett, 2004). Secondly, the English mature students in this research remark upon some teachers’ lack of willingness to care about their study or to take initiative to ask if they need help or not. As many research studies have suggested, support from staff and the relationship with staff are two essential aspects of the institutional habitus which have significant value for mature students’ study experience and outcome (Morrison, 2009; McTaggart, 2016; Heagney and Benson, 2017). However, the majority of the English mature students in this research perceive that many of their teachers fail to make contribution to their academic and social integration into the university life. Thirdly, due to mature students’

lack of involvement with their teachers and with the university as a whole, they “stick together”, build up their own society and support each other. They perceive that the university fails to involve them; therefore their social integration on campus is limited to the society which they build up with their peers.

Institutional factors, attitudes and dispositions contribute significantly to how staff and students behave towards non-traditional students, thus actively contributing to the externalisation of an institutional habitus that excludes the non-traditional from its priority (Weissmann, 2013). As a consequence, even if universities are open to students from non-dominant groups, the institutional habitus of most universities is still marked by an emphasis on traditional students and the non-traditional students still suffer from a problematic deviation from the norm.

In conclusion, how the institutional habitus of university in England is not in favour of mature students could be summarized by using the argument from Gilardi and Guglielmetti (2011): there is a paradoxical effect among universities now; on the one hand, they encourage non-traditional students, especially mature students, to enter university, but on the other hand, they seem not concerned to understand them or change for them, which results in the institutional system being designed for the sake of traditional students and in their favour. As described by this research, the “soft” exclusion suffered by the English mature students signifies that, unlike their Chinese counterparts (discussed in the next section), the English mature students are not prevented or debarred from involvement in university life; but it is the institutional habitus embodied in the university that does not work in their favour; hence the institutional practices contribute to their exclusion rather than integration.

7.1.2 The Chinese adult higher education system creates a “hard” exclusion of mature students

Thomas announces that “Institutional habitus should be understood as more than the culture of the educational institution; it refers to relational issues and priorities, which are deeply embedded, and sub-consciously informing practices” (Thomas, 2002: 431). Unlike the unitary higher education system in England, the adult higher education system in China is an independent system, in parallel to the regular higher education system. Not dissimilar to many adult education systems in “Western” countries, adult higher education in China has long been recognised as a means for upskilling the work force and for promoting the expansion of higher education (He, 2004; Liu, 2006). Primarily regarded as professional skills development, an adult higher education degree is less academically-oriented and thus the entrance requirement of adult higher education is perceived as easier than that of the regular higher education system (Bai, 2007; Ji, 2013). The goal and target of the adult higher education system is not to provide education with the same academic focus as the regular higher education system (Xie and Tan, 2014). However, the adult higher education is authorized to award a Bachelor degree to mature students, although the degree awarded by the adult higher education system is different from the Bachelor degree awarded by the regular higher education system (Yu, 2006).

After the higher education expansion, more and more universities organise adult higher education and award Bachelor degrees to mature students, but in the university context, the regular higher education system and the adult higher education system operate and function separately and distinctly. Because mature students belong to the adult higher education system, they are managed separately from the traditional students by the university. The situation in which two higher education systems operate separately in one university context causes increasingly serious contradiction and conflict between

four aspects in the Chinese higher education arena—mature students, university, regular higher education system and adult higher education system. The contradiction and conflict between these four aspects is reflected in the institutional practice generated by the institutional habitus. The institutional practices including pedagogical structure and institutional structure build up a “hard” exclusion for mature students in the university. In comparison to the “soft exclusion” that the English mature students suffer from, this research defines the exclusion that the Chinese mature students in this research suffer from as “hard” exclusion, which means actual barriers are built up by the university to segregate and exclude these mature students from participating in university life on the same footing as their full-time counterparts, due to the incompatibility between the regular and adult higher education systems.

Regarding academic integration, the Chinese mature students in this research perceive that the university arranges regular higher education and adult higher education separately for traditional full-time students and part-time mature students in the one university context. Unlike the situation in England, the two types of higher education are organised by different higher education systems and based on different principles, which causes distinction and segregation between the two student cohorts (Li, 2008; Zhang, 2017). As perceived by these Chinese mature students, three types of the institutional practices reflect their segregation and unequal situation, as well as the way institutional habitus is not in favour of them.

Firstly, the Chinese mature students in this research perceive that the pedagogical structure of adult higher education provides education with lower professionalism and applicability. These mature students point out that the unbalanced course arrangement and the out-dated teaching content decrease the quality of the education and mature students’ benefit from it. The Chinese mature students in this research also highlight the lack of expertise and willingness to help among their teachers and how this situation

makes their education lack practicability. As significant institutional practices, the expertise of teachers and their willingness to provide support reflect the institutional habitus (Morrison, 2009; McTaggart, 2016; Heagney & Benson, 2017). Secondly, the segregation between the two higher education systems builds up a barrier preventing mature students from accessing the facilities and resources on campus equally with their traditional counterparts. As a significant aspect of institutional habitus, the materiality sets the scene for pedagogical outcomes and developments and has unavoidable impact on students' study outcomes (Poromaa, 2017). This limited usage of resources reveals the division between the two systems in the same university context and the unequal status of mature students as the non-dominant group. Thirdly, based on mature students' perceptions in this research, all the segregation and inequality they suffer from are rooted in the university's attitude towards the two different types of higher education. Mature students perceive that arranging regular higher education is the main duty and priority of the university; arranging adult higher education is an extended function of the university which is performed for the sake of serving the society and gaining financial benefit (Zhao, 2016). The university is perceived as showing no willingness to improve the quality of adult higher education, let alone investing in it. The Chinese mature students' academic experience presented in this research reveals the existence of the phenomenon that the institutional habitus excludes the mature students (Thomas, 2002), prevents them from engaging with the institution (Laird & Cruce, 2009) and treats them as "others" by creating a distinct pedagogical structure (Tett, 2004; Smyth & Banks, 2012).

Regarding social integration, the mature students in this research perceive that they experience "hard" exclusion, which is caused by the segregation between the two higher education systems. Firstly, the institutional structure is perceived as providing no channel for mature students to obtain information about activities or events on campus.

This lack of information functions as a silent rejection which mature students perceive as an indicator that the activities and events are provided for traditional students and they are not allowed to participate in. Secondly, mature students perceive that there are hardly any activities or student organizations provided them. Thirdly, these mature students also claim that they have hardly any interaction with the teachers and they cannot approach their teachers outside the lecture time. This situation excludes these mature student from integrating into the university and isolates them, which forces them to rely on each other as a marginalized cohort on campus.

The lack of academic and social integration drives the Chinese mature students to build up their own society and rely on their peers. As mentioned frequently in the student profiles and interview data, these mature students refer to their peers as “resources”, because they perceive they can benefit more from their peers’ work experience than the lectures and the peers are the only people from whom they can get support regarding both their study and job.

The situation of these Chinese mature students illustrates that the institutional habitus is perceived as not in favour of them but as treating them as a side-lined group. Unlike the English situation, due to the dual higher education systems in China, the institutional practices generated by the institutional habitus construct a “hard” exclusion of the mature students, which sets up actual barriers that segregate and exclude these mature students from participating in university life equally with their full-time counterparts. This “hard” exclusion and isolation reflects that the institutional habitus does not treat the mature students equally but maintains their excluded and isolated situation (Tett, 2004; Weissmann, 2013; Gilardi & Guglielmetti, 2011; O’Boyle, 2015). The lack of cooperation and integration between the regular higher education system and the adult higher education system in the university context contributes to mature students’

disadvantaged situation and makes them the victims of the incompatibility between the two systems.

7.2 Mature students' habitus: filtering themselves out from the "dominants' tune"

As analysed above, mature students' perceptions reveal that the institutional habitus is responsible for their unsatisfactory academic and social integration due to the institutional practices including pedagogical structure and the institutional structure in this research in both England and China. However, the institutional practices are not the only way in which the institutional habitus affects mature students' academic and social integration into the university in the two countries; this research indicates that the institutional habitus also affects mature students' habitus by making them exclude themselves from the university life.

As "a system of durable, transposable dispositions" the habitus generates "unified practices" (Bourdieu, 1979: vii) including one's thoughts, expectations, attitudes, aspirations, and actions (Bourdieu, 1979, 1986). The second sub conclusion in this research is that, the institutional habitus affects mature students' study experience via influencing their habitus, including their feelings about being mature students on campus, their sense of belonging and their expectations of university life in the two countries, whereby they feel alien to the university and exclude themselves from participating in university life. Both the English and the Chinese mature students in this research claim that they do not feel comfortable to be on campus or involved with the younger traditional students; since they do not have much academic and social integration, they do not have much sense of belonging to the university as either. Most of the mature students in both England and China do not have much expectation of their

university life, although the reasons behind this are different. Under the influence of the institutional habitus, mature students' habitus reinforces and reasserts itself then keeps on excluding students themselves from academic and social integration (Lehmann, 2007). The self-exclusion and segregation of the mature students interviewed in this research also reveals their unequal and disadvantaged situation in university in both England and China.

The sub-sections below will give more detail to the discussion surrounding this conclusion regarding situations in England and China, respectively.

7.2.1 The English mature students: self-exclusion to the unsuitable university life

As presented in the previous sections, unlike the Chinese mature students, the English mature students perceive that they are not prevented from participating in the university activities and events. However, they perceive that the university presents itself as the domain of traditional students and it is alien to them, so they choose to exclude themselves from participating much in the university. Since the habitus is a complex internalized core from which everyday experiences emanate (Reay, 2004), how the English mature students' habitus contributes to their self-exclusion could be seen from the following aspects.

Firstly, the English mature students in this research have a complex feeling about being mature students on campus. Apart from a few younger mature students (aged from 22 to 24) who do not class themselves as mature students, the majority of the English mature students in this research have negative feelings about being mature students because they feel they are old and it is awkward and embarrassing for them to be present with the younger students together on campus. Most of the English mature students perceive that the younger students are the dominant group on campus and many of them

tend to doubt whether they should be present in university (Tett, 2004; Lehmann, 2007; Reay, 2003, 2015). This sense of feeling awkward being out-of-place makes these mature students tend to avoid getting involved with their younger counterparts and to stay with the people like themselves (Dumais, 2002; Reay, 2003). At the same time, many English mature students in this research perceive that people still have wrong perceptions towards them, as people tend to assume that it is easy to study as mature students. Therefore most of the English mature students in this research prefer to spend time with their classmates as they perceive that they are in a similar life situation and they can understand each other. The majority of the English mature students in this research tend to exclude themselves from involvement with their younger counterparts; instead, they build their own society and constrain themselves within it.

Secondly, most of the English mature students in this research perceive that they do not have much sense of belonging to the university. They report that they do not get involved in university life since they have quite limited time on campus. Also, as shown in the prior sections, the institutional practices including the pedagogical structure and the institutional structure restrict mature students' academic and social integration into university life. Mature students' limited and constrained involvement with the university makes them feel less connected or bonded with the university, which then causes them to have less sense of belonging to the university. This lack of a sense of belonging drives these mature students to exclude themselves from the alien university atmosphere.

Thirdly, the majority of the English mature students in this research claim that they do not have much expectation of or interest in participating in university life. The educational expectation of the majority of these mature students is to acquire a degree and knowledge; university life is not part of their study goal. Therefore, they tend to confine their attention and effort to their study only and have less interest in the

university life. As claimed by the mature students in this research, also because of their family and job commitments, most of them focus more on the completion of their assignments and modules rather than spending more effort on their study. Mature students' educational expectation constrains their academic and social integration into university life. In addition, mature students' study expectation is also influenced by their perceptions of university life. As presented previously, most of the English mature students in this research perceive that the activities in university focus more on the traditional students rather than being appropriate for themselves; therefore they have less expectation of those activities, as they feel they cannot benefit much from them. Mature students' self-exclusion reveals how the English mature students' habitus is affected by the institutional habitus and generates their action of self-exclusion.

7.2.2 The Chinese mature students: self-exclusion and self-inferiority to the perceived "authentic" regular higher education

Compared to the English mature students who are not comfortable becoming involved in university life, most of the Chinese mature students in this research perceive that their academic and social integration into university life is restricted by the university and they also tend to exclude themselves from participating with their younger counterparts because of their sense of inferiority. Influenced by the institutional habitus, the Chinese mature students' habitus shapes their perceptions and hence their action, which is presented in the following ways (Reay, 2004).

Firstly, in terms of being mature students on campus, the perception of themselves as "eliminated ones from the regular higher education system" and "at a lower level" is the primary theme among the Chinese mature students in this research. As mature students perceive their degree is less valued by society, especially the job market, they feel they are less competitive than their younger counterparts. These mature students

also have the perception that society views them as people who are not able to study in the “authentic” regular higher education and they are the “failures” of the education competition. Students’ perception of their position in higher education is an important aspect which shows how the institutional habitus affects their habitus and hence engenders their self-perception (Lehmann, 2007, 2012; Weissmann, 2013). Because these mature students have been given these “labels”, their perceptions of being mature students are quite negative, including lack of confidence, a sense of inferiority, and a sense of discrimination.

Secondly, regarding study aspiration, the Chinese mature students in this research have reduced study aspiration for two reasons: most of them feel they cannot learn much useful or new from their teachers and lectures; they also feel that the low reputation of their qualification in society decreases their passion for study. Under the influence of the institutional habitus, mature students’ study experience and outcomes are both affected by their study aspiration, which is a significant aspect of their habitus (Nash, 2002; Edgerton et al., 2013). Thirdly, regarding the sense of belonging to the university, these mature students feel they do not have a sense of belonging; instead, they feel excluded and isolated because of their lack of academic and social integration into the university. As presented in the previous section, these Chinese mature students perceive that they have experienced “hard” exclusion from the university and this “hard” exclusion makes them feel that the university treats them as outsiders so they exclude themselves from becoming involved in the university as a response (Mallman & Lee, 2017; Lehmann, 2007).

As pointed out by Bourdieu, habitus must function and be interpreted in a certain field since habitus can generate various practices in different fields (Bourdieu, 1990b). In the Chinese university context in this research, “hard” exclusion—the institutional practices generated by the institutional habitus—shapes these mature students’ thoughts,

expectations, attitudes, aspirations, and actions (Bourdieu, 1974, 1986). Their feeling about being mature students on campus and their perception of their place in the university generates their actions in the way they interact with the university life by functioning as habitus. The evidence of this research indicates that the institutional habitus of the university affects the Chinese mature students' habitus, including their feeling about being mature students, their study aspiration, and their sense of belonging to the university. Consequently, under the influence of the institutional habitus, the Chinese mature students' habitus reinforces and reasserts itself then keeps on excluding them from involvement in the alien university life (Lehmann, 2007).

7.3 Comparison between the “soft” exclusion and “hard” exclusion in England and China

This research claims that due to the different higher education systems, the institutional habitus of the English university and the Chinese university function in different ways, which causes the English mature students and the Chinese mature students to suffer from different types of exclusion in university—“soft” exclusion and “hard” exclusion. Even though the ways in which the exclusion is presented in the two countries are different, the two types of exclusion cause the same consequence on mature students' habitus, which is that both the English and Chinese mature students generate self-exclusion as a response to the exclusion conducted by the university. Based on the theoretical analysis in the previous sections, this section compares the English mature students' study experience and the Chinese mature students' study experience from a wider perspective.

In the English context, because of the unitary higher education system, the mature students perceive that they just study in a different programme and achieve their degree

via a different part-time route; there is no difference between the degree they are awarded and the degree awarded to their full-time counterparts. They perceive themselves as more competitive than their younger counterparts in job market because they have both the same degree and work experience. They perceive the exclusion they suffer from in university as more about the university's failure to provide sufficient support and involve them in university life based on their characteristics as mature students, because higher education has been anchored in its historical traditions of serving full-time, residential youth (Sissel et al., 2001). Nevertheless, they do not doubt that they are allowed to be involved in university and have access to the educational resources equally with their younger counterparts. Their self-exclusion is more about their feeling not comfortable or attracted to fit into the university life. The institutional habitus of the English university presents itself as still marked by the younger traditional students but it does not cause the English mature students to suffer from further discrimination in the wider society, as Chinese mature students do.

This research also claims that the incompatibility between mature students' habitus and the institutional habitus in the English context also illustrates the deficiency of the Widening Participation policy when it is put into practice. From the policy level, the initiative and primary goal of the Widening Participation policy is to provide equal access to higher education to people from various academic backgrounds, but it has not provided enough support for people from less advantaged academic backgrounds to integrate into the academic study in university. Furthermore, this policy aims to facilitate mature students' study by providing flexible study modes, but it fails to provide flexible study assistance to compensate for the lack of support caused by mature students' limited time on campus. The Widening Participation programme design is grounded on an inappropriate assumption about what would please and attract mature students, but it fails to provide what mature students actually need during their daily

study practice. As a specific programme of the Widening Participation strategy, the Foundation Degree programme shows its deficiency regarding the two aspects above, which means its practice cannot fulfil its goal.

From the institutional level, this research claims that the universities have not contributed enough to embrace mature students in the university and to fulfil the ambition of the Widening Participation policy. The university has not contributed enough to provide better academic and social integration for mature students. Specifically, as illustrated in this research, the university has not arranged specific academic support or social activities for mature students, to promote their better academic and social integration, based on their requirements and characteristics.

On the contrary, the dual higher education system in China not only causes “hard” exclusion to the Chinese mature students within the university circumstance, but also causes them to suffer from discrimination in the wider society. As perceived by the Chinese mature students in this research, the university segregates them from their younger counterparts in the university context by the different pedagogical structure, and the institutional structure. The “hard” exclusion presents itself in various ways which lead these mature students to feel that they are treated differently by the university and they encounter barriers to their academic and social integration into university life. Furthermore, because of the unsatisfactory reputation of the adult higher education system and its nature as continuing education, these Chinese mature students perceive that they suffer from exclusion and discrimination in the wider society as well. They perceive that their degree awarded by the adult higher education system is less valued or recognized by the society, especially in the job market, which makes them feel they are less competitive than their full-time younger counterparts.

Compared to the English mature students in this research, the Chinese mature students perceive they suffer from outright exclusion and discrimination both in the university context and in the wider society. However, they could choose to exclude themselves from participating in university life and isolate themselves in the university context, but they are forced to bear the discrimination and bias in the wider society.

In the higher education massification era, the Chinese mature students' disadvantaged situation has deteriorated. More and more regular higher education graduates are flowing into the job market, causing the devaluation of the Bachelor degree (Mok, 2015, 2016), which means the less-valued degree awarded by the adult higher education encounters more discrimination. As illustrated in this research, both the government and the university exacerbate mature students' disadvantaged situation.

On the governmental level, the Central Party Committee and the State Council in China have issued a series of policies to support the development of regular higher education academically and financially, such as the "211 Project", the "985 Project", the "Key Discipline Innovation Platform", the "Key Discipline Project" and the new "Double World-Class Project" in the year 2015. On the contrary, the government encourages the development of adult higher education by treating it as a form of continuing education and informal learning (Liu, 2016; Lu, 2014), but the government rarely invests in adult higher education, academically or financially (Qin, 2016; Wang, 2016). The developmental direction of adult higher education announced by the government places the value of the degree awarded by the adult higher education system in an ambiguous and embarrassing situation. On the one hand, the degree awarded by the adult higher education system is authorized as a Bachelor degree; on the other hand, the degree is seen as less academic and with lower value than the degree awarded by the regular higher education system, by both the government and society. At the university level, this research claims that there is a vicious circle constructed by the reputation of the

adult higher education system in society and the quality of education it provides. The unsatisfactory education provided by adult higher education gives it a negative reputation in society, and this negative reputation in turn decreases expectations of adult higher education system to improving the quality of the education it provides. Consequently, mature students become the victims of this vicious circle, and they suffer from the exclusion and inequality both inside the university and in society.

Even though the mature students in England and China suffer from different types of exclusion, they are still in an unequal and disadvantaged situation. At the same time, their response to their disadvantaged situation is similar, which is to exclude themselves from the university life dominated by the full-time students and rely on each other. Therefore, McDonough's argument, "dance to the dominants' tune and filter out those unable to keep time" (1997: 107) could be used to summarize the situation in both countries.

7.4 Summary

This chapter has presented a synthesis of the major conclusions and arguments drawn out from this study.

This research suggests that along with the development of higher education massification globally (Mok, 2016), mature students in both England and China are still in a disadvantaged situation in higher education, which reflects that the institutional habitus is still in favour of traditional students and maintains mature students as an excluded cohort. Compared to the English mature students, the exclusion that the Chinese mature students suffer from not only exists inside the university, but also extends to the wider society after they graduate. The exclusion generated by the institutional habitus is internalised by mature students and affects their habitus, which

then externalizes to reproduce the action whereby the mature students exclude themselves from integrating into university life, academically and socially. Mature students' study experience in this research reflects the interaction between the institutional habitus and mature students' habitus and how the institutional habitus works together with mature students' habitus, contributing to mature students' unequal and disadvantaged situation in higher education by limiting their academic and social integration.

Chapter 8 Coda

This study has now come to the concluding stage. This chapter presents a summary of the main argument of this research, with concluding statements. Statements about the limitation of this work, the contribution of this research and the implication of this research are all presented in this chapter.

8.1 A summary of the main argument of the study

This study began in Chapter 2 providing contextual information about the different higher education systems in relation to mature students in both England and China, including the access system, the study patterns, and the inequalities that the mature students suffered from. In England, various alternative pathways for mature students to get access to university were introduced, then the Foundation Degree programme as one form of the alternative pathways was introduced in more detail, since English mature students who study in this alternative path were a focus of this research. In addition, the two parallel higher education systems in China, the regular higher education system and the adult higher education system, were explained, and then it was shown in more detail how the adult higher education system functions for mature students. After presenting how the higher education systems worked in the two countries, the inequalities that the mature students suffered from were also illustrated in this chapter.

Chapter 3 contained a literature review of the concepts, theories and relevant research studies linked with this study, beginning with the way habitus and institutional habitus operated and functioned in higher education context. Because of the small amount of research studies that explored mature students' study experience employing the theories of habitus and institutional habitus, research that investigated what institutional factors

influencing mature students' study experience via mature students' interaction with their institutions were also investigated, aiming to develop the theoretical framework of this research, which was shown in Figure 3.1. Methodology issues were discussed in Chapter 4, where it was shown how the methodology was designed for this research in order to carry out data collection and data analysis. As a constructivism qualitative research, the semi-structured interview was employed as the data collection approach because it explored mature students' subjective feelings and experiences about their study. The interviews were guided by the theoretical framework and the themes that emerged from the piloting.

Chapter 5 and 6 incorporated the data collected in this study. More specifically, chapter 5 presented eight individual profiles of the mature students in this study, four from England and four from China. Each profile introduced the mature student's current life situation, study aspiration, impression of studying as a mature student, and the researcher's impression of the mature student. Chapter 6 provided a description of interview data based on the emergent themes, organised by the Nvivo analysis used in this research. Two main themes were outlined in this chapter from the perspective of how the institutional habitus affected mature students' study experience, which were how the institutional habitus affected mature students' study experience via its institutional practices and via affecting mature students' habitus. These two themes particularly answered the two sub research questions of this research. Through the data presented in this chapter, it emerged that mature students in both England and China were in a disadvantaged and unequal situation which was contributed by the institutional habitus; although, because the higher education systems in the two countries functioned differently, the disadvantages and inequalities that the mature students suffered from in the two countries were different. Chapter 7 drew out a

synthesised discussion, which gave rise to the conclusion of the whole thesis. Chapter 8 is the summary of this study.

8.2 A summary of the conclusion of the study

The major findings of this study suggest the appropriateness of the metaphor of “dance to the dominants’ tune and filter out those unable to keep time” (McDonough, 1997: 107), which reflects the incompatibility between institutional habitus and mature students’ habitus in both England and China. This incompatibility between institutional habitus and mature students’ habitus affects mature students’ academic and social integration, resulting in mature students’ unequal and disadvantaged situation in the higher education arena in the two countries. Because the different higher education systems in the two countries treat mature students in different ways, this research defines the exclusion that the English mature students suffer from as “soft” exclusion, whereas the exclusion that the Chinese mature students suffer from is “hard” exclusion, in which actual barriers are built up by the university; but both the English and Chinese mature students generate self-exclusion from the alien university atmosphere as a response to the exclusion constructed by their universities.

More specifically, mature students in the two countries suffer exclusion and segregation from the university, which is manifested in their disadvantaged academic and social integration in the university. Due to the different higher education systems in England and China, “soft” exclusion and “hard” exclusion operate in different ways, and the ways mature students exclude themselves from university life are presented in different ways. In England, mature students perceive that they are entitled to be fully involved in university life academically and socially equally with their younger full-time counterparts; but because they feel the university life is alien to them and does not fit them, they are not willing to have much academic and social integration apart from

their lectures. They exclude themselves from involvement in university life but they perceive they are more competitive than their younger counterparts in the job market, as they perceive their Bachelor degrees to be the same as those of traditional fulltime students, and they have job experience in addition. On the contrary, the exclusion constructed by the Chinese university' habitus acts as "hard" exclusion for mature students. Because of the dual Chinese higher education system, the incompatibility between the regular higher education system and the adult higher education system in the same university context generates actual barriers to mature students' involvement in university equally with their full-time younger counterparts and affects their academic and social integration. This actual exclusion and isolation makes mature students exclude themselves from involvement in university and contributes to their lack of a sense of belonging. Furthermore, since the degree awarded by the adult higher education system is less valued by the society, which views mature students as the "failures of the regular higher education", the Chinese mature students' habitus generates a sense of inferiority and lack of confidence.

This research suggests that along with the development of higher education massification, mature students in both England and China are still in a disadvantaged situation in higher education, which reflects that the institutional habitus is still in favour of traditional students and maintains mature students as an excluded cohort. Compared to the English mature students, the exclusion and inequality that the Chinese mature students suffer from extends outside the university context to the society because of the lower perceived value of their degree and the education provided by the adult higher education system. The exclusion provided by the institutional habitus is internalised by mature students and affects their habitus, which then externalizes to reproduce the tendency of mature students to exclude themselves from integrating into university life, academically and socially. Mature students' study experience in this

research reflects the interactive mechanism between the institutional habitus and mature students' habitus and demonstrates how the institutional habitus works together with mature students' habitus, contributing to mature students' unequal and disadvantaged situation in higher education by limiting their academic and social integration.

8.3 The limitations of the study

All studies have limitations, and this study is no exception. The first limitation to be addressed is the four universities in both England and China for the data collection. Each specific university has its particular situation and characteristics; hence the mature students' study experience presented in this study only can represent their own study experience and subjective feelings generated in that specific context. Besides, since two English universities were selected in England and the two Chinese universities were selected in one city, future research studies could be carried out on in a larger scale and collect data from broader samples.

Another limitation is the challenges of conducting a study involving issues of intercultural communication and understanding. Since the researcher's first language is Chinese, it is unavoidable that she may have failed to make the English interviewees understand the interview questions clearly, which could limit the quality of the data. In addition, because the researcher has not experienced English undergraduate education herself, the interview questions might not reach the core of the existing problems. Similarly, since the researcher's undergraduate study and degree were from the regular higher education system, she might be unable to comprehend Chinese mature students' experience fully. All the researcher's personal experience, knowledge, and perspectives on the problem affect the quantity and quality of the qualitative data collected for this research.

The third limitation is in the analysis of the data. Since the theory and the theoretical framework is based on European research studies, the operation and the concretization of the habitus and the institutional habitus in these theories may be different from the way the habitus and institutional habitus actually work in the Chinese context. Therefore, the research data is analysed based on the theoretical framework and the conclusion is interpreted from the lens of the theory and current research studies. This reflects the challenge to retain the consistency of the study in terms of the intercultural understanding in the research design, data collection and the bridging of theory with the data.

8.4 The contribution of the study

The contribution of the study is twofold:

(1) This study contributes to the theory relating to mature students' experience in higher education. It does this in two ways:

- by offering an interpretation of the mechanism by which the institutional habitus interacts with mature students' habitus and generates both exclusion and mature students' self-exclusion. The institutional habitus affects mature students' study via institutional practices and by affecting mature students' habitus. Through mature students' interaction with the university, the institutional practices affect their academic and social integration, separating and excluding them from the traditional fulltime students. The institutional habitus makes the mature students feel the university is alien to them, and contributes to their sense of isolation and lack of a sense of belonging. Consequently, mature students' habitus generates their own isolation and exclusion from the involvement in university.

- by contributing to an understanding of the extent to which the higher education system can play a role in mature students' study experience. As a multi-case study from a global perspective, it shows how the English and Chinese mature students' different study experiences are constructed in relation to the different higher education systems in the two countries. The exclusion generated by the unitary English higher education system is described as "soft" exclusion, which means the university does not prevent mature students from participating in university but makes them feel the university is alien to them and make them feel it is difficult to participate. In comparison to this "soft" exclusion, the exclusion constructed by the Chinese university is defined as "hard" exclusion in this research, which emphasises that the incompatibility between the regular higher education system and the adult higher education system creates actual barriers to Chinese mature students' involvement in university. Although the different higher education systems generate exclusion for mature students in different ways in the two countries, the same response to the exclusion could be seen from mature students' action, which is that the mature students in the two countries generate self-exclusion from involvement in the university. By presenting the convergence and divergence of mature students' study experience in the two countries, the study reveals how the higher education systems affect mature students' study experience and the result of the influence.

(2) This study contributes to an understanding of a particular type of higher education system in China—the adult higher education system as a parallel system to the regular higher education system. In comparison to how the unitary higher education system in England works for mature students by providing alternative pathways into higher education, the adult higher education system in China is independent and distinct from the regular higher education system, and has the authority for arranging higher education for the Chinese mature students, including recruiting, educating, and

awarding the degree. By looking at how the English higher education system works for the mature student cohort, the drawbacks and the inappropriateness of the Chinese adult higher education system, especially in the higher education massification era, can be illustrated explicitly.

8.5 The implications of the study

Based on the constructivist view, readers may draw their own conclusion and understanding of this study when they read it. In terms of the researcher's stance, some issues emerged which have implications for the policy and practices of education provision for mature students in both England and China, from a global perspective. The researcher perceives that how the English system deals with the mature students could shed light on the Chinese adult higher education system, even though the English situation has to be improved as well. Therefore, this section presents the implications for the Chinese adult higher education system first, then draws out the implications for the English higher education system in relation to mature students.

From the Chinese perspective, in the era of higher education massification, the meaning and value of the adult higher education need a further and deeper consideration. The essence of the adult higher education in the era of higher education massification, as declared by the Chinese government and many researchers, is further education, which is practice-oriented, aiming to provide the opportunity for people to have further development and update their knowledge as part of a life-long learning strategy. Whereas the adult higher education system is also authorized to provide undergraduate education and award a Bachelor degree, the degree awarded by the adult higher education is perceived by the society as having less academic value and as lower than the degree awarded by the regular higher education system. Based on this situation, a

number of questions regarding the equality of higher education in China need to be considered deeply.

The first question that needs to be considered is, since the society perceives the Bachelor's degrees awarded by the regular higher education system and those awarded by the adult higher education system as having different academic value, should this academic and students' stratification continue to exist in the future, in order to keep the education provided by the adult higher education system and by the regular higher education system at different academic levels, or should the quality of the education provided by the adult higher education system be improved and the degree awarded by the adult higher education system have the same value as the degree awarded by the regular higher education system?

The consideration of the two developmental directions of the adult higher education system leads to the following further questions. If the future developmental direction of the adult higher education system is to retain the academic and students' stratification, and to provide more practice-oriented education rather than academic-oriented education, compared to the regular higher education system, should adult higher education still be authorized to award a so-called "Bachelor's degree" or should the adult higher education system award another type of qualification, instead of the Bachelor degree? On the other hand, if the future developmental direction of the adult higher education system is to improve its educational quality and make the Bachelor's degree it awards have the same academic value as the Bachelor's degree awarded by the regular higher education system, should its current relatively lower entrance requirement also be changed to be more strict? At the same time, should its graduation and awarding requirements be changed to be more rigorous? Then if the entrance requirements, graduation and awarding requirements of the adult higher education all become similar to those of the regular higher education system, what will be the

distinguishing feature of the adult higher education? In the era of higher education massification, what role should adult higher education system play in terms of degree awarding, and how can educational equity for both adult and traditional students be guaranteed?

Based on the questions above, another vital question regarding mature students' educational equity arises. As shown in the data presentation chapter, the majority of mature students in this research failed the Higher Education Entrance Examination when they were young, so they could not study in university via the traditional route. They perceive that it is nearly impossible for them to take the Higher Education Entrance Examination again, let alone pass it, when they become adults and have job and family commitments. Consequently, studying as mature students in the adult higher education system is the only available way for adults to promote their academic level and improve themselves in China, since regular higher education system does not provide higher education at Bachelor level in a par-time form (Li, 2008). However, based on the discussion above, if the adult higher education system retains academic and students' stratification, and mature students still can only be awarded the less academically-oriented and less-valued Bachelor's degree, does it mean that once people fail the Higher Education Entrance Examination there is no way for them to achieve the so-called "authentic degree" recognized by the society? If it becomes no longer possible for people to achieve the so-called "authentic degree" recognized by the society after failing the Higher Education Entrance Examination when they are young, is there any room for discussing higher educational equity? Conversely, if adults could be offered an alternative reachable way to get the so-called "authentic degree" recognized by the society after having failed the Higher Education Entrance Examination when they are young, then how can traditional students' right and equity be guaranteed?

The questions above are the fundamental questions in relation to the root of the Chinese higher education systems. In the era of higher education massification, how to protect mature students' benefit and how to guarantee overall higher education equity is a serious question which needs to be considered thoroughly. Since the scope of this research is limited and this research does not involve a comparison between Chinese mature students and traditional students, this research is not able to answer these questions. However, for the researcher herself and for other research studies, as well as government officials, these questions are unavoidable and are becoming more and more vital in Chinese society.

When research looks at how the English higher education system deals with mature students' education at undergraduate level, there are some useful experiences which could shed light on the overall Chinese higher education systems.

Instead of arranging a parallel system specifically for mature students, the unitary English higher education system provides various alternative pathways for non-traditional students, including mature students, to get access to university and get qualified. The English mature students in this research perceive that the academic level and the amount of modules they have are the same as their younger counterparts have. They also perceive that the academic standard they have to meet in order to get qualified is also the same as their younger counterparts. This strategy implies that even though the English mature students come into university through an alternative pathway and study part-time, they study at the same academic level as the traditional students, and have to meet the same academic standard in order to get qualified with the Bachelor's degree. The English mature students in this research perceive that the entrance requirement may be easier than the traditional way such as A-level, but the requirement for getting qualified is the same. This English strategy could shed light on the Chinese situation. Instead of arranging a parallel adult higher education system for managing

mature students' study, the regular higher education system could recruit mature students by an alternative pathway, and the mature students would have to meet the same academic standard as the traditional students in order to get qualified. In this way, the educational resources invested particularly in the adult higher education system could be saved and then invested in the university to enable mature students to share the same educational resources as their younger counterparts. Once the Chinese mature students are offered the opportunity to have education at the same level as the traditional students, as well as the opportunity to be awarded a Bachelor's degree with the same academic value as that awarded to traditional students, it would be depend on the individual mature student if they could attain the degree or not rather than the overall higher education systems that prevents mature students from being qualified with the same Bachelor degree as the traditional students. Simultaneously, the exclusion that the Chinese mature students suffer from inside and outside the university would be changed. However, taking into account the limited educational resources in China, as well as the competitiveness of higher education, more research needs to be done in order to find out if this strategy could be put into practice in China.

Regarding the areas that the English universities could improve, the researcher of this study has two suggestions as follows. Firstly, more opportunities of participating in university life academically and socially should be made more reachable for mature students. This is because the majority of mature students in this research claim that the workshops and activities that they want to participate in are all organised in the daytime, based on the traditional students' schedule, which prevents them from having a promising integration into university life, even though they want to participate. This would also be an effective way to enhance mature students' sense of belonging to the university and enhance the feeling that they are not isolated in the university. Secondly, there is a need to improve the relationship between mature students and their teachers.

As perceived by the English mature students in this research, the teachers may assume that the mature students do need their care or support, so the teachers tend to “hold back” and interact less with the mature students. However, the mature students actually need attention, care and support from their teachers, which could contribute to their study as well as enhance their sense of belonging.

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Appendix I: Records of field work on daily basis

Fieldwork in China (20th November 2015—30 December 2015)

Date	Fieldwork	Research dairy
20 th	Approached University E and met the gatekeeper	
21 st	Contacted the volunteers regarding the time of interview	
22 nd	Interviewed student E1	
23 rd	Interviewed student E2 and E3	
24 th	Interviewed student E4	Improved interview methods
25 th	Interviewed student E5	
26 th	Interviewed student E6	
27 th	Interviewed student E7	
28 th	Interviewed student E8	
29 th	Interviewed student E9 and E10	
30 th	Managed and organised the interview data	Feedback and planed for the further interview
1 st	Took a break	
2 nd		
3 rd	Approached University S and met the gatekeeper	
4 th	Contacted the volunteers regarding the time of interview	
5 th	Interviewed student S1	
6 th	Interviewed student S2	
7 th	Interviewed student S3	
8 th	No interview arranged	Feedback from previous interviews
9 th	No interview arranged	
10 th	Interviewed student S4	
11 th	Interviewed student S5	
12 th	Interviewed student S6	
13 th	No interview arranged	

14 th	No interview arranged	
15 th	Interviewed student S7	
16 th	Interviewed student S8	
17 th	Interviewed student S9	
18 th	Interviewed student S10	
19 th	Took a break	
20 th		
21 st		
22 nd		
23 rd	Managed and organised the data	
24 th	Set plan for transcription	
25 th	Finished the first interview transcription	Got an idea of the time for finishing one transcription
26 th		
27 th		
28 th		
29 th		
30 th	Planed for the further interview transcription schedule	

Fieldwork in England (20th January 2016—30 February 2016)

Date	Fieldwork	Research dairy
20 th	Approached University Y and met the gatekeeper	
21 st	Contacted the volunteers regarding the time of interview	
22 nd	Interviewed student Y1 and Y2	
23 rd	Interviewed student Y3	
24 th	Interviewed student Y4	Improved interview methods
25 th	Interviewed student Y5	
26 th	Interviewed student Y6	
27 th	Interviewed student Y7	
28 th	Managed and organised the interview data	Feedback and planed for the further interview
29 th		
30 th		
31 st		
1 st	Took a break	
2 nd		
3 rd	Approached University H and met the gatekeeper	
4 th	Contacted the volunteers regarding the time of interview	
5 th	Interviewed student H1	
6 th	Interviewed student H2	
7 th	Interviewed student H3	
8 th	No interview arranged	Feedback from previous interviews
9 th	No interview arranged	
10 th	Interviewed student H4	
11 th	Interviewed student H5	
12 th	Interviewed student H6	

13 th	No interview arranged	
14 th	No interview arranged	
15 th	Interviewed student H7	
16 th	Interviewed student H8	
17 th	Interviewed student H9	
18 th	Took a break	
19 th		
20 th		
21 st		
22 nd		Interviewed student H10
23 rd	Managed and organised the data	
24 th	Set plan for transcription	
25 th	Finished the first interview transcription	Got an idea of the time for finishing one transcription
26 th		
27 th		
28 th		
29 th	Planed for the further interview transcription schedule	

Appendix II: An overview of profiles for participants in this study

			Age	Sex	Marital status / child's age	Year of study (F: Finish)
Chinese interviews	National university	E1	35	F	married / 5-year-old daughter	1
		E2	23	F	married	2
		E3	24	F	Not married	2
		E4	31	F	married / 3-year-old daughter	2
		E5	28	F	married	F
		E6	29	F	Not married	1
		E7	26	F	married	F
		E8	28	F	Not married	1
		E9	24	F	Not married	1
		E10	32	F	married / 3-year-old daughter	2
	Provincial university	S1	29	F	married / 3-year-old daughter	3
		S2	25	F	married / 1-year-old daughter	F
		S3	26	F	Not married	F
		S4	25	F	Not married	3
		S5	24	F	Not married	3
		S6	24	F	Not married	3
		S7	25	F	Not married	3
		S8	26	F	Not married	F
		S9	26	F	married	2
		S10	26	F	Not married	3
English interviews	Post-1992 university	Y1	38	F	Married/ 8-year-old son and 9-year-old-son	BA honors
		Y2	24	F	Not married	BA honors
		Y3	30	F	Not married	BA honors
		Y4	28	F	Not married	BA honors
		Y5	42	F	Not married	Foundation Degree, 1st year
		Y6	22	F	Not married	BA honors
		Y7	50	F	Married 20-year-old 23-year-old	Foundation Degree, 1st year
	Pre-1992 university	H1	22	F	Married 2-year-old	Foundation Degree, 2nd year
		H2	52	F	Married 3 children	BA honors
		H3	32	F	Not married	BA honors
		H4	34	F	Not married	BA honors
		H5	44	F	Married 3 children	BA honors
		H6	57	F	Married 1 child	BA honors (finished)
		H7	23	M	Not married	BA honors

		H8	24	F	Married 2 children	Foundation Degree, 2nd year
		H9	26	F	Not married	BA honors (finished)
		H10	22	F	Married 2-year-old daughter	Foundation Degree, 2nd year

Appendix IV: An example of interview transcripts

Appendix

Interview: E4

Date: 24th November 2015

Place of interview: Costa Cafe

Duration: 01:22:45

Q. 请您自我介绍下

Could you introduce yourself?

A. 我今年 31， 出生在上海， 目前从事自由职业。我已婚宝宝三岁半。现在是也大一年级，学习学前教育。我来学校坐地铁 20 分钟，交通很方便，这也是选择这个学校的原因。夜大之前读到大专，行政管理，大专 2006 年毕业，大专毕业之后一直做行政，自从去年生了宝宝之后才决定转行做学前教育的，2014 下半年开始转行，2014 年 10 月份参加的成人高考，决定把学前教育作为我终身的职业。从 2006 到 2014 年一直做行政管理，中间换过几个公司，最后一个是因为生宝宝了我就在家里修养，之前换公司是因为那边没有晋升的空间我就走啦。

I am 31 and was born in Shanghai. Now I am doing liberal professions. I am married and have a 3-year-old daughter. I am a first year undergraduate student, studying early childhood studies. It takes me 20 minutes by subway to come to university, very

convenient. That is why I choose to study in this university. I finished my study at college level at the year 2006, majored in administrative management. After I graduated from college I engaged in administrative work from 2006 till 2014. I have changed a few companies. I left the last company because there was no promotion opportunity. I decided to switch career to work with children from last year due to the birth of my baby. I started to work in nursery from the second half of year 2014. I participated in Adult Higher Entrance Examination at the October 2014. I decided to choose the preschool education at my lifelong career.

Q. 从 06 到 14 年做行政管理时想过做幼师吗？

Have you ever thought about work for preschool education when you work as administrative?

A. 其实还真没想过，之前想过但我觉得我是没有可能的，因为我年龄上去了，做幼师可能相对来说我这个年龄已经不占优势了，但是从内心来说我还是真的很喜欢孩子的，后来我身边几个朋友，包括几个亲戚他们也都是做幼师的，有一次闲聊当中说吗，还是可以有机会的，就是还可以考，因为现在国家对幼教的年龄有没有限制。而且向我们这种有了宝宝的人来说，更容易在行业当中发挥自己的特长。

Honestly, I have not planned for it. I have thought about it sometimes but I thought it was impossible due to my age. Since I was not young, there would not be any advantage for me to be work for preschool education. But I do love children from deep of my heart.

Some of my friends were working in nurseries; during our chat they told me that there were still opportunities to be a teacher in nursery for me. They said that I still could take the examination since there was no age limit for working in nursery among the country. Meanwhile, for the people like me who had their own babies, it was also beneficial to play our strength.

Q. 你是什么时候萌生了当幼师的想法？

When did you have the idea of being a kindergarten teacher?

A. 其实是在 13 年初，衡量过了我就一直想去做幼教，犹豫了很久，然后就来参加成考了，进来就选的这个专业。20 我是 08 年结婚，11 年怀孕，12 年生宝宝。

I had that idea at the beginning of year 2013. After a thought in detail, I did feel that I really what to be a kindergarten teacher. I was married in year 2008 and gave birth to my baby at year 2012.

Q. 为什么 12 年生宝宝 14 年想要去读？也就是说你结婚到生宝宝是没想过当幼师的？

Why did you choose to take the exam at year 2014 since you had your baby at year 2012? So you did not think about being a kindergarten teacher from the time you got marriage until you had baby?

A. 没想过，因为那时候有工作，怀孕之前都是做行政的工作，行政的工作就是管理的事情很多，管理的事情很杂，我根本没办法想到去学习，我没办法停下来读书，所以就一直没这个想法。因为 14 年初我那时候那个公司已经离职了，而且又在带宝宝期间，所以就有了那个想法，我个人还是蛮喜欢孩子，蛮喜欢跟孩子在一起。

No, have not thought about it during that period since I had job then. I had been working as administrative until I was pregnant. Working as administrative you have to manage a lot of things, a lot of different things, I could not think about study at all. I could not stop working to study so I did not have that idea. Since I left my previous job at the beginning of year 2014 and I was also looking after my baby, I had that idea. I do love children personally and love to be with children.

Q. 那你觉得你做行政管理的工作经验对你当幼师有什么影响吗？

Do you think your previous administrative job has any influence on you for working as a kindergarten teacher?

A. 有影响，有帮助，因为行政这个工作对你工作的细致程度是有要求的，如果我现在去带孩子的话，因为我已经有这种细心细致的工作习惯，以后我带孩子的话肯定没问题。工作性质上搭不到边。可能因为做行政接触的人比较多，各个板块都会有接触，那性格上也会有所改变。

Yes, there is, my previous job has beneficial for my job as a kindergarten teacher. Because administrative has a very high requirement for working in great detail, if now I am looking after children, I already have the habit of working in detail; there is no problem for me to take care of children. There is no relevance about the content of the job. Working as administrative you have to get in touch with or cooperate with many different kinds of people, so your personality could be changed during this progress.

Q. 为什么重新回来读书?

Why do you come back university to study?

A. 因为我决定要做这个专业了啊，那我得从新投入从零开始啊，网路教育我觉得很不正规，对我以后的晋升什么都是有影响的。我觉得我要转行就要从头开始学习，因为 E 大学在教育方面是很有名的，希望能接收这种教育，就来读。还有就是 E 大学离家近，方便一些。因为读这个的都是正在从事幼教工作的，那我可以跟他们相互交流一下。

Because I decided to do this job, change my career, I have to start from zero. I think on-line learning is very informal and have bad effect on my future job promotion. I think I have to learn from zero since I want to switch career. University E has a very good reputation on education area, I hope I could be educated here so I came and studied. On the other hand also because University E is close to my home and it is convenient to come here. The students here all working in kindergarten as teachers, I would like to have a talk with them to get some information as well.

Q. 幼儿园对你学前教育学历上的要求？

Is there any requirement for you to be a teacher in nursery?

A. 对学历有要求，我 14 年四月份的时候找了一家早教中心，刚停下来，在早教中心当了班年的托班老师，不做了是因为他这个学校的管理有问题，我觉得办这个学校应该是一切以孩子为出发，但他们觉得他们盈利的方面更多一点，我觉得孩子生病了，要让孩子回去休息的否则来了交叉感染也不太好，那我就跟家长说生病了就回家休息，等休息好了再来上学，那领导不是这样想的，领导觉得孩子来一天就赚一天的钱，但搞得我们很多小孩子都被感染到，还有很多就是他不为孩子着想，我就觉得我不能适应这个环境，那我就走了。啊，我的时间记错了，我是 13 年的八月份参加的教师资格证的笔试考试，然后同年十月份我就参加了成考，我是 15 年四月份进的早教，那等于说是之前我都是在公司做行政。我在进早教的时候教师资格证和成考都结束了，早教做到上个星期（十一月份）结束的，等于做了半年多一点，2013 年的八月份到 2015 年的三月份我是在广告公司做行政，在这一期间我经历了成考还有教师资格证的笔试考，2013 年八月教师资格证考试，2014 年十月份成考，我是 15 届的学生。15 年的四月份进的早教，我现在早教的工作结束了，现在还没开始找新的工作。

Yes, the requirement for degree. I have worked in an early learning centre in the April 2015 and I just stopped it. I have worked in that early learning centre for a half year. I stop because I think there is some management problems in that early learning centre. In my opinion, anything the school does should for the sake of children, but they prioritize the money more than the children. I thought if the child was sick, he should

stay at home and have enough rest; otherwise he would affect other children, so I told the parents to let their child stay at home. But the manager thought that they could earn the money if the child comes. As result, many of the children in my class were affected. And they also did many other things which showed they did not care about the children so I decided to leave because I cannot adjust this atmosphere. I took the written examination of the teacher certificate in the August 2013 then I took the Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination in the October at the same year. I started to work in the early learning centre in the April 2015. I worked as administrative before that. I had finished the two exams before I worked in early learning centre. I stopped working in the early learning centre at November 2015, so I have worked there for almost a half year. I still have not found a new job now.

Q. 早教机构对你的要求？

Any requirement for you to work in the early learning centre?

A. 我进的时候他对我没有要求，他看我比较有亲和力，那我跟他说我很喜欢这一行，那时候他那个早教也是新开的，那么我想这个新开的地方多多少少可能对我有点帮助那我就去了，他对我也很满意，那我就去了，进去之后发现他里面的风格我不是很喜欢，我做了半年就辞职了。

There was no requirement when I apply for it, they thought I am friendly and nice and I told them I did like to work with children. Also at the same time, the early learning centre just opened not long, I thought maybe it could be more helpful and advantage

for me to work there and they satisfied with me then I started work there. But just because I did not like the way they did things so I decided to left after a half year.

Q. 早教对成考和教师资格证有要求吗？

Any requirement of the teacher certificate for working in the early learning centre?

A. 没有，因为我以后要往幼儿园发展的，所以成考啊教师资格证啊都是为了我以后进幼儿园打基础的。

No, they did not ask for. I took the two examination only because I would work in nurseries in the future.

Q. 那为什么你 15 年没有直接进幼儿园而是进早教呢？

Why did not you go directly to work in nursery instead of working in that early learning centre?

A. 因为很多公办幼儿园都是有要求的，就是需要你拿到证的。我那个时候教师资格证还没有拿到，教师资格证是分三个部分考的，第一个是笔试，第二部分是面试，第三部分是普通话，我已经笔试和普通话都过了，还有一个面试我没有过，不出意外的话我今年年底能拿到教师资格证。顺利的话我年底拿到教师

资格证，我明年就能找到幼儿园。我当时进早教就是为我进幼儿园打基础的，因为我在 E 大学学这个不可能进早教的，因为早教他针对的年龄层次就不一样，因为我们现在专业里面学的都是针对三到六岁的，但早教里面是三岁之前的，如果去早教的话那我这三年学习下来就没有什么用了。

Because most of the public nurseries have the requirement of the two certificated. I had not got my teacher certificate at that time. There were three parts of the teacher certificate: one is the written examination, second is the interview, third is the mandarin. I have already passed the written exam and the mandarin, only the interview is left. Hopefully I could get my teacher certificate at the end of this year then I can find a nursery to work at the beginning of next year. I worked in the early learning centre just wanted to prepare for my future working in nursery. What I am learning now in University E cannot help me to work in nursery because the content focuses on the children aged from 3-6, but the children are before 3 years old in the early learning centre.

Q. 回来读书的其他原因？

Other reason for coming back to study?

A. 最主要的是进幼儿园要求的硬件条件，就是进幼儿园一定要有一个本科学历。

Most of all is the necessary condition for working in nursery in the future, which is the Bachelor degree.

Q. 大学情结？

University dream?

A. 之前有过，但工作之后太忙就耽搁了，时间不够，实际上想还是有想过的。但找工作的硬件条件是我回来读书的更主要原因，因为你没有这个硬件的话你根本进不了幼儿园。家里人也是蛮支持的，我现在跟公婆一起住，他们可以帮我带孩子，否则太难了。他们支持是因为我这样读书他们可以帮我带孩子，觉得我这样可以影响到孩子，他们总跟我孩子说你看妈妈这么努力这么上进，你也要像妈妈学习哦，所以我女儿平时也会拿着书，就是我每次回来看书什么的，我女儿也会在一边看，会有影响。他们也是想要我有个稳定的工作，我之前的工作不是很稳定，因为毕竟都是私人公司，你说不清楚他万一哪天倒闭了什么的，那对于整个家庭来说都不稳定，那我就要重新找工作吧，那行政管理这个工作太宽泛了，大家都可以去做也不是只有行政管理才能去做，专业性不是很强，但幼教的话，你其他专业根本不可能去转，就是如果你不拿到这个证书人家不可能让你去进。

I had the desire to study in university before, but just leave it aside because of my busy work and lack of time. I did have thought about it actually. But the necessary condition for working in nursery is the main reason for me to come back and study, otherwise it is impossible to work in nursery. My family is very supportive, I live with my parents in law now, they could help me look after my daughter otherwise it is too difficult. They think that my daughter could be influenced and inspired because I am studying now. They always tell my daughter that you see you mum studies so hard so you should learn

from your mum and study hard. Therefore my daughter always takes a book and when I read a book she will also take a book to read. There is some positive influence on children. Also my family want me to have a stable job because my previous jobs were not very stable which are all private companies and easy to lose my job. If I lose my job that would be a big factor that affects the stability of the whole family then I would have to find a new job. Administrative is too broad and all the people can do it not only those graduate from that major, which is not so professional. But being a nursery teacher is much more professional which cannot be done by the people from other job area. If you do not have the certificate it is impossible for you to have the job.

Q. 那你进幼教的工资和之前比？

How will your salary change if you work in nursery?

A. 工资少了

Less than working in company as administrative.

Q. 少了为什么还要进幼教？

Why do you still would like to work in nursery?

A. 我行政之前税后八千，但幼教我了解了一下，没有编制的两千多，但是有利有弊啊，行政你照顾不了家庭啊，但幼师可以啊，他们早上早上班，晚上下班又早，他们一般四点钟放学，那时候女儿也正好放学，她现在还小，但以后上一年级了，她功课什么的，如果像行政这样一直加班的话你根本管不了他，现在小孩子竞争额也是蛮激烈的，那做幼师的话可以我对她尽责一点，多照顾他一点，工资方面，我觉得经过自己努力进了编制工资也会还一些，反正慢慢来，先进去进蛮好。

I get 8000 after tax when I work as administrative. But based on my information, the salary is only around 2000 outside the establishment (Bianzhi), but there is both advantage and disadvantage. As administrative you do not have time to look after your family but the time is more convenient to work as teacher in nursery like they go to work early in the morning and finish work early in the afternoon as well usually at 4pm when my daughter will also finish school. Now she is little but when she goes to primary school I would not have time to support her study if I still work as administrative. You know it is also competitive among children as well. I could look after her more if I work in nursery as a teacher. Referring to the salary, I think it will get better if I could get a place in the establishment. Just take it slow and first of all is get into that system.

Q. 你老公支持你吗？

Your husband supportive?

A. 不大支持吧，他觉得赚的少了啊对家庭的贡献就少了啊，他喜欢我做一些挑战性的工作，他觉得幼儿园这个工作太低级了

Actually not really supportive, he thinks I earn less so contribute to the family less. I would like me to do some challenging jobs and he thinks the job in nursery is too simple for me.

Q. 你们聊过你的想法吗？他理解吗？

Can he understand you?

A. 聊过的，他正在理解中。一开始他是很不支持的，就是刚开始有这个想法的时候他是不支持的，但这毕竟快一年了嘛，我已经经历了成考，然后又考这个考那个，一直在往这方面走，他也慢慢习惯了，有时候在家里看人家视频怎么上课嘛，然后跳几个小舞蹈，他也会纠正你啊，哪些好哪些不好的。

We have talked about that and now he is trying to understand. At the beginning he was not supportive just when I first had that thought. But until now it is almost one year and I have taken so many examinations and am continuing spending effort on this way, he slowly gets used to it and accepts it. Sometime when I watch the video to learn hoe other people give lesson I will dance a little bit and he will correct me to tell me which is good which is not.

Q. 还有其他让你回来读书的原因吗?

Any other reason for you to come back to study?

A. 因为在我高考时，我妈妈让我要么选幼教要么选护士，我那时候还是蛮叛逆的，我什么都没选，那时候想太多了，护士要每天三班倒的，而且接触那些病人还是蛮害怕的，还有幼师嘛，我觉得跟小朋友有什么好玩的，那时候比较叛逆的，但是后来我在走上工作岗位之后我觉得以我的性格，外面的世界实在太复杂了，人际关系啊，都蛮复杂的，还是小孩子纯真一点，而且小孩子，你跟他们在一起心态也会变得年轻一点。在没结婚之前看到人家小孩子也是蛮喜欢的，很多人就说你长的一张娃娃脸嘛，还蛮适合做幼教，你干嘛不去做幼教，当时也想过，但当时我根本没有时间付诸于行动，那现在的话我进入了这行，开始来 E 大学读书啊，我觉得真的是完成我的一个梦想吧，完成自己一个做幼师的梦想。

When I was in high school, my mum suggested me to learn either early childhood learning or nursing but I was so rebellious then so I did not choose any. Also because I thought too much at time mument, I thought nursing has to change shifts and I would get in touch with so many patients which was so scary. Referring to the work with children, I thought it was meaningless to spend time with children. All of these thought because I was too rebellious at that age. When I started to work I do realized that the society is too complex for example the relationship between people. The children are more pure and easy to get along with. Also you will have a positive mental attitude to stay with children. Before I got married, every time I saw children I did feel that I liked them so much. Also many people said that I have a baby-face and I was suitable to be

a teacher so they said why did not I become a teacher in nursery. I had thought about as well but actually I did not have time to put it into action. Now I have already entered this area, started to study in University E, which I treated as a fulfilment of my dream of becoming a teacher when I was young.

Q. 为什么觉得做幼师是个梦想？

Why do you take it as a dream?

A. 因为我觉得当时高考的时候没有选择做幼师，以后就没有机会了啊，没有机会做幼师这个行业了啊，一开始高考的时候没有想去做，但后来工作几年慢慢慢慢的发现这个还是我的梦想，我还是想要去做，但是那时候也没有渠道也不知道，因为那时候我还在崇明呆过一段时间，那时候信息也没有这么广泛，我不知道原来我还可以通过成人高考还可以去学这个专业，我还可以通过网上去学习这个专业，那个时候是没有这种渠道的，我是不知道的。那我 08 年结婚，06 年左右来上海之后接触的人多了，才知道网上啊夜大啊很盛行，那个时候知道有夜大这个渠道，知道之后就想去读，当时就想去读幼教但当时不知道可以来华东师大这里读，那时候很多学习，但后来就被事情耽搁了就没有去找，我那个时候就像读幼教，想做幼师了。

Because I think since I did not choose to study the early childhood learning during the Higher Education Entrance Examination maybe I would not have the opportunity to become a teacher in the future. I did not want to study that when I was young but after worked for several years I realized that is still my dream and I still want to do that.

During that time there was no way for me to get that information since I had worked in Chingming (villageside) for a while where I could not get enough and new information, I did not know I could take the Adult Higher Education Entrance Examination to study it or study on-line. I did not know that during that time. I came to Shanghai at the year 2006 and got married at 2008, since then I knew more people and knew that the night university or online-learning was so popular. When I knew I could study in night university I did feel that I would like to study there. I did want to study the early childhood learning but I was not sure if I could study in University E or not. But I was too busy with my work so the plan of study was held up then. From then I started to think about study and become a teacher in nursery.

Q. 那你为什么离开之前的公司？

Why did you leave your previous job?

A. 公司彻底不做了是因为那时候刚结束了教师资格证的笔试考，觉得那个时候如果你再不学点东西多接触这一行可能就更来不及了。因为在公司你的工作是跟幼教不想关的，你没有办法去学到东西，所以就觉得放弃了，然后就从公司出来了，找了一家早教，想接触下实际的工作，之前离职的时候好几个老大都找我谈，因为之前在公司我是负责合同方面的，太多老板都不放我，但后来我就很毅然决然，但一个人真的要走了你要留也没什么意思，然后就放我走。

I quitted my last job completely when I just finish the written exam of my teacher certificate. I realized that it would be too late if I did not start to learn something and

get some information about this job. Because the things you did in company were not relevant to the job of being a teaching in nursery therefore I could not learn anything in my previous job so I decided to quit. Then I started to find a job in the early learning centre thinking about get in touch with this job. I am a determining person; I will stick on it if I decided to do that. If you choose to do anything you should do everything for the sake of your purpose. None of my friend understands me; they all say you are 31 now, not the twenty-year-old young girl who could do anything from zore. Also I feel such a big pressure. First of all, I have to be part of the establishment before 35, now I am 31 which means I have 4 more years work on it. Except that, I have to get my teacher certificate as the essential requirement for working in nursery. I am still in the exam progress and it is really difficult for me but I definitely will persist in it no matter how difficult it is.

Q. 是什么让你能付出和牺牲那么多就想做幼师呢？

What makes you could sacrifice so much to be a teacher in nursery?

A. 因为我喜欢孩子，然后这个职业对我的家庭有帮助，各种原因，但最主要的原因还是我喜欢孩子，我希望我的工作氛围就是跟孩子们在一起，我不想再跟职员打交道，可能还是我的性格吧，可以跟孩子在一起，每天嘻嘻 University E 的，可以叫他们一点东西，然后我也要不断学习然后交给他们，这样会比较开心。我现在看到许多孩子很老成，不知道是家庭的培养还是什么，我不希望看到这样的孩子，我希望看到孩子，如果我将来带班，我希望我看到的孩子都是很阳光很开朗的。孩子你不要让他失去童真。

Because I like children, then this job is helpful for my family. There are also many other reason but most important one is I like children, I hope I could work with children rather than office staff. Maybe because of my personality, I feel happy to have fun with children, teach them things, I myself keep on learning definitely and teach them. I see many children are mature beyond his years and behave like adults. I do not know if that is because of their family education or not, but I do not want to see children like that. If I would teach my own class I hope the children in my class are all very optimistic, cheerful and elastic. Children should not lose their children's simplicity.

Q. 为什么会选择 E 大学?

Why did you choose University E?

A. 首先是 E 大学离我家近，因为晚上要上课，S 大学离我太远了，路途是一个原因。还有就是 E 大学的口碑好啊，口碑好对以后的就业就有影响啊，因为我现在了解下来，很多幼儿园都希望录用 E 大学的学生，他们都觉得 E 大学的口碑好，据我了解，S 大学总归是混一张文凭，E 大学相对来说对于这种培训方面还是很认真的，在找工作的时候 E 大学的毕业证会更占优势。E 大学也更严格，学到的东西更多啊，如果就是混一张文凭什么都学不到我觉得对我来说是没什么意义的，我主要是来学东西的，我不是来这边混文凭的。还有选择 E 大学的原因是我觉得这个学校的环境不错，有文化底蕴，我没进过 S 大学，但我那边的朋友也都说 E 大学比较好，我在这半年是觉得蛮有文化底蕴的，空气什么都蛮好的。

First of all, University E is so close to my home. The transportation situation and distance is a factor for me to choose university. Secondly, University E has a high reputation in education, which is helpful for me to find a job in the future. From the information I have, most nurseries prefer the graduated from University E, they all think University E has a good reputation and high standard. According to my understanding, people in University S just muddle through your work only for certificate but on the contrary, University E takes this kind of training seriously and do it conscientiously. The certificate of University E would prevail over the certificate of University S. The teaching in University E is very strict, from which I could learn more. It is meaningless if I only just muddle for a certificate without achieving any knowledge. My main purpose is learning knowledge rather than muddling for a certificate. Other reasons for choosing University E is that I think the atmosphere here is great with a pro-founded culture. Even though I have not been to University S but my friends there all say that University E is better and I do feel that. Also the air here is good and fresh.

Q. 为什么校园氛围好会是你选择的一个原因？

The good atmosphere in the university is one of the reason you choose it、

A. 大学一定要氛围好，大学一定要氛围好，如果里面的人都流里流气的，那就不是一个学习的地方，我觉得这里的人都蛮有修养的。

The atmosphere in a university is so important. If the people in university are all low or dovish then it is not a place for studying. But I do feel the people here are well-educated.

Q. 你在 E 大学有归属感吗？

Do you have the sense of belonging in the university?

A. 很有自豪感，虽然是成人学生，但我也觉得毕竟自己是 E 大学的，每次在微信上晒晒都满有自信的。一贯来的，以前我在崇明小乡下的时候，他们要是有人考到 E 大学那就是很好很好的事情，整个村都要庆祝的那种，我小的时候也知道自己成绩不怎么好吧，就有种奢望的感觉，我觉得我自己不可能去 E 大学的，没有机会去 E 大学的，但没想到我居然在我 31 岁的时候进 E 大学了，虽然是夜大吧也是蛮开心的。因为我们村里面做老师的蛮多的，有三个是 E 大学的，有一个是 S 大学的，但当时就一直听说 E 大学 E 大学，然后我姑姑姑父都是做老师的，我们那边做老师的比较多，都没怎么听过 S 大学，真的

Yes, I do feel the sense of pride, even though I am a mature student I feel I am the student of University E and feel so proud of it every time I pose pictures on Wechat. When I was in the village, it would be great if someone accepted by University E which would be celebrated all the village. My grades were not very good then and I had an extravagant hope but I clearly know that it was impossible for me to go to University E. But who can believe that I finally enter it at the age of 31, I do feel happy even though it is Night School. There are many people who become teacher in my village, three of them from University E one from University S. I always heard about the name of East China Normal University then. Also my aunty and uncle are both teachers. I have not heard much about University S actually.

Q. 那你觉得你小时的对 E 大学的喜欢会是你选择 E 大学的原因吗？

Do you think the preference of University E when you were young is the reason why you choose it now?

A. 有影响，内心深处是喜欢的。我选择 E 大学就这两个主要原因，一个是离家的距离，一个是 E 大学在我心里一直一开口碑什么都是很好的。

Yes there is some influence since I like it deep in my heart. I choose University E because of two reasons, one is that it is close to my home and another one is University E owns a good reputation in my knowledge.

Q. 你想过混文凭吗？

Why do you think you cannot muddle through it?

A. 没有，我这个年级已经不允许我再混了，可能我年轻一点可能会混，但我这个年龄还能再混吗，会一年就拖一年，我还是想要取得学位的，英语达到四级，每门学位课达到七十分才能拿到学士学位，我真的有个梦想，我看到操场上那些穿着学士学位服毕业的人拍毕业照，我真的觉得好美啊，我想我也要有这么一天，然后我其他同学都说这个衣服可以买的啊，但那不一样啊，那不是你靠

自己努力取得的。但是我要比他们在学习上花更多的时间和精力，但只要我能拿到学士学位就很值啊。

I have never thought about it. I could not muddle due to my age. If I was younger maybe I would muddle. But I cannot muddle at this age. The longer you muddle the later I would get my degree. I have to get the English level-4, at least 70 in each module then I could get my Bachelor degree. I truly have a dream. Every time I see the Bachelor take picture wearing Bachelor gown I do feel that is so wonderful and I do hope I could have that day in the future. Many of my friends told me that I can buy that Bachelor gown on-line but that is different and that is not the thing you achieve by your own effort. But I have to spend more time and effort in my study. However I feel everything worthy as long as I could get my Bachelor degree.

Q. 幼儿园要求你一定要拿到学位证吗？

Is there any requirement of the Bachelor degree from your nursery?

A. 没有要求，就是我个人的想法。拿到七八十分还行，上学期考试都九十分，但今年有点忙，我今年早教停下来了还是有时间复习的，我觉得今年也都能考九十分左右。

No, it is all my personal desire. I can make my grade around 70 or 80, last semester I have all my modules at 90. But this year is a little busy. Since I have stopped the work early learning centre so I think I could have time to prepare for the exams.

Q. 那你在读 E 大学期间都不会再工作了？

Will you still work when you study in University E?

A. 我要工作的，我现在只是休整一段时间，这次考试只要五门，而且这种考试很多都是背的，像以前我在早教根本没时间背，我回家还要带孩子的，而且还要休息吧，不休息也不行，然后我需要有一段时间来背书，我 12 月底我还有教师资格证的面试，面试通过了明年我就可以找个幼儿园了。我明年暑假我会去读上岗证，明年也是会拿到的。我找幼儿园肯定是为了长期发展的，因为一个老师带班，就像我之前早教带了半年，那些孩子跟你就很熟悉了，他们知道我要走了孩子们就心情不好，就问老师你什么时候回来，然后家长就说老师生病了，病号了就会回来的，很感动的，所以我想你要找幼儿园一定要长期发展，而且你要带小班中班大班就一定要带三年，我是很重感情的。

I will work. I just have a short rest now. I have 5 exams this semester and most of them are needed to pass by memorizing. When I worked in the early learning centre previously, I did not have time to memorize. I had to look after my daughter when I got back home; I also had to have a rest otherwise I could not stand for it; then I have to find some time to read the book. I will have the exam for teacher certificate at the end of this year. When I pass the interview part of the exam I could start to find a nursery to work. And I will take the training for work license for nursery teacher next summer holiday and I think I could get it in next year. I will look for a nursery which is beneficial for my long future development. Because a teacher manages a class more than a half year like what I did before, the children could be so close to you. If they know you will

leave they will be unhappy and keep on asking when you will come back. The parents will lie to them by saying the teacher is sick and she will come back when she recovers, which I think is so touching. This is what I mean by saying you should find a nursery where you work long. And you have to manage the younger-age class or middle-age class at least for three years. I am a loving person and do care about affections.

Q. 你在考 E 大学之前做过哪些准备？

What preparation have you done when you apply to University E?

A. 我考教师资格证的时候，我是在 E 大学报了一个班，然后成人高考我是在网上买资料的，那个网上有系统的老师培训，一套网课，网课上了两个月，我天天会看，天天会读一门，买了些资料自己做题目。教师资格证的班上了一个月。还有就是问考过成人高考的人要一些资料，问了之前的同事，他也参加了成人高考但他不是靠了 E 大学，学的财经，跟他借了政治的资料，英语也是一样的，我就是多了一门教育学。剩下关于成人高考就全是自己学的，没问过别人。

I bought all the books and materials for Adult Higher Entrance Examination on-line. There were systematic training on that website, a whole set of online lessons which last for 2 month. I took one lesson every day and also did some exercise which I also bought on-line. Also I had asked some of my colleagues for some materials who had taken the Adult Higher Entrance Examination before. Since he studied for business I could only borrow his books about politics and English which were the same among all the subjects.

I just took one more education. I learn all by myself after borrowed these books without helped by others.

Q. 考试难吗?

Do you think the exam is difficult?

A. 还可以，我在我们班排 29 名，但我英语没准备好，考的不是很高，考试的内容几乎都是范围里面的，都不是很难，英语的阅读可能是外面的文章。

It was ok, I was ranked No. 29 in my class. But my English was not good so I did not get a high mark on English. All the things in the exam were within the acknowledged range, which were not too difficult. The articles in English exams were taken from other books.

Q. 对夜大的看法?

What is your opinion about the Night School?

A. 对我们这些业余的来说还是很有帮助的，能够给我们一个再学习的机会，一个平台，虽然是夜大，但这个文凭很多幼儿园都是承认的认可的，我想找个二级园，公办的有编制的，公立的幼儿园可以进编，更稳定，可以有很多培训也

有晋升的机会，但私立的不会给你进编的，但他的薪资会高一点。我觉得进公立幼儿园进编很重要，因为你进一行总归要进入这个体系，要让自己有发展嘛，如果纯粹是拿一个证书对自己没发展的话我是不倾向的，我对自己是有要求的。还有就是能学到东西，E 大学专业性比较强

It is beneficial and helpful for us amateurs, which could provide us an opportunity and a platform to study again. Even though it is Night School, many nurseries recognise the certificate. I would like to search for a level-2 nursery which is public and provides a place within the establishment (Bianzhi). The public nurseries could provide place within the establishment which means more stable and secure with more training and promotion opportunities. On the contrary, the private nurseries could not provide the place within the establishment but they offer a higher salary. I think working in a public nursery within the establishment is more important because you work for one specific job you must make yourself within this specific system which could provide you more opportunities to improve and promote. That is why I choose University E because it is more professional and I can learn more rather than just get a certificate.

Q. 对成人学学历的看法？

What is your opinion about the degree of adult higher education?

A. 我觉得只要幼儿园承认这个学历就可以啊，那现在这些幼儿园是承认这些学历的，我就觉得这个学历是可以的。那有些人会说这个学历是用钱买来的什么

的，但我是真的觉得能学到一些东西的，那我现在有几个老师上课是很认真的，对以后的发展也是有帮助的。

I am satisfied and happy with it as long as the degree and certificated is recognized and accepted by nurseries. And the reality is the nurseries do recognized and accept this degree so I think this degree is valuable. But many people could say that this degree is bought by money however I think I can learn things here. There are a few teachers who teach really conscientiously, which is so beneficial for my future development.

Q. 那你觉得成人需不需要一个途径让他能拿到一个和普通本科毕业证含金量是一样的？

Do you think there should be some way for mature students to have a same value certificate as that of younger traditional students?

A. 我觉得是需要的。我会倾向课程很紧但含金量很高的那种课程，你要是要含金量，那肯定是紧一点才有含金量，我真的希望我们成人去学习，我不知道有没有可能到达他们专业学生一样的效果，因为成人回来参加这种高考，肯定是因为他们之前经历过一些事情，错过一些事情的，错过一些事情，那我们现在返回来再读，真的是蛮有困难的，我希望能够公平一定，大家都一样，可能我们比他们全日制付出的更多，我觉得有没有可能说对我们严格要求一点，但这个证书的含金量相等的，差不多的。我觉得回来读书学东西比拿学历重要，我希望这个学历以后也一直能承认啊，我觉得读这个真的很辛苦啊。我觉得考试什么的可以更严格一点，更严格就更公平啊，那如果很松的，向我们这种真的

靠自己真枪实干的去读的，去背的，那如果不严格，别人就会去打打小抄啊什么的，我是觉得很不公平的，现在蛮严的，还算公平。我觉得还可以多增加一些平台啊，就是老师和学生交流的平台，现在有几个老师会跟我们有一些互动，但是很多都是上完课就回去了，就说我们也可以进行一些沟通嘛，毕竟他们是专业的，我们有问题也可以问问他们。就像现在不是会有微信群啊，可以建这种群啊，聊一聊。

I think there should be. I do prefer the program which has dense courses and high value. If you want a high value the dense courses are required. I do not know if we could learn as much as they do and could reach the same level as they do as mature students. But coming back to take the examination and study as mature students means we missed something and experienced something previously. It is really difficult to study as mature students now. I hope it could be fair for everyone and everyone are treated the same. Maybe we have payed more than the full-time younger students. I am wondering if there could be some way to offer us dense courses and rise up the value of our certificate to the similar value of theirs. I think it is more important to learn things and study than just getting a certificate. I hope this certificate could be recognized and accepted in the future. I do feel it is difficult to study as mature student. I think maybe the examinations could be more restrict, the more restrict the exam is, the more fair for everyone. If the exams are lax then it could be unfair for us who do study hard and memorize all by ourselves compared with other who may cheat on an examination. Now the exam is strict and I think it is fair. I think it would be better if more opportunities could be provided for students and teachers to communicate. Now there is a few teachers could interact with us but most of them just go back home when they finish their lecture. It is good for us to have more interaction and communication with

the teachers because they are professional. We also can communicate in some modern ways just like via Wechat or QQ group.

Q. 你在 E 大学能用到哪些资源?

What kind of resources you can use on campus? Anybody told you at the beginning what you can use in the university?

A. 开学的时候没有人说过有哪些资源。图书馆我可以进但不能把书借出去。

学校有食堂，可以办卡可以吃饭，但学校的网络是不能用的。就是 wifi 不让用，数据库什么的都没用过，也没有老师说过。我了解下来就只有图书馆和食堂可以用。社团是没有的，但学校的网上会说有什么摄影比赛之类的，这个可以报名参加，但基本上我们都不会参加，太忙了，但他主要面向全日制的，参加也没什么意义。不知道关于讲座的信息，没有人会告诉我们。

No, there was no one told me what I could use in the university. We can go to the library but we could not borrow books out of the library. We can eat in the canteen. We can not use Wi-Fi on the campus. I have never approached the database either heard of how to use it from the teacher. From my understanding, we can use only the canteen and library. There are no societies for us. We can apply for the photography competition but most of us would not participate because it is organised for full-time students which is meaningless for us mature students to join and we are too busy as well. Nobody tells us the information about speech or presentations. We do not know that.

Q. 你觉得读书困难吗？

Do you think it is difficult for you to study as mature student?

A. 我觉得我们课程安排的不是很好，本来听说课程安排都是均匀的，但由于去年装修，就把去年的两门课安排到了今年，那我们今年就有五门课，这样的话对那些有工作的其实是很累的，而且还有一门课的教室被安排在很远的，下雨时我们还要走很长一段路过去，要么就都安排在一起，像礼拜天一次性走过去。想我周日要八点半上英语课，一点上教育学，他到四点钟结束，这两个小时就耽搁在那边，然后等六点半再读下一门，每次都是中心那两个小时就去附近商场逛一会，然后再回来，像有些人住得近的就回家吃好饭再回来，但我们经常没教室的，有时候我们晚上上课的教室是有别人的，那我们是进不去的，那我们怎么办只能去外面逛啊。就是我们下课后可定是要找下一门课的教室，但下一门课的教室有时候是有人的，我们是进不了的。

I think the arrangement of our lessons is not very proper. At the very beginning, we were told that all the lessons were spread equally in each semester. But because of the decoration last year, two modules which were supposed to be given in last semester is giving in this semester, which means we have five modules this semester. Those who have work do feel very busy and tired in this way. Furthermore, the classroom for one lecture is so far away outside the campus and we have to walk for a long way to that classroom. It could be better if this one is arranged on Sunday when we have all day lesson. Usually we have lesson on the whole Sunday. We have English in the morning from 8:30 the education from 1 pm to 4 pm. Then the last module starts from 6 pm

which means we have two hours gap between 4 pm to 6 pm, during when we only could go shopping in the shops nearby. Those who live nearby could go back home for lunch and come back for the evening lecture. We always have nowhere to go because sometimes we have to change to other classroom for the last module and the classroom may be used by other students so we cannot access to it.

Q. 为什么不去图书馆?

Why do not you go to the library?

A. 因为我们周边的几个人没有人要去图书馆，而且他们又经常拉着我，就没有这个概念所是要去图书馆。中间空两个小时的时间，也没有人跟我们说过图书馆可以去，我们不知道的。

Because no one of us would like to go to library and they also always ask me to go together with them therefore we do not have the thought of going to library. Furthermore no one has told us we could go to the library so we do not know we can go there.

Q. 别的困难?

Any other difficulties?

A. 有些信息我们了解的不是很清楚，就像改课啊什么的，班主任也是很晚猜得到信息，像上次我们有一个课是这周不上下周上当时都很乱的，大家都不知道怎么上，当时就问问问，问到后来才知道，班主任也不是很了解，课和课之间的老师都没有沟通好改怎么弄，所以导致我们也很乱，后来经过班主任去问才知道怎么上

There are many information we cannot gain on time just like the changing time of a lesson. Our supervisor also gets the information very late. Just like last time, one of our module skipped last week and given the week after, which was confusing. We did not know how that was arranged so we asked each other. When we asked our supervisor she did not know either. That shows a problem that the communication between teachers is messy which easily makes us students feel confused and lost.

Q. 你们可以选课吗？

Can you choose module?

A. 现在不能选，可能要到毕业前有选修课我们才能选课，现在的课都是统一的课程。我们学前教育有很多课是必须要上的，但选课的话在毕业前选的话也是蛮好的，但如果全部都能选我还是想自己选，因为我要选一些针对我来说我需要学习的课程。

No, we cannot now, all the modules are arranged unified. Many of the modules are compulsory. If it is available I hope I could choose the module by myself then I could choose what is useful for me.

Q. 别的困难?

Any other difficulty?

A. 考试范围最好再能给我们缩小一点，其实他考试的范围还是蛮广的。因为像他们有工作的话是真的没有时间去看书的，而且有时候课堂上教的并不是考试就一定会有的，他给你的是超过这个考试范围的，而我们又紧紧只有两个星期去复习，真的蛮累的，有那么多东西要背。其实给的范围小了要背的也蛮多的，就是最后那些时间少的人是很困难的。那我们考试都是名词解释简答题论述题案例分析题，还有一个设计题，没有选择题，都是要背的，全部都是从头到尾就是写，如果范围很大那要怎么考，你不可能把整本书都背下来的啊，那不现实的啊，所以相对来说复习范围窄一点。还有就是上课时间最好放平时不要放周末，周末的话就一个上午，就不要全天了。因为周一到周五都要上班，已经很累的，你总要给自己一个休息的时间吧，而且礼拜天一天都要奉献给他，而且有些幼儿园在周日还是蛮忙的，礼拜六再加加班什么的，那就等于一周都没有休息。我觉得周末可以上，那最好就上个半天，如果你放在晚上上也是可以的，就白天能自己支配。还有就是最好能给我们一些指导，我不知道以后能不能在找工作方面给我们一些渠道推荐什么的，就像如果成绩好的就可以有推荐什么的，因为学校的资源更大嘛。老师也会有很多资源，这样对我们就业也比较轻松点，因为学这个本来就是为了就业的嘛。最好课程时间能够再缩短一点，

因为现在很多课程的很多同学都要早走，因为他们住的真的很远，如果按照课程时间上到九点钟那他们回家就要十二点了，所以老师有时候不理解我们为什么要早走，但我理解的，他们住的真的很远很远，所以我们有一个老师很硬就坚持一定要上完课再走，那没有办法他们就直接走掉了，没办法的太远了，上完课回家马上洗洗就要睡觉了，第二天还要上早班，真的很辛苦，所以能不能为我们考虑考虑，课程不要上的那么晚，或者中间不要休息，上完课早点回家。

The range of exam content could be narrowed down because the range of exam content is very broad. Those who have work do not have much time to read books. Also sometimes what is taught in class may not be the content in our exams. Teachers always give us more to memorize than what is asked in the exams. But we only have two weeks to prepare for the exam, which is really tiring and difficult. There is too much to memorize. Even though the range is narrowed down there is still too much to memorize. So it is really difficult for those who have limited time. The content in our exams always definitions, short answer questions, essay questions, case analysis questions and design questions. There is no multiple-choice question. Everything in the exam is needed to be memorized. We have to write from the beginning to the end of the exam and we could not memorize the whole book which is impossible. So we hope the range of exam content should be narrowed down. On the other hand, it is better that all the lessons could be given on the weekdays rather than the weekends. If it has to be given on the weekends, it will be better that it takes the morning time rather than the whole day. Because we have to work from Monday to Friday which already makes us very tired and we need time to rest. If we spend the whole Sunday on study, plus some people need to work extra hours on Saturday, we have no time to rest at all in the whole week. We are ok to have lectures on Sunday if we have t but it could be better if we only have lecture in the morning or night rather than the whole day, then we can arrange the other

time of the day. Thirdly, we need some guidance. I am not sure if we could have some guidance or recommendation in the future for our job searching just like those who have a good grade could be introduced to some good nurseries since the university must have a bigger resource than us. Also the teachers may have more resources. If we could have some job information then we could feel more relaxed because we come here to study aiming for having a job. Fourthly, it could be good if the time of our module could be shorter. Many of us live so far away from school so they have to leave earlier before the lecture finishes. They live really far away, if they go back home at 9 pm when the lecture finishes then they would arrive at home at 12 pm. Many teachers could not understand why we leave earlier but I know. Some teachers just insist that we should not leave until the lecture finishes, but there is no other ways to solve the problem they just leave. They have to do that because it is really too far. They arrive home so late that they only could take a shower then sleep since they also have to work the other day, which is really tiring. So we hope that the teachers could think more about us just like make the lesson shorter or skip the break time, in which way we could finish it earlier and go back home earlier.

Q. 你觉得老师怎么样？

How do you think about the teachers?

A. 我们这几个老师我都没有沟通过。老师从来不会问你听没听懂。他就讲他的，我们下面聊天啊发微信啊什么都可以，他不管，就有一个老师会说你们注意点，它只要上好自己的课就好了。他不会问他的课跟我们的工作有没有关，就有一

个我们学位课的老师蛮好的，他也在我们微信群里面，他会跟我们沟通，有问题也可以去问他，这个老师蛮好的，其他的话就上好课就结束了啊，不会问我们。不会关心我们，更不会关心到我个人。课下不会有交流，课下也不会去问他们，只有这个老师会问的，其他老师都不会。我觉得我问了他应该会回答我，但他们不会主动来问我们的，但我们学位课那个老师蛮好的，他有一次上课是这样上的，他就是让我们看一个视频，看好以后每个人都要说一个观点，他就每个人说的在总结一下，我觉得这样蛮好的，这个老师也很体谅我们知道我们很远过来，所以尽量让我们课堂作业在课上完成，然后家里就不要在做作业了，有什么问题可以问他。老师上课的状态认真倒是蛮认真的，就是有几个老师不跟我们互动的。

I have never communicated with these teachers.

The teachers never asked me if I understand or not. They just teach in front of the classroom and we just do whatever we want to like play with cell phone or talk to each other, which the teachers do not care about. There just one teacher could say that we should be quiet and mind our behaviour. Others all just teach and give their lesson.

They never asked us if what they teach is relevant to our job. There is one teacher who is very nice, she has added us in Wechat and could talk with us. If we have questions we could ask her. Other teachers never asked us and they just leave when they finish their lecture. They do not care about us certainly do not care about me. I never communicate with them after class neither ask the questions. I think they may answer my question if I ask but they would not ask me if I have questions or not initiatively. There is one teacher who is good. Once she let us watch a video, after watching it she let us to give our opinions about it then she gave her own opinion and conclusion, which I think is very good. This teacher is also very considerate and she knows we live very

far away so she let us finish our assignment during the lecture time then we do not need to do it when we back home. We could ask her if we have any question about it. Most of our teachers are teach conscientiously, but some of them do not interact with us.

Q. 互动有必要吗?

Is it important to interact with teachers?

A. 当然有必要，因为他们比较专业嘛，然后他们也不来问我们听懂还是没听懂，这样的话我们就在自己的理解范围内，有可能我们的想法是错的，那不纠正我们就会一直错下去，那基本上有几个老师上课都是对书照读的，后来我觉得有点枯燥，她真的就是把整本书从头到尾读一遍而已，也没有结合实际啊举一些例子啊什么的，好枯燥。

Interaction is definitely important because they are professional. If they do not ask us whether we understand or not, we will still understand the things within our limited knowledge. Maybe our understanding is wrong, which could continue to be wrong if nobody come to correct us. Most of the teachers' lectures are so dull and dry and they just read the book for us, seriously, she just read the book from the beginning to the end without any examples and applications, which is really boring.

Q. 老师上课的状态对你听课有影响吗?

Does teacher's interaction has influence on your study?

A. 他如果互动多一点我们可能会更加积极一点听课，如果没什么互动的话我们可能都要早走，睡觉或者聊天，那如果一直跟我们互动的话我们是没有时间聊天什么的啊，都是跟着你的思路在走啊，我喜欢有互动的。

Definitely yes. The more interaction between us the more active we are. If there is no interaction maybe we would like to leave earlier, sleep or talk. On the contrary, if there is dense interaction, we have no time to talk with each other or do something else. We would follow the teaching and teacher's though all the time so I do prefer the teaching full of interaction.

Q. 你觉得老师关不关心你对你上课有影响吗？

Do you think there would be any influence on your study if your teacher care about you or not?

A. 肯定有啊，你关心我我就觉得你重视我，重视我这个人重视我的学习，那我就会更加努力一点认真一点，那我觉得如果你不重视我那我就觉得老师就认为我们就是来卖个文聘的，就像有一个老师说“我知道你们的，就是来混一个文聘而已的”就这样说。这样对我的影响就是老师都这么说了，都觉得我们是来混一个文凭的，他没有考虑到人家真的是来学习的，他给我们反馈的是消极的

状态，那我的反应就是上他这么课我也不是很积极的，而且他这个老师有点问题，一个年轻的老师。

Yes, there would be. They caring about me means they think highly of me, think highly of me as a person and think highly of my study, because of which I would like to work harder and study more conscientiously. If the teachers do not care about me then I would take it as the teachers think I just come here to buy a certificate. Just like one of our teachers said that “I know that you just here to buy a certificate”, which makes me think that in teacher’s opinion we are here to buy a certificate, she does not think that there still some people come here to study genuinely. The feedback she gives me is negative, since she already treats me like “a person comes here to buy a certificate” then I do not want to study hard. But I think there is something wrong with this teacher, she is too young.

Q. 你喜欢什么样的老师？

What kind of teacher do you like?

A. 我喜欢认真负责的，可以跟我们沟通的，不要把自己当做老师，就当自己是我们的朋友，不要有这种很清晰的概念，这样的话会让我们有敬畏的感觉，让我们担心跟老师交流他会不会睬我呀，他会不会回答我啊，会不会问的一些问题很低级啊，就不要给我们这种感觉。还有喜欢幽默一点的老师，课堂氛围还是蛮重要的，你课堂氛围好一点当然积极性就会高一点，比如说一些关于这个专业说一些关于专业的一些例子，我不知道有些老师是不是从事学前这个专业，

还是就是刚刚毕业的，我搞不清楚，看他们都还蛮年起的，就像我们有一个老师，他就是我也是研究生刚刚毕业，我就是想跟大家探讨一下，有些问题还要请教大家，我觉得这个老师就蛮好的，他就觉得你们大家都已经在职了嘛，有些经验可能比我还丰富，可以从他们身上学到一些，那我觉得蛮好啊，就很谦虚的一个状态，还有就是，有问题就马上指责出来的老师，就是比如说你有学习上的一些问题啊，可以把你不好的地方改过出来，马上帮你解决的那种，就像课堂上随机会问你一些问题啊让你来回答，那如果你出错 就告诉你如何去改正去解决。

I like the conscientious and responsible teachers, who we can communicate with. They do not treat themselves as our friend rather than our teachers. We fell feel in awe of them and fear to talk with them if they take such a clear line between us. We will worry about if the teacher would talk to me, if they would answer my questions, if they would think my questions are too silly, which are all bad feelings. Furthermore, I like the teachers with a sense of humour. The atmosphere in class is very important. The more relaxing the atmosphere in class is, the more active the students could be. We have a teacher who is a young lady, she is very nice. Once she gave lecture to us and provided an example, she said "I would like to have a discussion with you since you are all working in nurseries with richer experiences than me, and I could also learn from you". I think this is very good, this humble attitude is very nice. I also like the teachers who would correct you as soon as she realizes there is something wrong with you. Just like the teachers would ask you questions on class and correct you if they see your answer is not proper or good enough.

Q. 你觉得老师上课时会把理论和实际联系在一起吗？

Do you think the teachers could link the things you learn in class with you work?

A. 有几个老师会的，大概有不到一半的老师会，把理论跟实际结合在一起当然很重要，有些人理论学得很好，但实际没有经历过他根本不知道怎么弄，所以理论结合时间是很重要的，时间一定要以理论为基础，有实际工作经验的不多，我们这学期应该有一个老师有实际幼儿园的工作经验，其他老师都是研究生刚毕业的或在读的。

Some teachers would, less than half of them. It is significant to link the theoretical knowledge to practices. Some people are really good at theories but they have no practical experience. So it is important to link the theoretical knowledge to practices and practices must be based on theories. Only few teachers here have practical work experience. Only one teacher this semester has nursery job experience. The others are all in-school postgraduates or new postgraduate graduates.

Q. 你怎么看待派研究生给你们上课？

What is your opinion on in-school postgraduates to teach you?

A. 他们理论基础肯定是很扎实的，但实际基础可能就不太够，实际的经验肯定缺少一点。针对考试的话跟他们肯定是能学到东西，但是说真正在工作岗位是运用啊可能没什么用，如果是那些在幼儿园上班的老师来给你上课，他就会跟你说很多幼儿园发生的事情，比如说我在华师的学教师资格证的培训班，他

们拍的老师都是在幼儿园在职的老师，他就马上会跟你联系幼儿园每天在发生的事情，那些小孩是怎么样的，他每天是怎么处理这些小孩的，那这样的话我就很明白啊，那我就知道刚开学那些孩子很吵闹的很哭闹的，你怎么去处理，那像我在早教中心碰到这样的事情我就想到老师跟我说的该怎么去处理。派研究生而不是正式的老师给我们上课，心理倒不会不开心，还能接受，就觉得一方面他也需要到外面去学点东西，或去一些地方去实习一些，看别人是怎么上课的，去体验一下，体验好了回来再给我们讲。上课倒是蛮认真的，但他们基本上没什么实践，都是以理论为基础的。

Their theoretical basic should be firm but they lack of practical work experience. If the teaching is examination oriented we could learn lot from them. But regarding the application in real working context maybe there is not much could be used or applied. If the lecture is given by a teacher who has the nursery work experience, she could tell you many stories happed in nurseries. When I studied in University E for certificate of teacher, the teachers were all from nurseries. They could link the things they taught to what actually daily happened in nurseries like how the children behaved every day, how they manage these children. I could understand very well in this way. Then I could understand how to manage the children when they first come to nurseries and cry seriously. When I worked in that early learning centre what the teacher had told me in class would come to my mind anytime I met the similar situation and applied that into real work context. It is common for us to be not happy when our lectures are given by in-school postgraduates rather than professional teachers, but it is still acceptable. We think they should go out to learn something or to see how other people teach and have a real feeling. It would be better when they come back to teach us with a full experience. They teach conscientiously but only lack of practices, all based on theoretical knowledge.

Q. 你喜欢什么样的课？

What kind of lesson do you like?

A. 能够以后运用到我工作上面的一些课程，还希望有实际技能方面的，因为我们做幼师的，实际的技能需要很多，比如说钢琴，绘画，舞蹈，但这些这边都没有，但上岗证里面有，但成教本科里是没有的。在考上岗证时，因为证书是 E 大学颁发的，培训也是 E 大学培训的，是一门一门结课的。因为做教师需要的知识很广，但我觉得本科里面的东西都是很死板的，比如说幼儿园里面需要有很多游戏，那你可以开一些有关游戏设计的课，我自己的想法是可以有一个不值得跟幼儿园一样的教室，可以在里面教你怎么上课，你学这个专业最起码你知道以后课怎么去上。那现在我觉得是学校想让我们取得一张文凭而已，他没有站在我们的立场去想，他可能觉得绝大多数的成人都只是需要一张 pass 而已，他没有考虑到有一部分同学还是想要学基础的，学技能的，可能向我们这样之前错过的一些大学重新回来学的同学来说，如果你在讲一些理论的话可能对我没有什么帮助，就是取得一张证书而已。作为没有基础的同学，对我来说这些课肯定没有什么大的用处，但理论上的会有些帮助，但实际工作中，这些理论帮不到你什么，在学校里主要还是给小朋友上课。课程是能听懂的，但听懂了之后再去上课，有经验的和没经验的是不一样的。比如说我们现在有设计教案嘛，那那些在幼儿园待了好几年有经验的老师拿到一个课就知道怎么写，得心应手，像我们的话没有基础的话就很困难，作为大学肯定要教这些给我们，要么我们没有基础的要怎么学呢，而且还有些其他人也不是在这个岗位上，是从其他单位转的，如果学校不教我们我们没办法学。

What I can apply to my real work. I hope we could have some lessons related to practical skills since we are teachers in nurseries we need many skills just like piano, drawing, dancing, none of which is included in our modules now, but we have it in the training of work license. We need a broad range of knowledge to be a teacher in nurseries but the things we learn in the university are too rigid. Since we have to play many games in nurseries it would be better if there could be some lessons about game designing. I hope the university could provide a classroom which is designed like the real classroom in nursery in which our lesson could be given then we could know how to give lesson to children in real context. Basically we should know how to teach children when we graduate. But in my opinion, the university now just want us to have a piece of certificate. They have not thought in our place. They just take it as granted that all of us just only want a piece of certificate but they have not thought about there are still some students want to learn basic knowledge and skills. For the people like us who had missed the opportunities to study in universities, the theories they teach maybe not helpful for me, which could only provide me a piece of certificate. For the people who do not have basic knowledge like me, the theories could help me but not too much because our practical work is teaching children which cannot be helped by the theories we learn. There is a big difference between those who have work experience and those who do not have. For example now we have design the instruction plan, those who have worked in nurseries for many years feel it is so easy to design the instruction when they see the theme. But the people like me who do not have work experience feel it is so difficult to do it. These are rally what should be taught be university otherwise we do not know how to do it. On top of which, there are many people come from other professions. We could not know how to do it if the university do not teach us.

Q. 在你自己私人的生活圈子里面，你最好的朋友都是什么时候认识的？

Who are you closest friends in your personal life?

A. 最好的朋友就是一起长大的，最好的就一个，往外在扩一层的话就是初中认识的，一个人，再往外的话就是同事，一个，这三个人都是我最好的朋友，再往外扩一层的话就是现在也大这群人，这群人中有一个是最好的，我觉得我们在发展下去会达到跟他们三个一样的关系

My best friend grows up together with me, just one. There is also one friend in the second circle who is my middle school friend. Also there is one friend in the third circle who is my previous colleague. These three are all my best friend. If extend the circle further, the people I know in the university should be in the next circle, one of whom is closest with me. I think we could become very close friend just like those three.

Q. 那一个圈子跟你的关系更紧密？

Your personal friend circle compared with the university friend circle, which is closer to you?

A. 私人朋友圈子的关系更紧密，因为年数上这么多年了，因为他们时间上占优势。

My personal private circle. Since we have know each other for so many years. They prevail over time.

Q. 如果再往外扩一层?

Extend the university circle?

A. 我很想跟（E 大学的）老师做朋友，但现在还没有。

I want to make friends with the teachers, but there is no until now.

Q. 那你这个个人左右的圈子就只有一个人你觉得是可以发展的?

So you think there is only one from the university circle could develop into good friend?

A. 对，就发展成很好的，就我每天都可以有话题聊，很多地方都可以一起去这样子，但是你不能把十个人都当最好的，交朋友也是要有重点的，不可能什么朋友都当最好的朋友，那也是不可能的。

Yes, become very close friend who I could talk with every day and go to anywhere we want. You cannot take 10 people all as best friend. There should be some key point

when you make friends with other people and you cannot treat anyone as very best friend, which is impossible.

Q. 私人圈子再往外扩一层?

Extend your personal circle?

A. 夜大新认识的朋友中只有一个可以放进我的私人朋友的圈子里。再往外的话就是老师啊，（谈不上新认识的那十个人的圈子）这个是时间的问题啊，因为很多事情会随着时间慢慢变化的，很多友谊会随着时间的推移慢慢变淡的，现在我觉得关系还可以，但没有好到怎么样的一个级别，因为我现在也不能滥交朋友，交朋友也是很有原则的，首先肯定是要性格是要合得来的，第二个是你们两个是要有共同的爱好的，还有就是可以给你带来帮助的，也不是酒肉朋友这种，我觉得各个层次的朋友也都要有一点，我现在还真是却这种老师这种级别的很少，我现在跟老师是有聊，但达到很好的关系的没有，我觉得老师跟学生总是有一层那种关系在，我非常希望将来某个老师能跟我成为非常好的朋友

There is one who I met in university could be put into my personal circle. Teachers maybe could be put in if extend the circle. This is something about time. Many things could be changed when time goes by. Some friendship could fade slowly by time. I have my principles for making friends, firstly we should match by our personality; secondly we should have common interests; thirdly we could help and support each other. I hope I could have friend on different level. Now I do not have friends who are teachers. I have talked with some of my teachers but I have not got any who has a very

close relationship with me. I think there is still a line between students and teachers. I hope I could become very good friends with teachers in the future.

Q. 最好的朋友对你读夜大有什么帮助吗？

What kind of help you could get from your best friend?

A. 他们都蛮支持的，他们帮不了我什么，但他们对我的帮助是这样子的，因为我往这个方向发展了嘛，如果他们得到了一些资源，比如这本书或幼儿园里很重要的课程然后发给我说你可以去买一下这样子，或者，因为我转这个专业了嘛，我最好的朋友现在在日本，他就经常给我一些很可爱的东西，他说你现在做这个职业了嘛，应该再可爱一点，这也算一种帮助把，反正他们都支持我的，但专业上他们不懂啊，就帮不到

They all support me and encourage me to do it, but they could not give me practical help. The way they help me is like this: since they know I will develop in this career, when they get some resource relevant to my work for example a book or a lesson in nursery, they will tell me to have a look at that. Additionally, since I have changed my way to become a teacher in nursery, my best friend in Japan, she always gives me some interesting and cute stuff. She said I should become cuter since I do this job. I think this is kind of support. Anyway they all support and encourage me. But they cannot help me academically in my profession since they do not know it.

Q. 你在 E 大学你最亲密的朋友圈子是谁？

Who are you closest circle in university?

A. 我身边整个一圈都是幼师，都是我在 E 大学新认识的，他们给我提供了很多帮助，比如我要考教师资格证嘛，他们以前也都考过的，他们会推荐给我一些培训机构，说这个培训会比较好，那我就知道了，还有像需要看一些什么书，还有就是他们都是有经验的老师，我问他们什么问题他们都能很快的解答我，现在我问的最多的是关于教师资格证的问题，还有我之前在早教中心嘛，也会碰到一些问题，跟家长有一些问题，或孩子身上有一些问题，都会问他们。可能他们对我以后就业也是会有帮助的，因为有一个同学说等我证拿出来了，他可能会推荐我去他们学校，就这样子，还有就是就这一圈人的性格都很好，我能进这个圈子我蛮开心的，我问他们问题他们都愿意告诉我，我觉得我能学习很多呀，我现在还没遇到其他问题，最多的还是考资格证的问题，但等我走到工作岗位上遇到其他问题他们也都会解答我。我觉得我们都变成朋友了。

All my friend in University E are nursery teachers, who I met in University E. They have helped me a lot. For example since I have to take the exam for gaining the certificate of teacher which they have already passed, they could recommend some training institutes for me as well some books for me. Furthermore, since they are all experienced teachers, they could answer my questions quickly. Most of my questions now are about the certificate of teacher. Previously when I worked in early learning centre I had asked things which I met in my work like issues with their parents, issues about children. Maybe they could help me with my future career as well since one of these friends told me that once I get my certificate of teacher she could introduce me to

the nursery which she is working in. Also they all have good character and personality. I am very happy I could involve in this circle. They are all willing to answer my questions from whom I can learn a lot of things. Now I do not have too many questions, most of my questions are related to how to get the certificate of teacher. I think I would have more questions when I work in real context and I think they would still help me. I think we are all friends now.

Q. 你觉得在夜大，有人陪伴重要吗？

Do you think it is important to be accompanied by someone in university?

A. 我肯定是要找一堆人的，因为我这个性格不适合一个人的，我希望这个圈子都是爱学习的一群人，那我觉得现在这个圈子就是这样的，我们有十几个个人。跟一个圈子在一起很重要，因为可以交流啊，碰到什么问题都可以相互交流一下，一个人的话碰到什么问题，因为牵涉到工作问题，有些事情就会被忽略，就像你请个假有事没来，老师说了些东西，如果你一个人的话可能就会错过，那你一群人的话他们会相互跟你说你没来发生了什么事情，老师布置了什么任务，这样都会有了解。生活上的帮助也有，也会私下约出来玩，一起吃吃饭聊聊天。学习上平时一直在交流的，快考试的时候有什么不懂的，我们有个群都会交流的。因为幼师嘛，大家性格都很开朗，都玩得到一起，大家关系都很好，都很亲密，我也有几个很稳定的，但大多数都是开朗型的，都能玩到一起。我们现在基本都是同班一起玩，基本不跟其他班级交流，这边没有之前认识的，都是新认识的人，就有一个是之前成人高考时认识的，他不是这个圈子的，是另外一个圈子的，他是我认识的，但这个圈子其他认识不认识的，我没有把他

拉到我们的圈子里来，再往外推一层也都是朋友关系，我觉得现在这些同学，我们要在一起经历三年的关系，那我觉得毕业以后大家都会是很好的朋友了，以后工作上面也脱离不了他们的。我这个人就是很喜欢交朋友的一个人，所以我觉得同学都应该成为朋友，因为大家以后都在一个圈子里面工作，大家要交流交流的。

Yes, I have to stay with people. I cannot stay alone due to my character. I hope I could stay in a group full of people who like study. I think the group I am in now is this kind. We have around 10 people altogether. It is important to stay in a group because we can communicate and talk about whatever problems we meet. If one person stays alone she could miss something the teacher says in class if you were not in the class due to some reasons. But if you stay in a group, the other people could tell you what the teachers said, what assignment the teacher gave so you could know that kind of information. Also we can help each other in personal life as well and we also meet individually out of university to eat some food or have a talk. We always communicate about study especially before the exams, we would talk in our group online. Since we are all nursery teachers, we are all easy-going and optimistic. It is easy for us to involve together and have a good and close relationship. We always stay with the people from our own class rather than those from other classes. There is nobody I knew previously. I have known one student in the Adult Higher Entrance Examination, who is from another group not from our group. Since no one else from our group know her so I did not take her into our group. I think since all of us will spend three years in the university, we definitely could become good friend when we graduate and will have relationship about work as well. I like making friends and I think classmates all should become friend because we will work in the some area in the future and it is good for us to communicate and talk.

Q. 那这些你认为是朋友的人会给你带来什么帮助？

What kind of help you could get from those you treat as friends?

A. 他们会给我很多帮助啊，比如说我以后新进了一个幼儿园，因为幼儿园的工作都很繁琐，我是会努力学习但幼儿园的同事不会教我太多，都是要靠自己摸索的，但有了这些朋友，我要做一个东西我不会了，我就可以咨询他们，那这就是很好的一个资源，就像有些活动不知道该怎么组织啦，我也可以问他们，还有也可以扩展到私人朋友，一起出来玩玩啊什么的，我们还有计划说我们要一起去来个毕业旅游，毕业了我们就一起，孩子也不带，就自己去玩。反正就对以后的工作也有帮助，大家都想去有发展的幼儿园，我那个朋友也说了如果你够优秀就推荐你去有发展的幼儿园。

A lot help. For example, I will work in a nursery in the future, since the work in nursery is quite trifling and trivial I will learn hard by myself but my colleagues could not teach me too much and I have to explore them by myself. But since I have this group of friends, if I have some problem I could ask them for help, which is a very good resource; if I do not know how to organise some activities I also could ask them for help. Some of them could become good friend in private life to have fun together. Now we are thinking about organise a graduation travel and we go all by ourselves without our children, only us. As conclusion it is helpful for the future work since we all willing to develop in nurseries. And one friend of mine said if I am good enough then she would introduce me to her nursery.

Q. 父母的职业?

You parents job?

A. 我妈妈是农民，种地，父亲在高中做后勤，我妈初中，我爸高中。

他俩都支持我读夜大，因为小时候就希望我好好读书，取得一个好的学历嘛，但我那个时候比较叛逆，没听他们话，那现在我有这种想法他们还是蛮支持的，觉得孩子还是蛮上进的，然后就说家里孩子婆婆都是可以带的，你就安心读书就好了，反正需要什么帮助就跟他们说。还有同时他们也想我稳定一点嘛，因为我这个年龄了，他们也不想我总是跳来跳去的，我爸也跟我说过你一定要找一个作为你的终身职业去发展，那现在还来得及。还有就是我爸妈从小就觉得我是适合做幼教方面的，所以他们当然很支持我了。

My mum is a farmer, graduated from middle school; my father work for logistics support in high school, graduate from high school. They both support me to study in Night School. When I was young they both hope me can study well but at that time I was too rebellious and did not want to follow their words. They both supportive since I have this idea now because they think I am still making progress, they just let me to focus on learning and my mother-in-law could help me to look after my daughter. And told me that just tell them if I need them to do anything. Also they hope me could live a stable life due to my age and they do not want me to change my job frequently. My dad said I have to find a job which could be my whole life career and I still have time to do it now. My parents think I am suitable to be a teacher in nursery even when I was young so they are happy to support me now.

Q. 小时候随你的期待和要求？

Did they have any expectation on you when you were young?

A. 有期待啊，但我不听话啊。小时候我妈很严格的，我爸不严格的，因为我爸之前是海员，一个月或几个月才回来一次，后来才进学校的，所以他对我的学习也没精力管，我妈也没什么文化，他不怎么管你学习的，他对你要求很高但他不怎么管你学习的。

Yes, they had but I was rebellious. My mum was strict and rigorous to me but my dad was not. Since my dad was a seaman and only came back home monthly or once in several months. He worked in high school late so he did not have time to manage me. Since my mum did not have much knowledge she just had a high requirement and standard for me but she did not help me about my study.

Q. 他俩觉得学习重要吗？

Did they think study was important?

A. 我妈可能最想要得到的是一个结果，她是想要你要去考几分考几分，蛋挞对你每天要做什么，那她不管，因为可能文化有关系吧，学习层次也不高懂得也

不是很多，她只要一个结果啊，回来就问你你考几分啊，我考得不好她就教训你，他也不问你学习遇到什么困难啊，应该怎么解决这个困难啊，不问的。

My mum just wanted a result, she just wanted you to have a high score but she did not know what I should do every day and how to study, she did not think about that. Maybe this was related to her knowledge since her education level is low and does not have much knowledge, what she wanted was just a result. She always asked what my score was when I was back home. If she was not satisfied with it she would punish you. She never cared and asked what problem I had on my study and how to solve the problem. Never asked.

Q. 你觉得这种教育方式对你有影响吗？

Do you think the way they educate you has any influence on your study?

A. 肯定有影响的，那父母对我不上心，那我当然对自己也不上心了，因为我这种人是需要有人管管的。我觉得我妈要一个结果的这种想法背后的动机是面子吧，她最期待的就是听到某某某考了几分，她就也想让自己女儿也考几分，但是她看不到其他父母他们是付出了努力的，天天去学习的，我妈不是的，那时候，哎，反正我也不能说什么，那我现在自己去学习吧，没办法。她对学习没什么看法，他就觉得人家考一百分为什么你不能考一百分，他觉得这是很简单的事情，他就觉得我得不到一个好的成绩都是我的问题，都是我自身的问题。

我爸爸那时候不在家，他觉得我在外面赚钱，这些学习的事情都是应该妈妈来完成的，他不怎么管，我爸爸不怎么管我学习的，问我考几分啊，就说可以可以，只要不是垫底就好。两个人都是很宽松，但我这个人是很要被人管的，就是你一懒散我就懒散。

Definitely has influence. My parents did not pay attention on my study and I did not as well. I am this kind of person who needs other people to manage me and guide me. I think my mum eagers for my study result because the motivation behind it is the vanity. What she expected was when she heard other children's score she just wanted me to have that high score as well but she did not think about how much effort other children's parents had spent and how other children's parent learn how to teach their children. My mum did not. But I have nothing to do with it. What I can do is start to learn all by myself now, nothing else. She did not have any idea about study. She just thought other people could get a high score like 100, why could not I? She thought that was a quite simple thing and it would be all my own problems if I could not get that high score. My father was not at home. He thought it should all be mum's responsibility to look after my study since he took the responsibility to earn money. He never asked about my study. Sometimes would ask about my score and he just say it was OK as long as I was not the last one in my class. They managed me so loosely then I was lazy since I needed other people to guide me and help me.

Q. 他们觉得学习重要吗?

Did they think study was important?

A. 他们是觉得结果重要啊，就比如说，他总拿别人去跟我做比较，那你越比较我越是叛逆的，没有一个好的教育观念是影响到我，我小时候如果我努力应该会发展的很好，但就是这样一个学习环境导致我现在要重新自己去学，那个时候要是好一点的话我完全可以考个好大学，那我现在对我下一代肯定是完全不一样的教育方法了。

They thought the result is more important. For example they always compared other people with me, but I would be more rebellious if you compared more. I had not been influenced by a proper education view. I think I could have a good development and maybe I could go to a good university if I studied hard when I was young but due to that kind of environment I have to study all by myself now. so now I teach my daughter in a totally different way.

Q. 你老公？

How about your husband?

A. 比我大两岁，33，大专，他也是自己读的大专，不是考的，他现在做销售。他做销售嘛，忙一点薪资也会高一点。他就觉得同样是付出了，你得到的这么少，但是在幼儿园付出的更多，幼儿园真的很累很累的，而且工资又那么少，他就觉得这种东西为什么要做，他还说你现在才想到要去，之前也有过争执，现在慢慢好一点。

He is three years older than me, 33 now, graduated from Dazhuan. He works as a salesman. The more he earns the busier he is. He thinks my salary was quite low since I spend as much as, maybe more than that in other job but with a lower payback. The work in nursery is really tiring and busy but with a lower salary so he could not understand why I choose to do it, on top of which I start to do it in such a age. We have argued about this before but now it becomes better.

Q. 他对你读夜大有帮助吗？

Any help he could do for you?

A. 因为他也经常出差，他也管不了家里面，他对我的帮助嘛，有鼓励的成分在里面，他有时开玩笑嘛，看你能坚持多久，但从他的话里看出他已经慢慢开始支持了。

Since he travels on official business frequently, he could not spend too much effort at home. The help he gives me is mostly encouragement. He always make joke that let see how long can I persist. But I ca realize he starts to support me.

Q. 夜大有关键人物吗？

Any key person in you higher education study?

A. 我有一个亲戚，他是一个公立幼儿园的副院长，他关键是因为它影响到了我做了这个决定，他那个时候跟我说了一下这个情况，他说你现在做行政，他就问我你到底喜不喜欢孩子的，我说我喜欢的呀，他说那你到底想不想做幼教，我说想的，他说那你就付之行动啊呀，你想的东西你必须要去，然后他就跟我说了下做幼教的利弊，因为他做了 20 年了嘛，他说稳定是肯定的，还有如果你是真的很喜欢孩子的，那你就真的能在工作中得到快乐，这是第一个。还有就是你现在已经生好孩子了，做这个工作也能照顾到你的孩子，因为他孩子现在已经大学了，他说他就是这么过来的，他说你要读的话你就努力去读，时间还来得及，让我赶紧去办。反正我觉得他对我的帮助还蛮大的，他还蛮关键的，他说如果你以后考好了，一步步出来了，有什么问题的话他都能随时给我帮助，他真是发自内心的给我传递帮助，因为他也是亲戚嘛，我就考虑了一下后来就决定了。我有几个朋友也是从事幼教的，但他们都在郊区，小孩子也不太多，他们就混混日子这样，但我那个亲戚师傅院长嘛，他也是从老师一路奋斗上来的，他付出了好多好多，很不容易的，她真的很爱学习的，他基本上之前什么都不会的，钢琴啊美术是，他虽然是这个专业的，但他都不是很在行的，都是靠自己后天努力的，多以他现在能有这么成功。

I have a relevant who is the head of a nursery. She is important because she affects my decision. She had told me the situation and information about nursery. She had asked me if I liked children, if I wanted to work in nursery, I said yes, and then she said I should put it into action. She said I should start to do what I wanted to do. She told me the advantage and disadvantage about working in nursery since she had worked in nursery for 20 years. She said the stability is confirmed and I could feel happy and joyful if I did like children. Also I was already a mum myself so I could look after my own child as well, which was her own experience. She said if you wanted to study then study hard, there was still enough time and took all the certificate as quickly as I can. I think

she is quite important for me. She said when I finish all the exams of certificates we do it step by step and she will help me whenever I need. She is willing to help me genuinely. Since she is my relative so I finally made my decision. I also have some other relatives who are all teachers in nurseries. But they work in countryside with less children and their job is not busy as well. But this relative is the head of nursery and she had developed from teacher all the way up, she had spent too much effort, which is not easy. She does like study and she did not know anything before just like piano or drawing. She also learn that all by herself later so she could be so successful in her career.

Q. 关键事件？

Any key issue happened during this period?

A. 就隔壁班有一个女孩子，他经常带他男朋友来读书嘛，然后有一个同学把他男朋友的照片发到朋友圈了，他一个班里的朋友就看到了，他男朋友就来找他理论，就说我陪我女朋友上课你干嘛把我照片发到朋友网嘛，然后就来打人，结果打错人把另一个女同学给打了，很暴力的，后来 120 也来了，好像打的耳朵有问题。这个事情影响蛮大的，我就觉得好可怕，这学校怎么会这么乱，就觉得这个学校很不安全，就莫名其妙就会被打，要是哪天没看清把我打一顿，安全性很成问题。

There was a girl in next class who was accompanied by her boyfriend to study here. Someone had posted her boyfriend' picture online which was seen by another student in her class and she told her boyfriend. Her boyfriend then came to argue with that

person why you posted my photo online since I just accompanied my girlfriend for lesson. Then he beat the girl but she was not the person who posted his picture online, which was so violent. Then the emergency help came and the girl was told there was a serious problem with her ears. This issue had a big influence which made me feel that the university was so messy and so unsecure. It was so weird and unreasonable to be beaten. I just worry maybe one day I could be beaten as well by accident.

Q. 夜大的收获?

Any achievement in Night School?

A. 收获最多的是，一个是朋友，得到了一些资源，工作方面的，对我现在考试有帮助的方面的。

The important achievement includes friends and resources which relates to my current job and my exams.

Q. 未来的期待?

Any plan and expectation on your future?

A. 我是想通过自己的努力通过四级的，因为那段时间我在准备教师资格证面试考，还有期末考，还有四级，精力不够嘛，四级就没有考过，我最想的目标是能通过四级，然后学位课能够达到 70 分最后取得学士学位。然后期待我毕业了以后我能在一个学校能比较优秀，让他们觉得成人高考出来的和全日制是一样的，或许是更好，不要有什么差别对待。如果有机会我还想继续学，一步一个脚印，我这个时候学习我要付出比他们更多的努力，就像我画画也不是很好，你让我现在再去学个素描真的很难，还有钢琴舞蹈啊什么的，还有授课能力，这都是需要时间的积累去练的，不是一下子就能完成的，所以我需要努力很多。还有期待能评上优秀学生啊，还是要很努力才对。

I hope I could get the English-level 4 by my own effort. I failed the English-level 4 last time since I had the exams about teacher certificate, my end-of-term exams, and English-level 4 exam as well so I did not have enough energy for all of them. My most expectation is to achieve the English level-4 and get more than 70 on my degree courses then get my degree finally. After that I do hope I could get a job in a good nursery and let them see we part-time mature students could do as well as those full-time students, maybe better than them and let them treat us as the same without any discriminatory. I want to keep on learning step by step if I have the opportunity. I have to spend more effort due to my age now. I want to learn drawing, piano, dancing and giving lessons since I cannot do them very well. These all need to be accumulated by time not in one go so I need to spend more effort. I also hope I could be elected to be the excellent student, which also needs more effort.

Appendix V: A list of 58 nodes

Name	Sources	References
achievement from study	0	0
academic improvrmnt	4	4
self-confidence	8	12
institutional habitus affect via affecting mature stduents' habitu	0	0
expectation for university life	0	0
do not have expectation for university life	6	8
mature classmate do not want to talk	3	3
perception of being mature students in university	7	9
previours academic backgroud	17	17
sense of belonging	0	0
have sense of belonging	2	2
lack of sense of belonging	9	9
stay with the people like me	1	1
study aspiration	0	0
for job promotion	11	15
study attitude	0	0
think about the line	2	6
for self-realization	8	20
strive to learn	4	7
institutional habitus affect via practice	0	0
academic integration	0	0

FILE HOME CREATE DATA ANALYZE QUERY EXPLORE LAYOUT VIEW

Nodes Look for Search In Find Now Clear

Nodes
Cases

Nodes

Name	Sources	References
institutional habitus affect via practice	0	0
academic integration	0	0
access standard (link to the study difficulty)	11	11
academic level at the beginning	1	1
pedagogical structure	0	0
arrangement of module	0	0
alternative module	4	6
lack of teaching time	1	1
lack of tutorial time	2	2
unclear course requirement	3	3
teaching content	0	0
relevance between teaching content and work	0	0
teaching content supports work practice	10	11
too theoretical to understand (link to academic	3	3
two distinct degrees	2	2
teachers' expertise	0	0
relevant work experience	2	2
teaching attitude	0	0
lack of clear feedback	1	2
lack of good teaching attitude	2	2
willingness to help	0	0

Sources

Nodes

Classifications

Collections

Queries

Folders

AMELIA 58 Items

FILE HOME CREATE DATA ANALYZE QUERY EXPLORE LAYOUT VIEW

Nodes < Look for Search In Find Now Clear

Nodes
Cases

Sources
Nodes
Classifications
Collections
Queries
Folders

Nodes

Name	Sources	References
lack of good teaching attitude		2
willingness to help		0
some are not that willing to support		5
some are supportive		4
usage of facilities		0
lack of facilities for mature students		1
library		7
online resources		4
social integration		0
peer support		0
academic support		0
academic guidance		6
assigniemnt related		2
moral support		0
accompony		7
encouragement for hold onto study		5
self-confidence construction		2
teacher-student relationship		0
perception of being known by teachers		10
university does not involve mature students		4

AMELIA 58 Items

Appendix VI: Ethical procedures for research

THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE
CONSENT FORM: (INTERVIEWS)

I, _____ of _____

Hereby agree to be a participant in this study to be undertaken

By **Guan Shanshan (University of Hull)**

and I understand that the purpose of the research is to

“Dance to the dominants’ tune”: The impact of institutional habitus on mature students’ study in both England and China

I understand that

1. the aims, methods, and anticipated benefits, and possible risks/hazards of the research study, have been explained to me.
2. I voluntarily and freely give my consent to my participation in such research study.
3. I understand that aggregated results will be used for research purposes and may be reported in scientific and academic journals.
4. Individual results will not be released to any person except at my request and on my authorisation.
5. I am free to withdraw my consent at any time during the study, in which event my participation in the research study will immediately cease and any information obtained from me will not be used.

Signature:

Date:

The contact details of the researcher are: Shanshan Guan, PhD student in Faculty of Education, University of Hull

**The contact details of the secretary to the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee are Mrs J.Lison, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX.
Email: J.Lison@hull.ac.uk tel. 01482-465988.**

In some cases, consent will need to be witnessed eg. where the subject is blind/intellectually disabled. A witness must be independent of the project and may only sign a certification to the level of his/her involvement. A suggested format for witness certification is included with the sample consent forms. The form should also record the witnesses' signature, printed name and occupation. For particularly sensitive or exceptional research, further information can be obtained from the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee Secretary, eg, absence of parental consent, use of pseudonyms, etc)

NOTE: In the event of a minor's consent, or person under legal liability, please complete the Ethics Committee's "Form of Consent on Behalf of a Minor or Dependent"

赫尔大学教育学院研究伦理知情表（访谈）

我 来自

同意以 **研究对象** 身份参与 **关珊珊（University of Hull）** 的博士研究课题：

组织惯习对成人学习的影响——中英对比的视角

我知晓并认可：

1. 该研究的目的，方法，预期效益以及可能存在的危险；
2. 我对该研究的参与是基于自愿的原则；
3. 该研究的研究成果只能为本研究所用，且有关成果有可能发表在相关科研或学术期刊之中；
4. 除非获得我的授权和许可，则我所提供的任何资料\信息不会予以泄露；
5. 在研究的任何阶段，我有权选择随时离开该研究项目，且有关我所提供的任何信息都不会以任何形式加以使用。

签名：

时间：

本研究的研究者为：**关珊珊，赫尔大学教育学院博士研究生**

如果您有任何问题，欢迎您同赫尔大学教育研究中心教育研究伦理委员会秘书 J.Lison 女士联系。

联系方式为： Mrs J.Lison, Centre for Educational Studies, University of Hull, Cottingham Road, Hull, HU6 7RX. Email: J.Lison@hull.ac.uk tel. 01482-465988.

如果研究对象为以下情况，如盲视/智力障碍，则本研究需要在一名见证人的陪同下进行。见证人必须独立于本项研究，且需要签署一份证明文件以证实其参与。该证明文件可见研究伦理知情表的附页。此表格必须涵括见证人的签名，电子签名以及相关的职业信息等。对于任何可能涉及敏感问题的研究，请参看教育学院研究伦理办公室的相关文件和表格（例如，家长知情同意书，姓名替换准则等）

注:如需获得未成年人的‘知情同意书’，则需要完成研究伦理委员会的“未成年人研究知情同意申请表”