

CHAPTER 4: DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

...the analysis of data is not a distinct stage of the research. It begins in the pre-fieldwork stage, in the formulation and clarification of research problems, and continues into the process of writing up (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 174)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the rationale for the design of the study, how it operationalises the theoretical framework, and how the study was implemented. The chapter is organised in accordance with the components of Miles and Huberman's (op. cit., p. 12ff) "interactive" model of data analysis. The chapter summarises these components and how they were managed in the study. More detailed accounts of the data sets, their analysis, and the findings which emerged, are provided in subsequent chapters. The selection of social-theoretical resources which informed and was informed by these findings is explained in Chapter 5, The analyst's perspective.

4.2 DESIGN OF THE STUDY

4.2.1 Rationale

To address the questions of *how commercialisation affects the professional practices of teachers who work in ELICOS colleges in Australia*, the study took as its perspectival entry point the analysis of the promotional brochures produced by a sample of ELICOS institutions. This focus led to the initial foregrounding of the social resource perspective. However, the fact that this perspective was taken as the starting point in this study does not reflect a need to sequence the perspectives in a particular way; as explained above, the presentation of the perspectives in Figure 4 does not represent a chronology but rather a flexible topography which can be adapted to the needs of particular investigations.

The value of the brochures to the study is that, as social resources drawn on in the recruitment of students, they reflect and advance the commercial interests of the colleges, and in doing so, they provide an opportunity to investigate whether the discourse they instantiate is also that which advances the commercialisation of teachers' practices.

4.211 The brochures and social practice

Promotional brochures constitute the first point of contact between the colleges and their prospective clients and, as such, are central to the recruitment of members of the public into the college. The brochures therefore enter into, and are inseparable from, the social practice of recruitment, an activity characteristic of commercially-oriented educational organisations. Designed to persuade members of particular target groups to convert to the role of clients of the colleges, the discourse instantiated by ELICOS promotional brochures is highly strategic, exemplifying what Cook (1992, p. 1ff) has termed the "discourse of advertising", a discourse which Fairclough (1992, p. 215) has identified as a "discourse technology". As such, brochures contribute to this recruitment function by constructing English language education in ways likely to attract new clients. In designing the study, then, it was reasonable to imagine that these constructions reflect and advance a commercialised view – or 'ideology' – of education, which renders in a saleable way the colleges, their courses, teachers, and students, and how they participate in processes of teaching and learning. The analysis of the brochures, then, seeks to discover evidence for, and to generate an account of, these commercially-motivated constructions of participants and the relationships between them.

4.212 Predicting the colonisation of teachers' practices

The purpose of generating the account of these constructions is to compare them with how ELICOS teachers themselves perceive their professional practices. The point of this

comparison is to discover whether it provides evidence that the discourse implicated in the construction of the college in the brochures is also implicated in advancing the commercialisation of teachers' professional practices. This interest in investigating the 'predictive value' of the analysis of the promotional brochures was prompted by Fairclough's (1992, p. 207) account of "commodification" as a process involving "the colonization of institutional orders of discourse, and more broadly of the societal order of discourse, by discourse types associated with commodity production". As explained in Chapter 3, colonisation is both central to Fairclough's explanation of social change and provides a focus for the investigation of such change. The specific focus in this study on promotional brochures as examples of the "discourse of advertising" (Cook, loc. cit.), then, draws on Fairclough's (op. cit., p. 99) observation that "the extension of market models to new spheres, can, for example, be investigated through the recent extensive colonization of orders of discourse by advertising and other discourse types"³⁶.

Within the study, it was anticipated that colonisation would be evidenced by interdiscursive relations between the discourse(s) instantiated in the brochures and teachers' perceptions of their practices. The reason for suspecting the presence of these relations was that both the brochures and teachers' professional practices are subject to the same commercial pressure to package, promote and sell English language teaching and learning, a process which does not stop at the brochures but represents the overarching commercial imperative of the colleges.

There was also reason to suspect that, as the discourse evidenced by the brochures advances this pressure on teachers' practices, it creates tensions and stresses, and encounters resistance as it shapes the relations between teachers, students and managers. This is because of the potential for tension, noted in Chapter 1, between teachers' interests

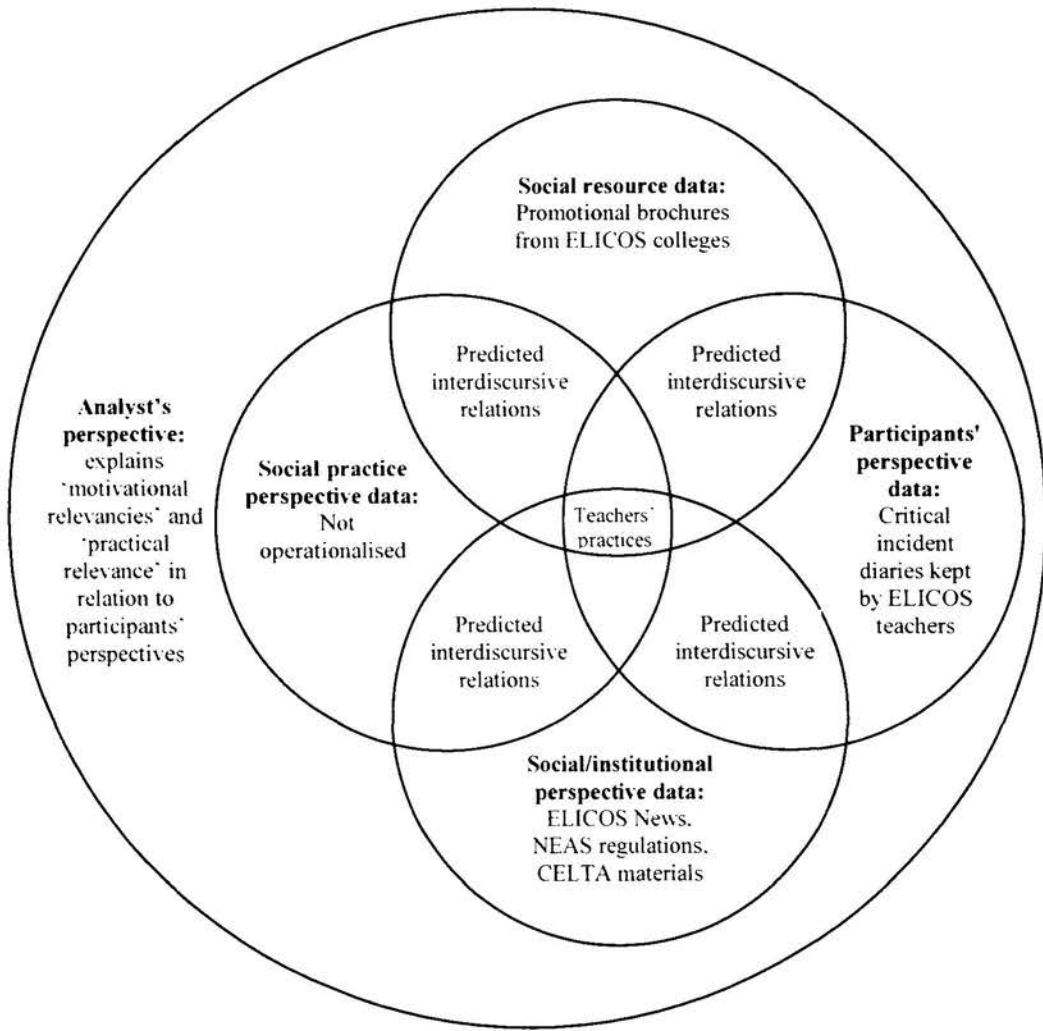
³⁶ Moreover, the analysis of colonised discourse that Fairclough (1992, p. 208ff) provides, that of language education, provides a valuable starting point – explained in Chapter 7. The social resource perspective – for the analysis of the ELICOS promotional brochures.

in teaching according to their standards of professional practice and the colleges' interest in selling educational products - a common cause of these tensions being the challenge posed for teachers working with students who are simultaneously clients of the college.

It was anticipated that these tensions between pedagogical and commercial interests would be evidenced by the "fragmentation of discourse" (Fairclough, *ibid.*, p. 220) as commercial and teaching agendas compete to define the roles of participants. From the teachers' perspective, this fragmentation would be experienced as "moments of crisis" (*ibid.*, p. 230), points of inter- and intra-personal conflict in which the teacher is faced with a choice between meeting competing commercial and pedagogic needs, an example of Fairclough's (p. 90) "contradictory interpellation", which is most visible at "critical moments... where personal and community matters of concern are critically evidenced and in play, typically matters surrounding issues of rights, powers, claims and responsibilities, which set at question who the framers and gatekeepers of such issues are, and who the respondent followers" (Candlin, 1997, p. x).

Whether such moments of crisis are experienced by teachers, what they identify *as* moments of crisis, and the relationship between these moments and the construction of participants and relationships advanced through the promotional brochures, were, then, key questions in to be addressed in designing and implementing the study. The remaining sections of this chapter explain how this was done, and in doing so explain the relationship between the theoretical framework and the design of the study, outlined in Figure 7, below.

Figure 7: Outline of the study



4.22 Data reduction

4.221 Data selection: the data sets

Each data set used in the study represents a different actor from the “archive” (Fairclough, op. cit., p. 227) of discursive practices which are drawn on, produced and reproduced within the ELICOS sector. The actors are

- teachers, represented by those who participated in they study:
- the ELICOS colleges, represented by those which produced the brochures gathered for the study:

- the sector's peak body – the EA³⁷;
- the organisation which regulates the sector – NEAS; and
- the most influential teacher training organisation in the sector – UCLES³⁸.

The use of 'actor' here draws on Mouzelis (op. cit., pp. 15-16) who employs it as a way of referring to an individual or collective social entity which influences the social world. According to this usage, actors are 'micro' or 'macro', depending on their relative capacity to influence the social world, and therefore each other. To this distinction, I have added 'meso' actors to refer to those social entities whose capacity to influence the social world lies between that of micro and macro actors. Applying these distinctions to the ELICOS sector, then, individual teachers are typically micro actors; ELICOS colleges are broadly meso actors; and the ELICOS Association, NEAS, and UCLES are macro actors.

This use of 'actor' is not meant to imply a particular relationship between individual actions and social structures and processes, or to deny that the word crudely glosses the complex realities of social life. Rather, consistent with Mouzelis's (ibid.) explanation of "macro actors" (p. 16) as "a convenient shorthand to avoid longwinded descriptions of complex processes of representation and of group decision-making" (p. 15), the distinction between micro, meso and macro actors in the current study is intended to capture differences in the capacity of social entities to affect each other, but, beyond this, does not assume particular identities or relationships for them. Thus, 'micro', 'meso' and 'macro' could, for example, *each* describe nations, institutions, groups of people or individuals – a bankrupt corporation administered by a receiver might thus be designated a meso or even micro actor: while the individual appointed as the receiver could then qualify as a macro actor.

³⁷ ELICOS Association

³⁸ University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate

The value of these distinctions for this study is that they provide a preliminary rationale for selecting data sets with which to represent the perspectives without, and this is a requirement of the theoretical framework as a whole, preempting the analysis of these data by assuming particular relationships between the perspectives. Though guiding the selection of the data sets for the study, then, these distinctions leave open the possibility that the explanation of the identities they evidence may be a complex matter, involving multiple relationships between different kinds of social entity.

The three perspectives, the micro, meso and macro actors, and the data sets which represent them are summarised in Table 1, below.

Table 1: The data sets

Perspectives	Micro actors/data	Meso actors/data	Macro actors/data
Participants' perspective	Teachers/critical incident diaries		
Social resource		ELICOS colleges/ Promotional brochures	
Social/institutional			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EA/ EA Newsletter • NEAS/regulatory documents • UCLES/ teacher training materials

The following sections summarise each of the data sets³⁹ and the rationale for selecting them. The operationalisation of the perspectives is explained in more detail in the subsequent sections of this chapter, and in the following chapters.

³⁹ This emphasis on data drawn from written texts, and the corresponding lack of data representing spoken texts, arose from the circumstances of study and the analyst's resources – explained in Chapter 5. The analyst's perspective.

4.2211 *The participants' perspective*

The participant perspective focuses on recovering teachers' perceptions of their professional practices, thereby focusing on the "backstage" (Goffman, 1959, p. 129) world of the college as it is perceived by institutional members rather than the "frontstage" (ibid.) world depicted in the brochures. In order to investigate teachers' perceptions, data was gathered using "critical incident"⁴⁰ diaries which were kept by a sample of teachers engaged in what would be considered in the ELICOS sector to be normal teaching duties. Participating teachers were asked to describe and explain any incidents which they felt adversely affected their ability to carry out their professional role, whatever they understood this to be. The diaries are then subject to a thematic analysis using the coding procedures recommended by Miles and Huberman (op. cit., pp. 55ff). The analysis focused on identifying the participants and relationships which the diarists' perceived to compromise their ability conduct their professional practices.

4.2212 *The social resource perspective*

The social resource perspective focuses on *describing* the discourse instantiated in promotional brochures produced by a sample of ELICOS colleges. The aim here is to develop an account of the discourse instantiated in the brochures through an analysis of how participants and the relationships between them are constructed. The coding procedures used to develop this account are those recommended by Miles and Huberman

⁴⁰ The term 'critical incident' here draws on the work of Stiegelbauer, Goldstein and Huling (1982, cited in Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 115), who, Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 115) explain, developed this focus the data gathered on "those events seen as critical, influential, or decisive in the course of some process". Thus, in their research into the implementation of a new language program in a school, Stiegelbauer et al. (op. cit.) identified "'critical incidents'" as events which had "a "'strong catalytic effect'" on determining the need for the program or on the principal's "'game plan'" (strategy) for implementation". Following this usage, then, 'critical incident' diaries provide an appropriate means of gathering data on participants' perceptions of "moments of crisis" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 227).

(ibid., pp. 55ff). The codes themselves are drawn from the linguistic descriptors used in systemic functional grammar. As the purpose of the analysis is to generate an account of how the brochures *represent* teachers' practices, the coding analysis focuses on discovering patterns of "transitivity" (Halliday, 1985, pp. 101ff), the aspect of grammar which serves "as a means of representing patterns of experience" (p. 101), and thereby enables "humans beings to build a mental picture of reality" (ibid.).

4.2213 Combining the participants' and social resource perspectives

The findings of the two analyses are then compared to discover to what extent the construction of participants and relationships identified in the brochure analysis correlates with those identified by teachers as compromising their professional practices. If evidence of these "converging conclusions"⁴¹ (Miles & Huberman, op. cit., p. 279) were found, it would enhance the credibility of the study in three ways:

- *substantively*, it would support the prediction that the discourse instantiated in the brochures influences through interdiscursive relations the discursive practices engaged in by teachers:

⁴¹ I have avoided the term 'triangulation' in the study because, in the sense in which it aims "to support a finding by showing that independent measures of it agree with it or, at least, do not disagree with it" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 266), it does not accurately describe the "integrated combination" (Layder, 1993, p. 120) of data sets in this study. Apart from more general questions about the efficacy of triangulation in social research (see, for example, Mathison, 1988), the issue here is that triangulation's focus on "checking the validity of findings" (Miles & Huberman, loc. cit.) typically involves the separation of the discovery of findings from the means of validation, rather than the integration of these within, and as an ongoing guide to, the research process – as envisaged in Layder's (op. cit.) "multistrategy" approach and Miles and Huberman's "interactive" (op. cit., p. 12ff) model of data analysis. The notion of "convergence" is preferable to 'triangulation' here, then, because, for example, the combination of the diary and brochure analyses both supports the argument for and is *the basis of* the account of the 'discourse of commercialisation' developed through the study. On the other hand, 'triangulation' in the more general sense of "corroboration" (Miles & Huberman, ibid., p. 267) is integral to the methodology used in this study. In this sense, triangulation refers, as Miles and Huberman (ibid.) explain, not to a "tactic" but to a "way of life" in which "the verification process will be largely built into data collection as you go. In effect, triangulation is a way to get to the finding in the first place".

- *methodologically*, it would suggest that the findings of the brochure and critical incident analyses were not artifacts of the research process; and
- *ontologically*, it would tend to support the interdiscursive basis of the theoretical framework which informed the design of the study.

4.2214 The social/institutional perspective

To operationalise the social/institutional perspective, data were selected which, it was anticipated, would provide insights into how the operations of macro actors influence the identities and relationships between micro and meso actors identified through the analyses of the brochures and diaries. Such 'lines of influence' would be evidenced by interdiscursive relations between the construction of participants and relationships in the data sets gathered for the social/institutional perspective, and those constructed in the brochures and critical incident diaries. Three data sets were selected, each representing a different macro actor.

- The 'EA News'. This is a bi-monthly newsletter produced by the industry peak body – the ELICOS Association – to inform the managers of member colleges about local, national and international developments which may affect their decision making. The ELICOS News is written for, distributed to, and typically read by the managers and owners of colleges; but seldom by teachers, who generally do not perceive it to be relevant to their work. This familiarity with its source, purposes, content and intended readership led me to think that it would provide a rich resource of insights into the macro actors which shape ELICOS colleges and their practices.

- The NEAS regulations. NEAS is the regulatory authority governing the ELICOS industry. Its purpose is to develop, monitor and maintain minimum educational standards within the sector, and through its regulatory operations has considerable influence on the educational practices of the ELICOS sector. All ELICOS institutions are required to be accredited and regularly inspected by NEAS staff, and NEAS has the authority to deregister institutions which fail to meet the accreditation standards. The NEAS regulations were included as a data set because they shape a diverse and far reaching range of ELICOS-related practices, including ELICOS management structures and policies, marketing practices, teacher qualifications and teaching practices. Like the EA News, the NEAS materials are distributed to managers of ELICOS institutions, and teachers do not generally read them or consider them relevant to their work.
- Teacher training materials from the ‘CELTA⁴²’ course. This is, in private English language colleges in Australia and internationally, the most popular and influential teacher training course. It is run by UCLES, and is a one-month, full-time course designed to provide basic skills in English language teaching. Its short duration and international currency have led to its emergence as the most sought after employment qualification of its kind. The course is also popular among employers because it is highly standardised, meaning that graduates have predictable teaching skills and understandings of what teaching involves. This data set was included because the CELTA shapes teaching and graduates’ expectations of teaching in ELICOS colleges, including what language is, how students learn, and what teaching methodology to use. All the teachers who participated in this study were graduates of this course.

⁴² Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults

The next section explains how the five data sets were coded, and how the process of analysis was managed.

4.222 Data analysis

4.2221 Coding

The analysis of the brochures and diaries followed the coding procedures recommended by Miles and Huberman (ibid., pp. 55ff). They make clear that the units of analysis used in coding will vary depending on the nature of the data and purposes of the study, and stress that coding is therefore not a mechanical process which gets data ready for analysis: rather, “Coding is analysis” (ibid., p. 56).

This means that the coding of each data set reflects its role within the study. As noted above, the units in the analysis of the brochures draw on the transitivity descriptors in systemic functional grammar. These codes are in this sense ‘ready-made’, and therefore “a priori” (ibid., p. 61), because the units of analysis were imported into the study. Within the theoretical framework, the other data sets could also have been analysed under the social resource perspective using linguistic units of analysis. However, as explained above, within the design of the study only the brochures were analysed in this way. The other data sets are viewed under different perspectives, which implies using different units of analysis.

The thematic coding of the critical incident diaries required the development of the codes themselves. These codes are therefore more “inductive” (ibid.), in that they emerge through the process of analysis. The development of the codes from within the study raises the question of how to *warrant* the codes and their boundaries: in other words, how to justify units of analysis which are bound to be more loosely defined than linguistic descriptors, operate at different levels of abstraction and evolve through the process of analysis itself. Miles and Huberman (ibid., p. 57) acknowledge that this has been a

problem for “qualitative researchers outside linguistics and its subfields (e.g., discourse analysis)”. Their advice is to be explicit about the procedures used to develop the codes, following the guidelines summarised in the previous chapter to ensure that the rationale for the development of the codes is clearly grounded in the processes of analysis⁴³. This need to make explicit the warrant for the development of codes is addressed in the presentation and explanation of the coding systems in Chapter 6, The participants’ perspective, and Chapter 7, The social resource perspective.

The analysis of the EA News, NEAS regulations and CELTA materials does not employ these iterative, grounded coding procedures, but is more selective, focusing not on the generation of emergent findings through the development of coding systems but guided by the findings of the brochure and diary analyses in a search for evidence of the influence of macro actors on meso and micro actors. In this sense, then, the analysis of the final three data sets does not abandon the coding procedures, but is guided by the findings which emerged from their application to the first two data sets.

4.2222 Data management

Data management refers to the systems used for organising, recording and accessing data and data analysis within a study. Miles and Huberman (ibid., p. 45) emphasise that effective, reliable methods of data management maximise the extent to which data is kept in play through the process of analysis, and therefore contribute to the credibility of the study as a whole. Data management and analysis are, therefore, “integrally related” (ibid.).

The early stages of the analysis of the data and development of coding systems were managed ‘manually’. Following Miles and Huberman’s (ibid., p. 67) recommendations, this involved analysing the data using a three column page format. The

⁴³ Within the theoretical framework developed for the current study, the analysis is also conditioned by the analyst’s perspective, explained in Chapter 5, The analyst’s perspective.

data is entered in the central column, the codes are developed in the right hand column, and the left hand column is reserved for marginal remarks which record emergent thoughts on the data and evolving codes. These remarks are in turn fed back into the development of the coding systems as the analysis proceeds.

In analysing the data for this study, however, this approach to data management soon became unwieldy. In particular, it became hard to manually group and regroup coded data in different ways to find patterns which could justify the development of higher level codes. Cross-referencing and similar tasks also became inefficient as the volume of coded data increased.

In light of these difficulties, the data was transferred to 'Winmax' computer software, which is designed to facilitate the development of coding systems. It allows the three column format for developing codes but also includes other tools for managing data and analysis. These features proved invaluable for the management and analysis of the data.

4.23 Data display

The display of data and data analysis is important both for the process of analysis and for the credibility of the study (Miles & Huberman, *ibid.*, pp. 91ff). Within the "interactive" model of data analysis (*ibid.*, pp. 12ff), data display plays a role not only in presenting results but in the ongoing processes of data reduction, collection and conclusion drawing and verifying (*ibid.*, p. 11). Decisions on the kinds of displays to use and how to use them therefore affect both the intelligibility of findings and the credibility of analysis (*ibid.*).

The challenge in this study is how to display the data in a way which both facilitates the interrelated analyses envisaged, and guides the reader through the study in a transparent way. To address this, two types of display are used in the study: "matrices" and "networks" (*ibid.*, p. 93). "Matrices" have a grid-like structure while "networks"

model relationships between “nodes” (ibid.) – interpreted within this study as Venn diagrams. In the data analysis chapters, both types of display are closely integrated with the analysis itself, and are used to draw together and track the findings in order to “deepen understanding and explanation” of the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, cited in Miles & Huberman, *op. cit.*, p. 173).

The next section explains how the data were selected and the procedures used to negotiate access to and gather them.

4.24 Data sampling, negotiating access and collection

The five data sets represent the “boundaries” (Miles & Huberman, *op. cit.*, p. 27) of the study because they specify the range of data to be analysed under the different perspectives. There remains the questions of what sampling criteria to use to narrow the volume of data collected while preserving the integrity of the study. There is also the question of negotiating access to the samples and what collection methods to use.

These questions are related because, in order to be implemented, the sampling criteria need to acknowledge not only the rationale for the study but also the practical constraints on data collection, including issues of confidentiality, participants’ knowledge and attitudes to the study, and time, effort and money. The sampling criteria for each data set is shaped, then, by these constraints as well as by the research question, the data sources available within the ELICOS sector, and my access to them. The criteria can therefore be described as “purposive” as opposed to “random” (ibid.), and reflect Fairclough’s (*op. cit.*, p. 230) recommendation to sample data which are significant for the social practices under scrutiny.

The sampling, negotiation of access and methods of collection used for each data set are described below.

4.241 The brochures

In order to provide insights into the commercial construction of English language education, there was a need for the brochures gathered for the study to be produced by colleges whose operations reflect as clearly as possible the commercial imperatives which drive the ELICOS sector. The donor colleges therefore had, as far as possible, to exhibit commercial features common to the sector as a whole. Miles and Huberman (op. cit., p. 28) describe this focus on “what is normal or average” as “typical case” sampling. In other words, this was not a study in which cases were contrasted and differences highlighted; rather, the focus was on identifying patterns which would point to commonalities in the ELICOS sector, and potentially have implications for other sectors and professions.

The brochures were, therefore, selected from colleges which are representative of the largest part of the ELICOS sector, measured by number of colleges and numbers of students, and which most clearly operate in response to market forces. These are the private ELICOS institutions, which made up 69% of the ELICOS sector in 1997, when the data were gathered (NEAS, 1998, p. 8). As well as representing the bulk of the sector, there are generally fewer differences between private colleges and those in the public sector. While both private and public sector ELICOS colleges are influenced by commercial imperatives, public sector colleges usually operate in close relationships with larger institutions, such as universities. This means that, while they are exposed to market forces, there are variations across the sector between their operations, organisational structures, curricula, employment conditions and types of integration within the ‘parent’ institution. The problem in drawing on brochures from these institutions would have been that these variations, while doubtless relevant to questions of commercialisation, would have risked blurring the focus of the study.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ These decisions reflect my impressions of the ELICOS sector in 1997, when the data were gathered. I suspect that the differences I saw then between public and private ELICOS institutions have

In order to meet this criterion, then, ten private sector colleges were identified which, based on my knowledge of ELICOS colleges, were typical of the private sector as a whole. The list was then used both as the basis for the collection of brochures, and as a contact list with which to set up the critical incident diary study, explained below. The list was compiled from the 100 private ELICOS colleges operating at the time (NEAS, loc. cit.). Ten were shortlisted both because it was anticipated that this would provide a representative sample of private colleges in the ELICOS sector, and that this number would provide sufficient data to enable the “saturation” (Glaser & Strauss, op. cit., p. 62) of the codes which emerged during the analysis. The colleges on the list were representative of private ELICOS colleges as a whole in their

- target markets;
- courses;
- students’ educational backgrounds and goals;
- teaching methodology;
- curriculum and resources;
- staff profiles and employment conditions; and
- organisational structures.

The institutions differed⁴⁵ in terms of their

- numbers of students and proportions from the different markets;
- locations;

since narrowed or broken down. For example, numerous public sector ELICOS institutions have now adopted employment practices previously associated with the private sector, and linkages are increasingly appearing between private and public institutions, involving joint marketing, articulating courses and other forms of commercially-motivated integration.

- links with other educational providers, such as universities; and
- ownership – owners ranged from individuals to international corporations.

Verbal permission was then sought from the ten colleges to use their brochures in the study, a process which involved outlining the purpose of the study to managers and explaining the part the brochures would play in it. All ten institutions agreed to contribute brochures, with the condition that all names and other identifying information should be deleted or changed before they were used in the study.

Negotiating access to the brochure data was straightforward. It is likely that my status as a member of the managerial group whose members I was approaching influenced their agreement to my using their brochures⁴⁶ because, in negotiating the use of the brochures, I was able to draw on our common “members’ resources” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24). In doing so, I was able to anticipate concerns which participating managers might have, explain the potential value of the study to the ELICOS sector, and offer to provide each participating college with a summary of the study’s findings which might inform professional development and other practices.

The advantages of membership status, both of management and teaching groups, in negotiating access to data became more apparent in setting up the critical incident diary study.

4.242 The teachers and critical incident diaries

As explained above, the purpose of the critical incident diaries was to provide data reflecting teachers’ perceptions of “moments of crisis” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 230); specifically, moments when teachers are faced with a conflict in meeting competing

⁴⁵ The similarities and differences between the colleges are explained in more detail in Chapter 7. The social resource perspective.

commercial and pedagogic interests. The value of this data for the study is its potential to shed light on how processes of commercialisation operate within the ELICOS sector as a whole, not just at those moments recorded in the diaries. This type of sampling, which aims to “permit logical generalization and maximum application of information to other cases” is termed “critical case” sampling (Miles & Huberman, loc. cit.).

There were two decisions to make in gathering the critical incident data. The first concerned the criteria by which to select teachers to participate in the study. Second, there was the question of how to explain the study to participating teachers in a way which ensured that they sought data relevant to the study but were not thereby guided to report evidence of commercialisation. In other words, the aim was to gather data reflecting teachers’ concerns about their professional practice, but to minimise the extent to which their participation in the study might influence the nature of these concerns, or indeed what they understood as their professional practice. These questions are addressed below. The next section explains how teachers were selected and recruited to take part in the study, the following section explains the design of the critical incident diaries.

4.2.4.2.1 The teachers

Unlike the sampling of the brochures, it was not possible to establish in advance a set of criteria by which to select teachers as ‘typical cases’. There were three reasons for this:

- it was not known which colleges would agree to allow teachers to be approached to take part in the study. Indeed, there was reason to assume that consent would not be given because it would allow access to teachers’ concerns about their workplaces.

⁴⁶ The broader significance of the analyst’s ‘memberships’ and the ‘resources’ which accrue from them are explained in Chapter 5, ‘The analyst’s perspective’.

information which managers would normally want to keep in confidence and in many cases would not themselves be able to access:

- it was not clear which teachers would participate if permission was given. For teachers, participation would involve a considerable cost in time and effort. It would also require them to trust the analyst to keep their diaries in confidence; and,
- most importantly, it was not clear how to identify a 'typical teacher' in a way which would enhance the credibility to the study, beyond the industry employment criteria which are standardised in accordance with NEAS regulations.⁴⁷

For these reasons, the only conditions on participation were that the teachers should be involved in full-time teaching on mainstream courses during the time the diaries were kept; and that they should have been teaching in the ELICOS sector for at least a year. This was to ensure that the diary entries reflected routine teaching practices, whatever these might be, and that the diarists themselves would recognise these practices *as* routine.

The recruitment procedure involved four stages:

1. I sent an introductory letter⁴⁸ and made a follow-up telephone call to the senior managers of the ten institutions on the short list. In these, I introduced the study, sought interest in participation, and, if the manager agreed that the college would participate, requested that I give a talk to teachers at the college to explain the study

⁴⁷ The NEAS employment requirements are explained in Chapter 8. The social/institutional perspective.

⁴⁸ Appendix 9

and request their participation. The senior managers of seven colleges agreed to participate. They were then sent and completed the consent form⁴⁹.

2. The managers then arranged a time for me to speak at their institutions, and, during staff meetings, passed on my invitation to teachers and other staff to attend. Those interested were referred to the introductory letter, a copy of which was attached to staffroom noticeboards.
3. I then gave talks to groups, variously including owners, managers and teachers, at each college about the diary study and what participation would involve. Information provided in the talks drew on the guidelines for keeping the critical incident diary⁵⁰. In the region of 90 teachers attended the talks. At the end of each talk, I gave out my contact details and invited any teachers who were interested in participating to get in touch. Twenty seven teachers representing the seven institutions agreed to participate, and completed the consent form.
4. I then arranged to meet with each teacher to provide them with the guidelines for keeping the critical incident diary. We then decided a time when the teacher would start keeping the diary. At the close of each meeting, I explained that I would contact the teacher two weeks after the agreed start time to see how they were going, and would then arrange a further contact time.

Over the course of the diary study, nineteen of the participating teachers were not able to complete their diaries. This was for a range of reasons, but the most common one

⁴⁹ Appendix 10

⁵⁰ Appendix 11

given was that their workloads had increased to the point where they could not continue with the diaries. Eight teachers did complete their diaries⁵¹. Two worked in one ELICOS college, two in another and the others each taught in different colleges. This meant that six of the seven colleges which originally agreed to participate were represented.

4.2.4.2.2 *The diaries*

There were two challenges in designing the diary study:

- to inform the diarists how to keep the diaries without thereby predetermining what they would report: and
- to ensure that the guidelines for keeping the diaries were clear to participating teachers and did not place unreasonable demands on their time.

The first question concerns the validity of the diaries as a data collection instrument; the second, while also relevant to the credibility of study, is also an ethical issue. In addressing the first question, the guidelines identify the four groups of *participants* which emerged in the coding of the first brochure⁵². The four groups are

- teachers and other staff;
- the college, management and owners;
- courses, resources and facilities; and
- students.

⁵¹ Information on individual diarists is provided in Chapter 6. The participants' perspective.

⁵² In writing the guidelines, it became apparent, however, that there is no 'discourse neutral' language in which to describe these groups, a dilemma exemplified by the choices between 'student' and 'client', and 'course' and 'product'. It seemed likely that to use the commercially-oriented descriptions would prejudice the diarists towards identifying commercial pressures as compromising their practices – thereby adversely affecting the credibility of the study. On the other hand, there remained the need to ensure

The guidelines ask the diarists to describe any incidents in which the *relationships* between members of any of these groups had caused them difficulty in maintaining their professional practices as a teacher. It was left to the diarists to draw on their own understandings of 'professional'. In identifying these incidents, diarists were asked to record only those they recognised as recurrent in their experience - and not merely maverick events which may or may not recur – because these were more likely to evidence features characteristic of practices within ELICOS colleges.

The guidelines also suggested which aspects of these incidents to record. These included present and absent participants whom the diarist felt were relevant to the incident; a description of what happened; how it affected the diarist and other participants (present or absent); the causes of the incident as perceived by the diarist; and reflections on any similarities between this and other incidents familiar to the diarist.

To address the second question, a trial of the diary study was conducted in which one of the participating teachers kept a diary for six weeks. During this process she kept notes on the clarity of the guidelines and was asked to consider what duration would be appropriate, given her other commitments. She reported that the guidelines had been clear but that the six weeks was too long. She felt that a month would be acceptable, so the duration of the subsequent diaries was reduced accordingly.

4.243 The EA News

The decision on which copies of the EA News to include in the study was informed by Layder's (op. cit., p. 13) observation that the different elements in his research map each have their own histories, with daily routines and institutions typically involving different durations and different degrees of continuity. While one month was the period over which

that the diarists gathered data which was relevant to the study. To address this need, the groups were described in terms that teachers would generally use.

each diary would be kept, a duration which reflected the need to identify recurrent incidents, the duration represented by the EA News is one year. This was 1997, the year in which the diary study was conducted, during which, it was anticipated, the six issues of the EA News published and gathered for the study would evidence how the operations and interactions of macro actors shape the ELICOS sector.

4.244 NEAS documentation

A wide range of documents inform and are informed by the regulatory framework maintained by NEAS. Two documents were selected as being particularly significant in evidencing the operations of those macro actors which shape the regulatory environment in which ELICOS colleges operate. These are

- the ‘ELICOS Accreditation handbook’ (NEAS, 2001): this explains the NEAS regulations, set out in the “Standards and criteria” (pp. 19-53), and how they apply to ELICOS colleges. The handbook informs ELICOS managers’ decision-making throughout the accredited life of an ELICOS college; and
- the ‘National Code’⁵³ (DETYA⁵⁴, 2001): this is the code of practice produced by the federal government for all providers of education to overseas students.

4.244 CELTA materials

The global reach of the CELTA, its historical role in shaping British and international ELT, and its links with other ELT organisations mean that there is a wide range of materials which could shed light on how the CELTA influences the practices of ELICOS

⁵³ National Code of Practice for Registration Authorities and Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students

⁵⁴ Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs

colleges. The sample selected was ‘The practice of English language teaching’ (Harmer, 1991). This is one of the main resources used by trainers and trainees on CELTA courses, and provides insights into the teaching methods, pedagogic understandings and norms of professional practice which shape and are shaped by the training on the course. These represent the ‘standards’ to which teachers in the ELICOS sector commonly subscribe, and which contribute to their expectations and perceptions of professional practice within ELICOS colleges.

4.3 SUMMARY OF THE STUDY

The study operationalises the ontological and methodological aspects of the theoretical framework to investigate how commercialisation affects the professional practices of ELICOS teachers. In doing so, it employs five data sets within the “interaction” model of data analysis (Miles & Huberman, *op. cit.*, pp. 12ff).

As explained in the ontology, the study informed and was informed by the analyst’s perspective. The next chapter explains this perspective in relation to the “motivational relevancies” (Sarangi & Candlin, *op. cit.*, pp. 368ff) and the “practical relevance” (Sarangi & Roberts, *loc. cit.*) of the study.