

# Open Research Online

---

The Open University's repository of research publications and other research outputs

## Employability: identity and student agency

### Other

How to cite:

McCormick, Michael (2021). Employability: identity and student agency. The Open University.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

© 2021 Michael McCormick



<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Version: Poster

---

Copyright and Moral Rights for the articles on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. For more information on Open Research Online's [data policy](#) on reuse of materials please consult the policies page.

---

[oro.open.ac.uk](https://oro.open.ac.uk)

# Employability: identity and student agency

## A phenomenological case study

Mick McCormick – EdD doctoral researcher  
Mick.mccormick@open.ac.uk



### Background

- Critical appraisal of employability frameworks
- Where does the student fit in?
- What does the student say?
- Does it support emerging student identity?<sup>1</sup>

### Method and data collection

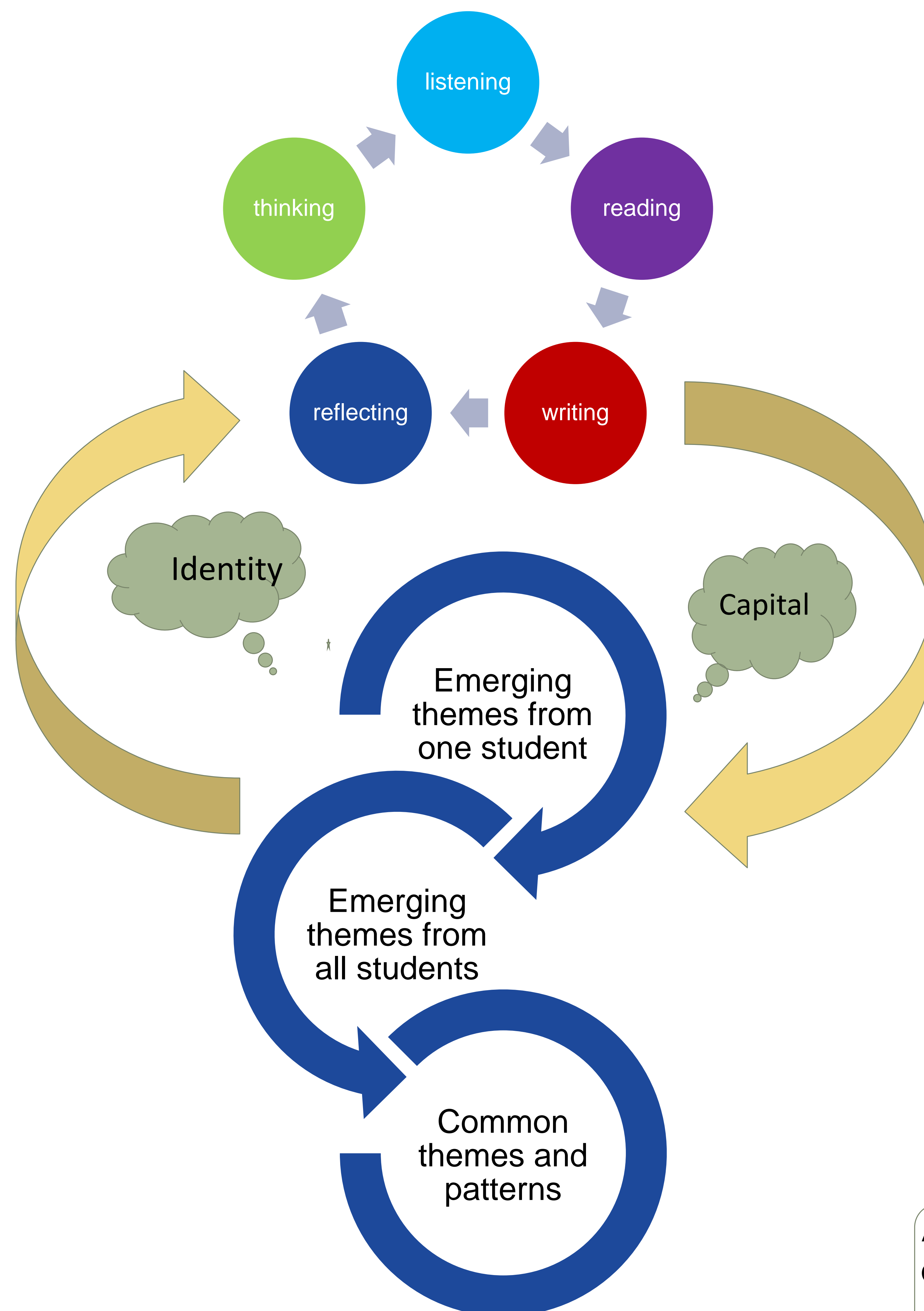
- Phenomenological methodology
- Semi structured interviews
- Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)<sup>3</sup>

### Emerging themes

- **Micro:** What do students say about employability – what do they make of it? Can we develop a more sophisticated approach to employability which engages student rather than sees student as an object being made ‘employable’?
- **Meso:** impact on institutional approaches to employability (University, Faculty, Qualification)
- **Macro:** influence debate and direction of employability narrative at national policy level

### Research Questions

- What are the effects of engagement with courses where employability has been embedded into the curriculum?
- What are the benefits of engagement with employability over the course of study and beyond?
- How effective is employability in developing different types of capital<sup>2</sup> to support emerging identities



### References

<sup>1</sup> Ibarra, H., and Barbulescu, R. (2010) 'Identity as Narrative: Prevalence, Effectiveness, and Consequences of Narrative Identity Work in Macro Work Role Transitions'. *The Academy of Management Review* 35, no. 1 (2010): 135–54.

<sup>2</sup> Adler, P., & Seok-Woo Kwon. (2002). Social Capital: Prospects for a New Concept. *The Academy of Management Review*, 27(1), 17-40. Retrieved March 18, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4134367>

<sup>3</sup> Larkin, M, Watts S, and Clifton, E. 'Giving Voice and Making Sense in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (1 January 2006): 102–20.  
<https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp0620a>.

**Acknowledgements:** thanks to Duncan Banks and Ray Chatwin – EdD supervisors - for their expert input and guidance