

Investigating Students' Experiences of Transition within the Algerian Higher
Education Context

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Abstract

This study explored the subject of student transition in one of the Algerian universities [University X] during the first semester of the academic year 2019/2020. It investigated campus-based and off-campus students' experiences of developing coherence with the new setting throughout the transition stages. In doing so, my original contribution to knowledge provides an understanding of how students can negotiate the transition to university in a context where institutional interventions are scarce in sustaining students' passages. It provides insights into individualities in mitigating change and its challenges independently beyond institutional interventions.

I used an auto/biographical narrative inquiry to research ten students' transition experiences into higher education [HE] in Algeria. This involved exploring both campus-based and off-campus students' perceptions, motivations, coping mechanisms and their experiences' implications on their personal development. The aim of inquiring into students' experiences was to contribute new knowledge to a field currently lacking in testimony centring on this area of inquiry. This consisted primarily of understanding the mechanisms students drew on to mitigate the transition to university within a context where little support (e.g., counselling) and activities (induction) are provided to assist students prior to and during their transition to university.

The findings showed that transition was challenging for most participants, whether anticipated or non-event. This was further intensified for some participants regarding social factors, which rendered their experiences contrary to plan. To manage such challenges, participants used different modes of coping and meaning making throughout the transition stages. The appraisal was the initial stage of meaning making. This was followed by active engagement, avoidant behaviour or adaptation, adjustment and coping with stressors. Although these forms of coping

were, to a varying degree, notable across stories, students' responses to challenges appeared to have a contingency on the type of transition experienced, the severity of events, and the cultural and social capital students possessed. In this respect, the more resources at one's disposal to draw on, the better for the integration process.

Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire. The thesis has not been submitted for any other academic awards nor to any other education institution be it in the United Kingdom or overseas. The work is original except where references are cited and used for research purposes.

Signed: Hamid Nedri

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List of Acronyms

NASDE: National Agency for Support and Development of Entrepreneurship

BAC: Baccalauréat (Baccalaureate)

BERA: British Educational Research Association

BSITM: Biographical Structural-Interactional Transition Model

BSA: British Psychological Association

CILT: Centre for Intensive Language Language

Ci-RES: Cooperative Institution for Research in Environmental Sciences

COC: Central Organising Concept

COR: Conservation of Resources

C.U.T.O: Le Centre Universitaire de Tizi-Ouzou

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

GDSRDT: General Directorate of Scientific Research and Technological Development

GDPR: The General Data Protection Regulation

GPA: Grade Point Average

HE: Higher Education

HS: High School

IPA: Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

IPDA: International Professional Development Association

JORA: Journal Officiel de la République Algérienne

LMSE: the Laboratory of Mechanics, Structure and Energetics

MHESR: Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

NA: Narrative Analysis

NHS: National Health Service

NIn: Narrative Inquiry

N-I: Narrative Interviewing

PRS: Purposeful Random Sampling

PNA: Paradigmatic Narrative Analysis

PSS: Problem Solving Skills

RP: Received Pronunciation

SCo: Social Construct

SDT: Self-Determination Theory

SL: Source Language

SRA: Social Research Association

TA: Thematic Analysis

TL: Target Language

THE: Times Higher Education

UCLH: University College London Hospitals

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UTMPD: Unified Theory of Motivation, Personality, and Development

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter 1: Introduction

Rouh atayred rouh, rouh atayred rouh
Rouh atayred rouh issin meqqar at-ketved
(Mezani, 1960)

Seek knowledge, seek knowledge
Seek knowledge, at least learn to write
(translation)

Higher Education should characterise the scientific research aspect within the teaching-learning processes, presenting a new stage beyond school. In my view, this did not appear true in my experience. In fact, my expectations, which I considered before my transition to university, are just imaginative... (Samir: research participant).

1.1. Introduction

Research participant Samir's quote can be interpreted from an adult education perspective. Formenti and West (2018) argue that substantial efforts are still needed to sustain transformative learning among young adults to develop the skills needed for understanding both the inner and the social world. In this way, they can become active agents who can contribute to change and shape societies with a critical stance within a complex and potentially destabilising society. Samir's quote is the result of an evaluation of an educational context amid an unhelpful transition. Since the new structure did not meet Samir's expectations and needs towards achieving progress, transformative learning was unlikely to take place because concerns of consistency and expectation mismatches clashed with Samir's experience of transition into higher education [HE]. Although transformative learning is not the focus of this study, this can have an indirect relationship with the current topic if we consider the quality of students' experiences in a context having insufficient student support services and how this may affect students' growth and critical development. Ultimately, this auto/biographical research seeks to make students' voices heard by state educational bodies with the aim of developing effective plans in relation to students' needs.

This study investigates students' experiences of transition into HE with the aim of understanding processes of meaning making within a context where little attention is directed to counselling and supporting students in their transitions. This gap can, therefore, have negative sequels not only on the quality of students' experiences but also on the aim of

promoting transformative learning. If an institution does not possess an effective support system sustaining student transition and their learning, the road towards developing an effective approach for adult education is likely to be difficult to achieve. Institutional poor student services can be challenging for most new university students. Therefore, understanding the extent to which students can mitigate such inconsistencies amid transition in relation to their personal meaning-making processes will be a recurrent theme throughout this research. This idea forms a central focus and contributes to knowledge in relation to students' experiences of transition.

My motivational drive for researching this subject was stemmed foremost from my own experiences in 2011/2012, which were characterised by unsettled moments that I had not had the chance to speak about until I started this study. This was further fuelled by the way the Algerian policy is still unable to provide substantial support for new university students to weather transition. The result, therefore, is having the feeling of being “ignored” (Yacine: research participant) and/or even being in a “marginalised” condition (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 4). Yacine's feeling reflects the way educational policies are implemented without any reference or consideration of the actual needs of those who are on the receiving end of the state's plans. The following section will set out the topic of transition in its broadest sense in relation to individual biographies as well as to educational transitions.

1.2. Background

Transitions are fundamental episodes within individuals' experiences (Prabhakar et al., 2019), as they shape the nature of peoples' biographies. “Transitions are periods of change in our lives that seem to alternate with periods of stability” (Merriam, 2005, p. 3). Transitions characterise uncertainty and various influencing factors, which affect individuals' decisions (Tønseth, 2018, p. 165). Transition can come in several types, including anticipated,

unanticipated, and non-event (Appendix Thirteen, pp. 401-402) (Anderson et al., 2012; Schlossberg et al., 1995). Each has its own challenges and effects on individuals, considering circumstances and the way people respond to situations. Nevertheless, life transitions might be hard to navigate and can result in adverse outcomes if they are not provided with appropriate support measures (Prabhakar et al., 2019).

Experiences of transition may have different forms and shapes even within a shared cultural context. However, although experiences are much more at the individual level, contextual or external factors, such as social and familial expectations can be significantly influential. This can result, for instance, in experiencing unanticipated or non-event transitions (Anderson et al., 2012). Equally true, the more change aligns with personal expectations and goals, the higher the likelihood of having an anticipated transition. Therefore, the actual situation and circumstances which occur before transition contribute significantly to shaping the quality of transition a person is about to have. With reference to student transition into higher education (HE), such circumstances can be understood through the agenda institutions follow in ensuring successful student experiences. This may involve, for example, preparation programmes, endorsement of personal goals via institutional interventions, and the extent to which institutions can advise and guide students, according to their records and performances to enrol in particular subjects prior the start of a course. These opportunities can be beneficial for students not only to have the chance to experience an anticipated transition after school, but also to establish their own identity at an early stage. However, evidence from this research, in the following chapters, show another reality, which in many ways was not helpful for most students making transition to university.

In the context of education, students are likely to experience transitions at different points in their educational journeys. The beginning and end of each course can be sensitive periods in which students need support and guidance. This is to bridge and facilitate transition processes,

including the process of dismantling of the values *Endings* stage (Bridges, 2004, p. 108) of the previous context and to start incorporating the practices and standards of the new. However, where support procedures are not in place, this can result in significant issues in students' academic and emotional wellbeing, impacting retention (Bland, 2016). This indicates that where institutions fail to meet crucial students' needs, drop-out can result (Pennington et al., 2018).

Although university students are expected to act autonomously, be responsible for their own achievements and form a sense of their identity (Scanlon et al., 2007; Yorke, 2000), research shows that persistence in HE is contingent on students' satisfaction (Harvey and Drew, 2006). For example, if the means provided do not align with students' needs to find a space where they navigate meaning, this may result in various frustrations which can affect progress.

Providing inadequate support and information for students before and during the initial stages of their transitions can affect their self-esteem and motivation, for instance, in terms of developing resilience. Ultimately, this can trigger anxiety in students, as the result of uncertainty and unpreparedness, leading to a potential dropout decision instead of persisting (Quinn et al., 2005). This study considers the Algerian context to investigate the subject of student transition to HE. Below, I present some historical and socio-political aspects and event in Algeria in order to contextualise the study and to provide the reader a glimpse of the research context.

1.3. The Algerian historical and socio-political landscape

Algeria is situated in North Africa and is bordered to the west by Morocco, to the southwest by Western Sahara and Mauritania, to the east Tunisia, to the southeast by Libya, to the south by Niger and Mali, and by the Mediterranean Sea in the north. Historically, all these countries formed the North African territory, based on tribal sovereignty, occupied by the Berber ethnic group (Wester-Ebbinghaus, 2016). Eventually, due to



Figure 1: Map showing the location of the study

colonialism, new borders were created, hence new states emerged. Algeria was also a former French colony, which gained its independence in 1962. Since then, many reforms have been in place with the aim of reinstituting, for instance, national heritage and identity. However, the Algerian political structure was an unsettled organism since independence, and power often ceased by military-civilians elite (Ottaway, 2021).

Consequently, this affected major sectors including the quality of management and policy making decisions in education. This was exacerbated even more with the outbreak of the civil war in the 1990s, which pushed the freshly independent country decades back. During this bleak decade, a considerable number of academics and researchers moved to EU and non-EU areas to pursue their careers (Bensaoula, 2010, p. 24). This, therefore, caused the Algerian National Research Institute to experience a dearth in research activity.

Moreover, it is argued that the spread of corruption by state officials is negatively affecting the country's economic development (Limam, 2012). This has been long contested in

many different forms. Matoub Lounes, one of the influential figures of resistance in Algeria addressed both metaphorically and paradoxically the Algerian people and government via his dedicated songs. Assassinated in 1998 for his resistance to government, he wrote:

<p>A Ležžayer ḥader at-tšeggemeḍ A d-tekkeḍ nnig tmura Di ddel ttezzi tenned Ijifer-im ur t-zeggw ara Arraw-im a ten-tetted S-lmux nnsen tes-xelḍeḍ G yeḍdawen-im tesserbaḥeḍ ččan-kem azaṛ ur d-igw'ra. (Matoub, 1991)</p>	<p>Beware, Algeria, don't surmount, you'll prosper and join nations Persevere, turn into degradation, turn! Don't shake the skirts of your coat Swallow up your offspring by wreaking their brains Fatten up the enemies who destroy you; they're sated with your flesh, not a nerve remained. (Translation)</p>
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In fact, Algeria has been experiencing a series of transitions, including the transition from colonial to post-colonial society, the civil war and the challenges of establishing economic and social stability. However, although there is significant human capital and potential across the country, structures remain fragile, giving rise to the emergence of Algerians' dissatisfaction with the government (Zoghdan, 2021). Eventually, the Algerian Hirak (mass protest movement) in 2019-2021 – also referred to as the 'Revolution of Smiles' (Meddi, 2019) - was the latest significant event by which Algerians protested against the government's regime and repressive politics via mass demonstrations (Boubekeur, 2020, p. 2). This was an attempt through which Algerians claimed a radical revision of the system and state structures, such as education.

Higher education is arguably one of the areas of fragility which needs to be given more attention, considering its significance as a source of intellectual foundation and country's future development. This study, therefore, investigates Algeria's HE in relation to students' experiences of transition. To better understand this micro level of the Algerian context, the following section provides historical information about Algeria and how this can be connected to the Algerian HE.

1.4. Historical facts about the Algerian University

The first university in Algeria was established in 1909. This was the product of the conversion of educational institutions, created between 1832 and 1879, into one university system based in Algiers (University of Algiers, 2021). After 1962, which marked Algerian independence, the illiteracy rate was high and the Organisation Armée Secrète (OAS) significantly contributed to such phenomenon. As a colonists' movement (OAS) opposing Algerian independence, they set fire to the library building, ruining about 500,000 books (LeMonde, 1962). This was similar to the French's scorched earth (*terre brûlée*) policy in Algeria (beginning of 1840s under the commands of Thomas-Robert Bugeaud), preventing access to anything to effectively allow the local population to survive by burning fertile lands and trees. While the former policy enforced starvation, the objective of the latter was to impact minds through lack of knowledge. Such atrocities put Algerians in vulnerable conditions both before and after independence.

Since 1963, education generally, in addition to higher education became a priority in public policy, making it mandatory for everybody. However, the Algerian educational agenda had significant gaps, for example, in terms of favouring quantity over quality (Bouchikhi and Zine, 2017, p. 46). Considering this, although education and university in Algeria are free and accessible to everyone, students transitioning to university may have problematic experiences since the agenda appears to prioritise curriculum content and there is little focus on tasks involving how to assist students to enter and exit educational stages (Mahdjoub and Milliani, 2017). The following discussion is intended as a biography, aimed at making the research context more familiar to the reader.

1.4.1. University X : a progressive establishment

University X was founded in 1977 in a form of a university centre, under the name *le Centre Universitaire de Tizi-Ouzou* (C.U.T.O) (Schoelen and Chachoua, 2020), located in the

Oued-Aissi region. Initially, the C.U.T.O. had five departments: the Department of Exact Sciences, the Biology Department, the Department of Legal and Administrative Sciences, the Department of Language and Arabic Literature, and the Department of Economic Sciences, created in 1978-1979. Over this period, there were 490 students and 27 teachers (Annuaire Statistique de 'University X, 2019).

By 1984, the C.U.T.O had achieved significant growth, expanding to nine disciplines forming a range of higher education national institutes, namely: The National Institute of Legal Sciences and Administrative Sciences, Agronomy, Biology, Language and Arabic Literature, Civil Engineering, Economic Sciences, Medical Sciences, Electrical Engineering, and Computer Sciences.

In 1989, the C.U.T.O had been officially upgraded to become a university. Since the late 1980s and beyond, the number of students attending university across the country was in constant ascendance. As per the annual statistical report of University X back in 2018-2019, 57,842 students enrolled at the university. This number is inclusive and distributed across five campuses. Below is a detailed description of the demographics of students at University X from 1977 to 2019 (Annuaire Statistique de 'University X, 2019).

1.4.2. The demographics of the student intake (2018/2019)

The university statistical directory as at 2018/2019, the number of university students was 57,842 spreads through the university campuses of which 10,938 were newly enrolled students and 503 overseas students, predominantly from sub-Saharan countries. The largest number (37,078) of students undertook a bachelor's degree in the LMD system. 14,507 masters' in LMD and 731 students in LMD Doctorate. Regarding the classical system, i.e., four years bachelor, two years magister, and four years doctorate system (Sarnou et al., 2012, p. 180), there were 4053 registered students in the classical graduation system, and 1473 students enrolled in the classical post-graduation system. The bachelor's degree, for example, was a

four-year intake but by implementing the LMD, it has been reduced to three years (Zekri, 2020, p. 14). At this time, these statistics were unfortunately not updated on the university website.

What is apparent from the available statistics is that the evolution of the number of students and lecturers at University X was in a constant ascendance from 1977/1978 starting with only 490 students to 2018/2019 reaching 57,842 students (Annuaire Statistique de 'University X', 2019, pp. 6-7). By the academic year 1989/1990 onwards, the number of students started to increase significantly. This year coincides with the educational reform policies that were set to take effect over the 1990s in Algeria. These reforms include rethinking the fundamental schooling system, for example, the place and the function of languages (e.g., French and English), but particularly Arabic gaining prominence as the first national official language of instruction after independence (Benrabah, 2004). Other reforms involve promoting the study of foreign languages from the primary school. This gives pupils to study either French or English at an early age (Rezig, 2011, p. 1330). Please refer to the table provided in Appendix Ten (p. 392), which displays the student attendance data for University X across all academic years extending from 1977/1978 to 2018/2019. As per the statistics of Appendix Ten (p. 392), the teacher-student ratio during the academic year 2018/2019 was 1 teacher for 27.06 students (Annuaire Statistique de 'University X', p. 7) showing the rapid growth in student demography compared to the very beginnings.

The report also details statistics regarding the distribution of the entire students across faculties and disciplines. It shows numbers of those enrolled in the classical system and LMD. The report shows, for example, student enrolment by faculties, fields of study and specialities, distribution of student numbers enrolled in graduation by Faculty, field and by year of study, those enrolled on postgraduation by faculty and field, and according to cycle and teaching system (e.g., the number of masters LMD students was 14,507 against only 4053 students within the classical system) (Annuaire Statistique de 'University X', 2019, pp. 8-18). Appendix

Eleven (p. 395) provides further statistics in relation to the distribution of students within University X in 2018/2019. Given the size of the university and the demographic of students, the teaching approaches used in the institutions, according to the literature, seem to be decentralised.

1.4.3. Teaching Approaches of University X with reference to higher education reform in the Algerian university

Following the implementation of the three-tier system (LMD) in Algerian Higher Education, there has been a noticeable shift in the dynamics of teaching and learning processes. This reform prompted institutions throughout Algeria to reassess elements related to a student-centred approach at the university level (Berrezoug, 2021). However, this system, advocating for learner autonomy, does not entirely align with Algerian culture, which possesses a collectivist nature in learning (Ghout-Khenoune, 2019). This assertion is supported by Farida's expectations, as a research participant, who anticipated an experience at university similar to that in school, receiving significant input from lecturers. The cultural impact on learning becomes more apparent if educators are not wholeheartedly committed to incorporating modern theories of teaching and learning into their practices (Miliani, 2014).

Initiatives such as creating an e-learning platform for students, as outlined on University X's official website, represent one of the teaching/learning strategies. This platform enables students to access learning materials through Moodle and communicate within a supervised and secure environment. Considering this, the institution has already embraced a blended learning approach by emphasizing the digitisation of teaching in its agenda.

While there is no universally adopted approach by teachers throughout the university, studies reveal diverse techniques and methodologies implemented across departments. The following section presents case studies delving into the methods employed by teachers in instructing subjects within classrooms. A study conducted by Didane and Fellous (2017) at University X explored teaching approaches and challenges in language teaching and learning.

Despite positive attitudes toward the student-centred approach among both teachers and students, the consistent implementation of such an approach proves challenging for many teachers due to factors like insufficient training, knowledge, and skills (Didane and Fellous, 2017). Another study by Bedoui and Akmoun (2016) highlights some teachers using self-regulation strategies to motivate students in developing their language learning skills. Teachers optimize students' self-regulation through activities such as evaluating essays, analysing mistakes, and enhancing text comprehension. However, this approach faces criticism for its perceived gap in assessing the impact of self-assessment on EFL students' self-regulatory practices and academic writing performance (Kadri, 2019). Limitations include a lack of prior experience in self-assessment, student procrastination, and absenteeism (Kadri, 2019, p. 274).

Considering research on EFL students and language learning, it can be inferred that the teaching approach at University X lacks a specific uniform pattern, instead adapting to students' needs and teachers' strategies to achieve targeted learning objectives.

1.4.4. University X's ethos and identity

1.4.4.1. Cultural and linguistic identity

University X symbolises a shift in politics, transitioning from a colonial-focused institution to one that is nationally oriented, and even more inclusive and locally focused on its approach to education (Kadri, 1991). For instance, University X has been recognised for its commitment to preserving Berber culture and identity (Alilat, 2020). Four decades ago, the influential linguist, writer, and anthropologist Mouloud Mammeri intended to hold a conference at University X on the topic of "Ancient Kabyle Poems". However, the event was cancelled either by certain individuals within the institutional hierarchy or by systemic obstacles (Tagzout, 2010). Subsequently, students at University X organised demonstrations, advocating for language and identity rights and protesting cultural repression (Medjeber, 2014).

University X holds a distinctive position within both the Algerian HE system and within the wider regional context of North Africa. Its ethos and influence extend from cultural preservation to sustainable development. Given its location in the Kabylie region, University X is known for its Amazigh (Berber) cultural heritage with 1200 students enrolling to study the language annually, outweighing the number of those who register to study Arabic, English and French (THE Times Higher Education [THE], 2023). Such cultural richness is reflected in the university's ethos, academic programmes and research endeavours, which contribute to the preservation and study of the Amazigh culture (Nait-Zerrad et al., 2017). Second, University X offers a range of academic programmes that aim to meet regional needs and broader academic interests. For example, it emphasises domains such as Amazigh studies, linguistics, cultural anthropology, and environmental sciences by reflecting the region's cultural and environmental significance (Khelladi, 2021).

University X's research approach has an inclusive strategy which actively collaborates with local communities and organisations. Such research and community engagement allow research endeavours to address and focus on local (societal) challenges and promote language preservation, and societal development in the Kabylie region (Bouzar-Kasbadji, 2018). Outside academic pursuits, University X can be seen as the core organ for developing regional identity, social cohesion, and cultural preservation in Kabylie (Harbi, 2019). Therefore, given these factors and characteristics of University X, it has the potential to play a vital role in Algeria's commitment to cultural diversity, regional identity preservation and academic growth. From this, we can understand the unique nature of University X as a hub involving traditional knowledge (cultural heritage) with modern academia. In recent years, there was a noticeable progress regarding what University X can offer to students whether national or international. The inclusive approach pursued by University X is exemplified below, particularly in its commitment to ensuring equality and rights for all students, regardless of their backgrounds.

1.4.4.2. Facilities, services and activities

Limited literature is available that comprehensively outlines the facilities, services, and activities offered by University X for students, teachers, and staff. The most reliable sources for obtaining information on these aspects are the official website of University X and the Practical Guide published as part of the Ci-RES Project in 2020.

University X provides affordable accommodation and transportation as part of its facilities. Students, irrespective of nationality or refugee status, only need to pay a modest annual membership fee. Upon completing registration, refugee students become eligible for a scholarship (Project Ci-RES, 2020). The university also offers additional amenities, such as a central library, reading rooms, digital resources, and an online catalogue in each faculty. Various digital platforms, including DSpace, PNST, SNDL, and IQRAA, along with an online journal, the Research Review of Sciences and Technologies, are accessible (University X's Website, 2023). Other on-campus facilities encompass restaurants, socializing cafeterias, and two post offices.

To enhance linguistic capabilities, University X has introduced the Centre for Intensive Language Teaching [CILT], addressing languages such as Arabic, Tamazight, French, English, Spanish, Italian, and German. These language courses are available at levels suitable for the university community (Project Ci-RES, 2020, p. 17).

Concerning the health and well-being of students, each student residence is equipped with a medical care facility. The Practical Guide mentions the existence of a space for medical care, yet it does not detail the extent of services provided or their limitations in terms of medical interventions. Additionally, a Psychological Help Centre for Psychological Listening, overseen by the centre's doctor, along with teachers specializing in clinical psychology and speech therapy, is available to address the needs of students and provide supervision for those studying

psychology (Project Ci-RES, 2020). Considering the broader activities of University X, official associations and clubs collaborate with the university to orchestrate cultural, scientific, and sports events spanning various faculties (Project Ci-RES, 2020). As an illustration, in 2022, the university's entrepreneurship club partnered with the National Agency for Support and Development of Entrepreneurship [NASDE] to host an open day aimed at enhancing students' understanding of entrepreneurship (University X's Website, 2022). The entrepreneurship club's objectives include offering guidance and information on the criteria and steps required for establishing innovative companies and startups, as well as providing feedback and pre-support to students with projects (Project Ci-RES, 2020).

Despite the array of services and facilities offered by University X, there is still ambiguity regarding the measures implemented to support students during their transition to university. An analysis of fieldwork narratives reveals criticism from participants like Farid, Sabrina, Samir, and Lynda, who expressed concerns about various aspects of the university, including management, paperwork, teaching methods, and student behaviour. For instance, Samir highlighted issues related to drug consumption within student accommodation, while Lynda pointed out the inadequacy of study IT rooms. (Please, refer to Appendix Twelve (p. 400) for an example from the fieldwork experience which supports Lynda's claim).

On a national level, although Algerian higher education, in recent years, has experienced significant expansion to accommodate the increasing number of students, the main struggle resides in following graduate students as human capital after finishing their university courses (Benouar, 2013, p. 363). This resulted in, to some extent, ineffectual university credentials because after graduation, students are likely to encounter another major issue which is the weak job market in Algeria, which started since the 1980s (Benghabrit and Haddab, 2008), rendering their new transition complex as new graduates. Unemployment among young graduates in Algeria reached 16.1% in 2014 as per the Algerian Conseil

Economique et Social (Madoui, 2015). Youth unemployment rate in Algeria in 2022 was 29.03%, but this did not include economically inactive persons like full-time students or the long-term unemployed (O'Neill, 2024).

This brings the idea of the double-sidedness of the free university in Algeria. Although such an idea can be located within the broader function of socialist philosophy in Algeria, being a state-owned/sponsored organism, however, exhausted by a centralized and bureaucratic systems (Schoelen and Chachoua, 2019, pp. 784-785). The task lies largely on educating the growing numbers of students, resulting in an oversupply of graduates (Bensouiah, 2018). However, little work is undertaken to ensure these individuals are equipped with the necessary skills for the shifting demand of the job market in terms of skills needed (Benouar, 2013). Academically speaking, in University X, students are likely to encounter an institutional culture informed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research [MHESR], which set out the overall strategy of HE (SPHERE, 2019). However, as a part of this approach, HE institutions can draw their scope and propose their approach to training and research regarding their capacities, needs and environment (Benouar, 2013). In this, each university in Algeria is, to a certain extent, self-governed, rendering the student transition experience to be different not only from one region to another but from one institution to another across municipalities. Therefore, investigating University X is not with the aim of any generalisations but only understanding the interplay between institutional dynamics, informed by its historical aspects and students' transitional experiences, involving motivations, expectations and personal goals. the following details the objectives which University X aims to achieve in the present and future.

1.4.4.3. University X's current aspirations and relationship to contemporary agendas

In terms of University X's future aspirations and its relationship to contemporary agendas, it has a diverse research engagement and cooperations with other institutions either in the field

of humanitarian concerns, environmental sustainability or chemistry. To cite a few examples, University X, as per the Practical Guide Ci-RES [Cooperative Institution for Research in Environmental Sciences] Erasmus Project (2020), participates in developing an institutional capacity to offer a welcoming and inclusive space for refugees at university (Project Ci-RES, 2020). University X is in partnership with both local universities (Bejaia, Ouargla) and organisms (Algerian Ministry of Higher Education) and European universities (Spain, Italy and France). This collaborative project therefore was initiated with the aim of reorganising the functional structure of the HE institutions to mitigate the current issues related to the effective integration of refugees within the institutions of HE (Project Ci-RES, 2020). For example, among the priorities this project aims to achieve is developing more effective health and accessible social security services. As a start, refugee students, like national students, benefit from the advantages of the CHIFA card (health insurance card), which helps its owner with most medical expenses (Project Ci-RES, 2020, p. 14).

Regarding environmental sustainability, University X strives to research and understand the relationship between the chemical composition, internal structure, physical properties, performance and the application of a material. As per the university website, the Laboratory of Mechanics, Structure and Energetics [LMSE] has a significant research repository around different themes including comparative studies and analysis of the behaviours of materials (Mansouri et al., 2019; Touhir et al., 2018; Mameri et al., 2018; Teklal et al., 2017), valorisation of energy resources through exploring new composites to reduce summer energy consumptions, rethinking new strategies and materials for thermal energy storage in buildings and developing effective sensors methods at low cost (Boussaba et al., 2021; 2019; Hamouche et al., 2018). Please, refer to Appendix Twelve (p. 400) for further information regarding University X's actions on sustainability.

The reasons behind these studies are predominantly for the optimisation of resources and how the latter can benefit the wider community. These also stress the importance of overcoming energy waste and developing efficient and environmentally friendly strategies.

Regarding the rich linguistic landscape Algeria possesses, University X takes this among its core subjects of investigation and debate among researchers. This is established through organising study days within departments to address questions around the scientific research in linguistics and providing recommendations, principles and research steps to help, for example, master's students gain more confidence in doing scientific research in language studies and produce dissertations with standards (Belkhir and Ammour, 2023, p. 2).

Symposiums around cognition and language learning are also at the heart of the university agenda. Although there is a plethora of literature on cognitive linguistics and education, to date however, there is still a huge need for innovative research that examines the interrelationship between cognition and the process of language learning (Belkhir, 2020, p. 5). In this, the Department of Letters and Languages, for example, initiates actions in identifying gaps in research and practice and then actively addresses questions that have significance for developing and influencing the field of linguistics at different levels. The core element however is attending to filling a crucial gap between theory and practice in the field of second and foreign language education (Yukiko, 2013). To address this problem, academics at University X endeavour to question research topics around cognition and language learning and learner motivation (Metrouh, 2019), cognition and language processing (Berbar, 2019), and the relationship between technology with cognition in second/foreign language acquisition (Benaissa, 2019). In addition, there is an emphasis on classroom diversity in HE about English as a Foreign Language [EFL] learners' Intercultural sensitivity (Achi and Yacine, 2022). The aim is to promote learners' intercultural sensitivity as a crucial element in fostering their intercultural communicative competence.

Other aspirations, according to the Rector of University X, the institution works to achieve significant future goals by emphasising the benefit of educational and research laboratories through acquiring other services (e.g., incubator and technical platforms), creating research infrastructures, and striving to adapt and strengthen the connection, for example, with the international socio-economic world (Bouda, 2023). The roadmap to achieve these goals is working towards better achieving the professional integration of the university graduates, supporting graduates in creating businesses, and providing teacher-researchers and doctoral students with the means to innovate, boost businesses and contribute to economic leverage both on a local and national level (Bouda, 2023). We can see from this agenda that potential plans to support students and researchers in their transitions to the economic market are considered thoroughly. However, the dispositions, which the university is taking or should take during the transition of students into HE, remain unclear.

This section accounted the characteristics of University X with reference its progressive establishments, evolution, aims and objectives, and challenges. The following heading provides further information about the evolution of the Algerian HE and it sets out why the topic of student transition is considered from an auto/biographical stance.

1.5. The state of higher education system and students' experiences in Algeria

1.5.1. Algeria's HE major reform policy

Algerian HE had gone through a major reform in 2004/2005 when the LMD system (Bachelor, Master, Doctorate) was implemented to replace the classical system. The LMD, a three-cycle degree structure, is part of the Bologna Declaration in 1999 to promote the harmonisation of degree structures, thereby, creating a coherent HE system across Europe (Diogo and Sabic, 2015, p. 3). In Algeria, the main reasons for initiating this plan were for massification purposes considering the demographic growth and with the aim of increasing

researcher ratio in the territory (Metatla, 2016). Statistics show that there were only six hundred researchers per million inhabitants in 2008, which was below the international average (Metatla, 2016, p. 2). However, it is argued that the implementation of the new system was not systematic, since adequate measures were not taken to ensure a fluid transition and coexistence between the two systems (Metatla, 2016). Consequently, the student experience was initially unsettled as this change triggered a critical concern among students who had already graduated in the old system and those who enrolled in the newly implemented strategy.

The main question aligns with the value of university qualifications of each system and how this would affect students after graduation, predominantly in relation to prospects. Ultimately, this rendered students' transition experiences, especially in the early years of the process, complex and uncertain from both perspectives. This was the result of grade comparison between students and the value of what is learned at university (West and Bainbridge, 2012, p. 245). Brown and Murphy (2012) use the phrase "grade inflation" to explain how HE can reflect a consumerist model (Brown and Murphy, 2012, p. 218). Although the neo-liberal underlying assumption promotes individuals' development via free market competitions outside state intervention (Smith, 2019), regarding education, the analogy lies in the way HE can become as a stock market, where the value of goods undergoes fluctuations, causing deception and frustration to students. This is also contingent on how grade inflation may force many students, for example, to undertake further courses with high tuition rates to update their credentials repertoire. To understand further the subject of student transition in Algeria, the following section sets out the extent to which the topic is researched and what measures are taken to support students over their educational history.

1.6. Student transition in the Algerian higher education: current status and issues

In the context of this study, exploring students' experiences of transition does not seem to be a prominent subject among researchers' interests. To date, there is a paucity in the Algerian research literature as little is known about this topic. Rather, topics related to language policy, educational reforms and assessment, curricular implementation, HE reforms, and progression processes through educational cycles (Samah, 2017; Mahdjoub and Meliani, 2017; Bellalem, 2014; Aouine, 2011) are highly researched areas approached through the socio-political landscape of the territory. In addition, some studies explore common discrepancies at the level of the government's agenda and policy, which for many does not meet the needs of both students and teachers to establish a supportive teaching and learning environment (Bellalem, 2008, Chetouani, 2001).

These studies question the inconsistencies at the level of the curriculum, educational reforms, and lack of infrastructure to accommodate the increasing number of students. This poses challenging paths for new students who experience transition to HE as there is a scarcity in the means of support, induction, and orientation programmes to facilitate the systemic transition and adjustment (Gale and Parker, 2014, p. 16). Ultimately, adaptation difficulties at key transition points of each educational cycle, such as primary, middle, and secondary school levels (Mahdjoub and Miliani, 2017, p. 126), give rise to students having to repeat academic years. This seems to persist even when attending university because the rate of student preparedness is low. Students are likely to experience concerns such as poor anticipation of the new experience at university. Schools appear to promote knowledge delivery over essential life skills referred to as 'social and emotional skills or non-cognitive skills' including confidence, self-control, social skills, motivation and resilience (Cullinane and Montacute, 2017, p. 7). Students, therefore, are not given opportunity to develop such adaptive processes, for example,

in learning how to respond to setbacks, and negotiate relationships and they do not have the knowledge or life skills to act outside the academic setting.

Career guidance, on the other hand, is among the plans which are seen as important to implement within middle and secondary schools (NABNI, 2012, pp. 12-85). Career guidance is introduced to inform, follow-up, and orient students through their education pathways. For example, providing them with advice about how vocational routes can be a positive alternative for those who have not succeeded in school, rather than experiencing it as failure (Mahdjoub and Miliani, 2017, p. 127). However, these kinds of plans are still insufficient as they do not aim to accommodate the needs of the increasing numbers of students. The question to address, however, is what types of support and orientation are given during each transitional point in the Algerian educational context, particularly HE. Currently, this remains unclear and unforeseeable even in the long-term horizons.

Having consulted the Official Journal of the Algerian Republic [JORA] (2005; 2003) and the legislative and regulatory decrees (2022), there is no reference to any modalities or measures with the aim to accommodate the students' needs during transition to university life. A recently published review of the main conventions, decisions, laws, decrees and communications of the republic of Algeria (JORA, 2022), does not include any specific reviews or decisions concerning how to sustain students' transition experiences to HE and any follow up plans to assist them after graduation. Rather, most of the decrees are related, for instance, to general nominations of individuals to take particular positions within the state institutions. In this regard, there is a significant gap in promoting student well-being during the beginning of any key transitional points, specifically transition from secondary school to higher education.

Enrolment is dependent on how well students did in the Baccalaureate [BAC] national examination, which denotes that institutional demands outweigh individual preferences

(Mahdjoub and Miliani, 2017: p. 132). It should be noted that certain subjects require particular grades and marks. Although the conventional assessment pattern determines whether a student can undertake a given course, the topic is under debate as some believe that marks do not reflect the individuals' true potential and intelligence (Gorman, 2015). Rather, they only report on how well an individual performed in a given task (Grimes, 2010). In this, Acocella (2002, p. 319) suggests that "an individual's choice and the level of his or her attainments are thus limited or denied by social conditioning; in other words, a person has neither negative nor positive liberty". Nonetheless, when it comes to transition into HE, it becomes a matter of retention and academic motivation because "student's initial choice of course is an important influence on their subsequent success and retention" (Simpson, 2004, p. 1). Arguably, directing a student to undertake another course which is not among his/her choices leads to the loss of motivation at the onset and potentially to an early dropout. This is one aspect among others, from which this study stemmed and which I will evidence below.

1.7. The genesis of the research

The challenges I encountered during my transition to university in 2011-2012 manifested even after my graduation in 2016. This brought me to question the way I exited school and entered HE without a defined systematic approach. A systematic approach which would enable students to understand what transition entails and what to expect once starting university. This vagueness and poor preparation caused significant impact on my emotions during transition. This was exacerbated as the institution did not provide counselling for students, therefore, I had to negotiate hardship and challenges on my own, although my actions were, more often than not, passive. This was a critical moment in that year which also had a significant impact on my academic performance. Moreover, at the time I was about to finish High school [HS], we had not been sufficiently equipped with the necessary background information and skills which would allow us to navigate transition. Therefore, it can be argued

that both institutions failed to act in accordance with students' emotional and academic wellbeing.

My Master's dissertation (MA Education) focused on the influence of multimedia resources on the speaking skills in a heterogenous group. This topic could have been developed further and become a topic for PhD research. However, the idea of researching student transition was persisting strongly in my thoughts. Initially, I attempted to connect the topic with lecturers' reflective practices through the lens of Bloom's (1956) six categories (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) and how lecturers' reflections and practices can improve students' university experiences. However, finding a research gap was quite challenging as this would have required longitudinal research. Interestingly, Bainbridge and West (2012) have identified a significant gap in relation to the application of Bloom's taxonomy. They criticised the wide application of the cognitive (knowledge) domain and a dearth in considering the affective (emotionality) and psychomotor (skills) domains, focusing on "relationships, emotionality, experiences and meanings of selfhood" (Bainbridge and West, 2012, p. 7).

Eventually, my experience as a doctoral student in the UK since 2018 empowered my insights towards thinking about transition in terms of individuals' values and skills in navigating hardship in new educational settings. This also coincided with the time I was experiencing a new transition as an overseas student. Ultimately, this stimulated in me the idea of investigating the subject in relation to students' responses, behaviours and actions in managing unsettled events. This premise aligns with the Algerian setting; however, this can be a research subject within a wider context. Although universities in many countries, such as the UK, make significant efforts to accommodate students' needs with the aim of rendering their transition experiences as smooth as possible, institutional interventions appear to be limited compared to the various aspects and factors students are exposed to both inside and outside the university

context. Therefore, students need to be involved in finding different exits and entrances, which can help them to navigate contextual challenges.

This idea leads to a consideration of what Bainbridge and West (2012), through their psychoanalytic perspective, refer to as the importance of developing an in-depth understanding around the affective and psychomotor domains. Indeed, this research touches on these aspects particularly in relation to how students can generate meanings after experiencing a range of challenges affecting their emotional stability. These aspects will be investigated with reference to contextual circumstances rather than in accordance with teaching and learning practices. This is to understand how individuals learn from experiences and how these stimulate them to evaluate, reflect and develop skills to solve situations within contexts where little support is given during transition. Ultimately then, this study can contribute significantly to bridging the gap in terms of the way emotions plays a key role in transforming cognitive processes into useful actions which can aid people amid hardship. That is, the more individuals' emotions are stable, the likelihood necessary decisions and actions will be taken. My personal account of transition, in the coming section, can help to illuminate the way institutions did not play a significant role in accompanying me after completing school or even communicating the options I could have considered before starting university.

1.7.1. My experiences of educational transitions: highs and lows

1.7.1.1. The beginnings

I started my education when I was five and since my first day at school, my mother kept motivating me to be successful in my studies. In the beginning, I remember her emphasising every morning the importance of being attentive and a good listener to what teachers taught. By the end of the day, she would say “go and revise your lessons”. This was almost the same every day, and for me, it was a burden after spending most of the day in the classroom.

However, I am pretty sure that if my mother had an education, she would have sat next to me for more study hours at home.

Summer holiday was the only period when I did not hear much about studies. September was not my favourite month as it marks the beginning of a new academic year. My mother's education is primarily derived from that of life experience, but she always encouraged, advised, sometimes, urged us to act towards progress. My mother acted as a gatekeeper and emphasised guiding her children to capitalise on her life experience as a tangible example to enable us to make the right choices.

1.7.1.2. After elementary education and the road to university

I was an average unmotivated student back in primary and middle school with a low level of focus in the classroom and no effective study strategies. I did not understand/know how to approach my studies. Nevertheless, the turning point in my education was when I went to high school, where I started to engage more with people and enjoy studying. Finally, some element of consciousness and motivation started looming. This might be the result of some tensions I had in middle school with some teachers, my teacher of English in particular. I was a passive student in the classroom and sometimes I was only physically present. This rendered my relationship with my teacher of English unstable, considering her character and teaching approach. Our relationship worsened when she came to realise that my friends were those who initiate trouble in the classroom. She would not tolerate any mistake on my part. We, as students, were not easy to manage, but our young age and energy fed our behaviours.

My weakness in English was far below the average, hence my exam marks in English were among the weaker ones if not the weakest. The aspect I consider deepening the chasm between the teacher and me was the day she overtly said, "You do not deserve it!". This was back to the day when she distributed our exam marks and mine was a terrible one. However, in one of my answers, I did a minor mistake and I thought if I would speak to her in a friendly

manner, she would not mind validating the answer, hence making my mark look less terrible. I was not optimistic in the first place, but the fact that I did not like to think about potentially repeating the academic year gave me the impetus to approach her, despite our unsettled relationship. My intuition was right, “you do not deserve it”, she said. Although this comment was unnecessary, I tried to digest it that day, however, it was so powerful for a young student. I lived with it for the rest of the academic year before progressing to high school.

Considering such a student-teacher relationship, it can be described as a negative countertransference per se as it involved passing negative emotions to an adolescent within a learning environment. Psychologically speaking, this also may contradict the lens of Winnicott's (1971) theory of object relations, which is suggestive of the relational aspect, or the energy, received by the subject from object, orchestrated by the object's behaviour and feeling (Winnicott, 1991, p. 88). In situations where individuals do not see themselves reflected in their significant others, it can lead to discord rather than harmony, potentially affecting the formation of positive relationships that foster growth and transformations (Merrill and West, 2011; Winnicott, 1991). The following can be a relevant example.

1.7.1.2. 1. The impact of the teacher's comment

The phrase "You don't deserve it!" lingered in my thoughts consistently, leading to feelings of irritation when alone and embarrassment in the classroom. This left in me a painful sentiment and deemed professionally inappropriate. Such a negative comment could have the potential to affect the free and creative expression that is essential for effective learning and personal development. However, what fueled my resilience was a life objective to be a unique individual, who actively strives to confront challenges. Although this sense of purpose was not prominently evident at that time, as I matured and gained new insights, I became increasingly aware of the dynamic nature of life, with its inevitable ups and downs on various occasions.

What transpired in the classroom that day did not evoke gratitude for the situation or the person (teacher); instead, it brought forth a challenging experience related to the unhelpful dynamics in my relationship with the teacher. This incident served as a catalyst for reconsidering my learning potential and the need to establish a protective barrier to prevent constant dwelling on the teacher's embarrassing comment. In this context, Winnicott's (1971) concepts of transitional space, play, growth, and development hold relevance to the circumstances within the classroom, encompassing factors such as the teacher's comment, limited interaction, and the unsettled teacher-learner relationships that led to embarrassment. These circumstances might have created a potential space within my inner self for play and negotiation, allowing me to figure out how "to let go... and to be emotionally and ideationally free..." (Formenti and West, 2018, 120).

Originally, Winnicott (1953; 1971) introduced the concept of transitional space to describe that "intermediate" area which poses a challenge for an infant to detach from a prime caregiver and how separation can be possible via good enough means (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 119). Winnicott, throughout his work on transitional objects and phenomena (1951; 1971), aims to understand how the subjective experience of infants moves to the objective experience of the social world or how both inner reality and external shared reality interact and co-exist within a transitional area (Skandalis, 2023, p. 1). Winnicott draws on the idea that infants develop attachments to objects like dolls, teddy bears, and soft and hard toys, which serve as the process of separation from the mother and preparation for the objective experience (Winnicott, 1971). Through play, a child can engage in a self-negotiation process (Formenti and West, 2018). For example, in Winnicott's view, the good enough mother is contingent "on her own experiences of having been well mothered herself, that is, a girl playing with a doll in her childhood can be understood as she is preparing herself imaginatively (fantasies) for the time she would become a mother (Saragnano and Seulin, 2015, p. 162). Winnicott (1971)

further points to how boys and girls are inclined towards different types of toys at an infant age (i.e., boys tend to use hard objects and girls go straight for the acquisition of family).

My dissonant experience with the teacher may oppose Winnicott's (1971) original idea that within transitional spaces, the role of the caregiver (significant other) in providing a secure environment is of paramount importance. Significant others act as a mirror through their responses in re-evaluating self and potentially overcoming anxieties in questioning whether the space is suitable (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 120). This is not applicable in my teacher/learner relationship experience because I have not shared this with anyone- until the day of the viva- to establish a good enough relational experience.

In Winnicottian (1991) approach, a supportive and encouraging educational environment is crucial for humans to feel secure in exploring their transitional spaces. Therefore, for individuals to cope with powerlessness in life, good enough facilitating environmental provision is crucial as we are living in an interdependent world, where dependence is not only inevitable but also has meaning (Winnicott, 1991, pp. 66 and 71). To quote one of Winnicott's examples directly:

...There are genes which determine patterns of an inherited tendency to grow and to achieve maturity, and yet nothing takes in emotional growth except in relation to the environmental provision, which must be good enough... (1991, p. 139).

It has all to do with sustaining growth via a nurturing process within a supportive environment. Internal mechanisms within humans need positive triggers to allow growth and maturity of individuals who can bring added values to communities.

Negative comments, in my teacher-student relationship, could have created a sense of threat instead of support, potentially hindering the free and creative expression that is essential for effective learning and personal development. However, the potential space I was involved in, to keep on keeping on, was imaginary (in mind) and dialogic (with self) overwhelmed by

frustrations, considering the fact of not discussing the feelings with anyone else. Maybe I was *too* reserved. Such a transitional space, therefore, has a mental and internal nature and the role of frustration stemming from the teacher's comment made the dialogue purely subjective. From West's (1996) perspective, with reference to his work on learning, change processes and motivation, through connecting the sociological concept of marginality to human motivation and learning. Individuals (learners/a marginal person) may undergo a transitional space, which may evoke feelings of perplexity and vulnerability, yet it also offers opportunities for creativity and a willingness to challenge adversity (Hopper and Osborn, 1975; West, 1996). However, this transitional process, within the context of human motivation and learning, can be asocial and ahistoric (Merrill and West, 2009, pp. 68-69) as it is shown below.

I think, back at that time, as an adolescent, I was conscious enough to feel and detect the magnitude of the teacher's discouraging comment. Intermittent dialogue with myself about the issue helped to weigh up my teacher/learner relationships and mainly the demotivating comment "You don't deserve it!". This was by questioning, for example, the extent to which this is true and the basis on which she made such an assumption. It was therefore a journey inside my inner world towards a constructive identity and understanding of the potential of self. Connecting this to Sean Courtney's (1992) observation of the learning process, he posits the idea that learning was often a solitary, context-free, cognitive process focused solely on acquiring knowledge and skills. For him, adult learners may embody the role of life spacers (Courtney, 1992), who are ready to take on new experiences and remain open to the opportunities and challenges that life presents (Merrill and West, 2009).

In Bridges' (2004) notions of transitions, I needed *New Beginnings*, and these could only be achieved through an intermediate space or a Neutral Zone, where I could negotiate and learn to let go of what I call 'the school nightmare'. For me, navigating such a challenging situation –affecting the inner self- was not only to detach myself from that learner who had unsettled

relationships with his teacher but also engage in a self-negotiation process which could allow pondering about *the me*, future possibilities and establish connection and identification with the *not-me* (external shared reality and others) (Winnicott, 1991, p. 139). As a starting point, I developed the motivation towards becoming a better learner of the English language. I was decent in German in secondary school, and I could have selected German to be the language of my course at university, but I kept following the initial plan to become a better learner of English.

Gradually, I embraced determination and resilience as my guiding principles, charting a course for progress, growth, and the pursuit of becoming a person with a positive outlook and life objectives. This mindset aligns with Audrey Hepburn's renowned quote: "Nothing is impossible; the word itself says 'I'm possible!'" (Parker, 2016). The overarching goal is to accomplish what initially seems beyond reach. This objective has evolved into a foundational principle steering my motivations, revolving around continuous self-reflection and consideration of how to achieve personal growth while transcending the negative impacts of situations, be it in education or life in general.

1.7.1.2.2. The high school stage

High school was a significant period of change regarding my interest in undertaking an English course at university, despite the presence of other motivations which were not stimulated by institutional interventions. Although university marked a new beginning to search for meaning, the early experience was blurred because I had little awareness of the range of challenges a university experience might posit for a fresh student, who had just started to learn English three years ago and afterwards, enrolled on a course entirely delivered in English. At that point, I did not know if I had enough endurance to keep up with such a situation in the presence of a new educational system, a new teaching approach, and amid the scarcity of counselling and student support.

There were moments when I could not see myself fitting in such a structure due to the significant work, I needed to do both on personal (e.g., motivation, confidence) and academic (e.g., learning strategies, acclimatisation with the new system) levels. Indeed, over the first year at university at least in the first six months, I was internally unsettled as there was a constant fear of failure and low self-confidence in navigating the new experience and its context. A fear of not having a suitable educational background to keep up with the new university habitus and the fear of not finding what I could do if university was not for me, considering the material scarcity as a hidden background. Such a transitional space involved a kind of dissonance between the psychological and the socio-cultural aspects (Merrill and West, 2011).

1.7.1.3. Transition to Higher education: a new chapter and new challenges

It was July 2011, and the results of the BAC exam were finally released in the evening, earlier than it should have been. My brother checked the results and informed me that I had passed the exam. I did not expect to hear news about the results until the next working day. Hearing such news was a relief for me and a happy moment for my family. Progressing into HE stood as the ultimate goal to achieve over the three years at HS. However, moving to an unfamiliar place has always its advantages and setbacks.

Before enrolling, I had to choose among the different courses the university offered and consider the courses outside my province. For new university students, registration took place around the beginning of August, shortly after the results of the national exam (BAC) had been communicated. At this stage, I was not sure about which course I would enrol on as I had three main favourite courses: physical education and sport, English, and German. I did not want to lose any of them although I knew that only one would be selected at the end. After hesitation, reflection, and consideration of the content of each course, I finally decided to study English as my main course. However, it would have been much more convenient to direct students to subjects they are good at if assessment were undertaken on students' performance in school to

match this with what students achieve in the BAC exam. This could maximise student subject choice, persistence and retention.

The first weeks at university had a significant impact on constructing my identity within the new circumstances, particularly having difficulties in navigating the new context and its values. Induction programmes and open days were scarcely provided, at least for new students to help them understand the context and make their first step in. I experienced a liminal state (Van Gennep and Kertzer, 2019) in which I was no longer a student at school, nor a student who successfully constructed his own identity at university. Attending university means having more opportunities to open oneself to the world, understanding complex subjects and developing the ability to analyse topics through different lens. This did not seem to happen in real practice.

My belief now is that every context which does not consider the challenges and the strains that people may face during their transitions, is unlikely to enable them to gain more mental maturity, positive attitudes, and self-confidence to achieve noteworthy progress. The absence of these aspects causes people to go through perplexities, self-reticence and ultimately non-linear transitions.

The academic year at university started around the end of October 2011. For me, this was atypical, as at school we used to start every academic year in early September. I was navigating this new context alone because most of my friends at school had taken different routes and courses within other universities. Therefore, socialising at university took time to establish good and reliable relationships with others even after starting my studies. My school friends and I attempted to meet in person whenever possible, but this only worked a few times as we had different study schedules. Each section of students was divided into a small study group to engage in tutorials. At this stage, networking was easier because this provided a similar

atmosphere as in school. I was able to connect with new people starting inside the classroom, where we were closer and sharing the same study content and sometimes personal backgrounds.

My study timetable was busy because being a first-year university student consisted of undertaking the core curriculum modules (*modules tronc-en-commun*) before enrolling within a particular speciality (civilisation, literature, or linguistics) for the coming years. Thursdays were challenging days for every student in my section because the study schedule ran from 8am till 5pm without a single break. This day of the week was intensive and exhausting, therefore, it was a challenge for many students to be motivated and attend the entire day. At school we used to have a fixed schedule which would not exceed 4pm; consequently, it was hard to accommodate this kind of planning. To mitigate this imbalance in the study schedule, I relied more on *intrinsic motivation* to maintain a positive attitude and remind myself about my ultimate objectives of attending HE in the absence of institutional *extrinsic motivation* (Legault, 2016).

The positive side of the story involves the ways lecturers (via their reflective practices) were able to deliver successfully substantial knowledge and provide advice on how to make satisfactory progress at university. As I developed more engagement with academic life, I realised that lecturers write little on the board which caused me to lose most of the information they communicated. I needed to develop other skills to personalise my method of studying and capture prominent ideas during lectures. As I remember, one of the strategies I used in the beginning was sitting at the front of the amphitheatre with the aim of better listening and writing accurate notes.

Commuting from home to university daily was sometimes unhelpful, especially when I had a busy study schedule. Therefore, doing some work after university was not possible because of fatigue. Adopting new techniques for self-organisation was necessary to achieve

balance between studies and other aspects of life. For instance, spending the weekends doing more research, organising modules' contents and reflecting on what I would study the next week. Family support had also a positive impact during my transition period. Although my brothers were not attending university, they were able to give me invaluable advice about what university life might consist of. One of them referred to his own story in terms of the impact of neglecting the importance of education might have on one's life span. According to him, studying helps people to understand the world in a pertinent way, having the ability to use knowledge to understand situation effectively.

Transition into HE was a unique phase which differed from my previous educational experiences. Mitigating such a period challenged my motivations; however, both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations were factors that helped to maintain momentum and aspiration in progressing in my academic journey. I learned how important thriving towards achieving objectives was, even with the presence of hardship. This lesson is not only in relation to studies but also throughout life. The latter is not free of challenging moments, rather, it is an ongoing form of transition, struggle, and ultimately a succession of both good and bad experiences, which make individuals active agents, able to find solutions and be a solution for others. Eventually, travelling to the UK just after completing university in Algeria became another major transition I had to mitigate amid undertaking a doctoral research.

1.7.1.4. Undertaking PhD and arriving to the viva voce exam

After I completed my bachelor's and master's degrees at the university in 2016, I was lucky enough to be granted a scholarship to undertake postgraduate studies in the UK. Another major transition started to take place the time I moved with a group of Algerian students to undertake a pre-sessional course at Canterbury Christ Church University. This did not only consist of a move to a place or a different system of education, but it also involved a new culture,

thinking, behaviours, and beliefs which were highly likely to diverge. Therefore, in the beginning, being an overseas student seemed like I had to make a dual simultaneous effort in understanding both student life and social life outside the university. It was a process of establishing a space which could link the international system with the one I was raised in. Finding a transitional space was requisite to function within an unfamiliar context.

The completed portrait of my PhD journey started in 2018 by enrolling on a full-time postgraduate course at the University of Gloucestershire. Not having a clear idea of what would be the actual focus of my research was the earliest challenge I had over the few months upon starting my course. Interestingly, my research seeks to understand students' transition experiences while I was experiencing a transition in the UK context. This placed me in a position similar to that of my intended participants, as I started learning the ropes in the international context. Administrative processes are my apparent setbacks both in Algeria and the UK. These often entailed time-consuming and sometimes prolonged negotiations to render regulations more flexible to fit within a student's situation.

The language barrier had its challenges for me in the UK context. Back in Algeria, I used to hear and sometimes speak what we call academic English or what is referred to linguistically as Received Pronunciation [RP]. The real challenge is that the British social life has different accents across regions different from what I learned at school. This was more challenging in the presence of idiomatic expressions and specific phrases people use in their speech. This was inaccessible to me as I was still not immersed in the culture. What I learned about English at school, as my fourth language, had limitations in navigating effectively the British social life at the beginning of my experience.

My PhD journey is composed of a set of stages, each has its setbacks but also an added value to my learning journey. This was from the project approval time until the submission of

the thesis in December 2022. The last stage consisted of defending my work in front of examiners. Arriving at the viva was accompanied by mixed feelings involving excitement and stress. The excitement in terms of having reached the end of my journey and stress was due to how to approach the examination phase, which was unpredictable. It was hard to tell what would happen as it all depends on the day itself. I was lucky enough that my supervisors were aware of such dynamics and advised me further about the process. Nevertheless, my fourth language (English) being my weakness since middle school, became the only instrument I was supposed to use to get through the viva examination. Another element, which might be obvious, but plays a major role in such situations is the power relations which examiners, as experts in the field, add to the process of examination. Although their intentions are not to take down the candidate but rather to help students to improve their work, the issue lies in the inner dynamics of the candidate by thinking constantly about how to convince and answer exam questions to people who have experience and history in research. In the end, we need feedback about what we produce, and this can only be communicated by those who are immersed in the field. Overall, the experience of defending the viva was interesting because before calling it an examination, it is first a discussion between people who met for the first time. Additionally, such discussion involved an intercultural exchange of experiences, thinking, personalities, beliefs and ways of viewing life.

Ultimately then, drawing on my educational transition experiences, it is possible, in the following section, to show the potential significance this study has and what contribution to the field it can add.

1.8. Importance and contribution of this study

Since the work of Arnold Van Gennep on *Rites of Passage*, first published in 1909, which theorised the process of individuals' transition within cultural communities, the subject expanded to cover further areas, including organisational change (Bridges, 2004; 1980), adult

life (Merriam, 2005), sports (Válková, 2017) and education (Menzies and Baron 2014; Tinto, 2012, 1975). However, there is a dearth of literature around the way people negotiate transition, drawing on their personal engagement with situations, in contexts where little support is provided to sustain meaning making. This study offers evidence based on students' stories of transitions, focusing on the ways they mitigated challenges. This research also provides understanding of how students navigated their experiences. The contribution to the field of education and to the subject of transition lies in exploring students' perspectives in mitigating transition to HE within a context (university) where effective student support strategies are scarce.

With regards to the Algerian context, this study exclusively contributes to the research literature of the context. It provides understandings about not only the nature of student transition stories but also of the different ways student transition can be supported through various plans and activities. In addition, this study can be seen as a source of empowering Algerian higher education through exploring the different stories of students' experiences of transition. The empirical evidence gives strong insights into the modalities (counselling, academic support, student advisory teams, induction and career services) which should be implemented and be developed by government and policy makers in relation to students' needs.

Second, the approach which I implemented, to investigate the topic of transition, focuses largely on individuals' understandings, views and reflections on the various aspects which shaped their transition experiences, both inside and outside the university setting. I also attempted in many instances to draw on my previous experience during interviewing and the process of comprehension of participants' narratives. This gave the process a flexibility in using our voices to understand our stories and to answer the research questions. In contrast, most studies around student transition focus on institutional interventions, such as, counselling to reduce the effect of transition on students' wellbeing. Little focus, however, is directed on the

way students develop a resilient approach via their personal outlook and reflections on problem solving.

The interesting aspect, however, resides in the way each student dismantles previous roles and assumptions and actively engages with the process of integration in the new setting. This auto/biographical narrative inquiry provides a ground not only in understanding individualities but also identifying degrees of divergence and convergence among narratives. Ultimately then, this idea can be widely applicable, particularly within contexts similar to the one of this research in order to give voice to the variety of thoughts and actions people can have to navigate transitions and attain the integration phase. Below are the research aims and objectives in researching the subjective aspect of students in managing transition within the Algerian context. It then moves to address the research questions I seek to answer using an auto/biographical narrative inquiry approach.

1.9. Aims and research questions

My aim in doing this research is to investigate students' processes of meaning-making during their transitions to HE. This is in relation not only to students' lives within a university setting but also understanding the way life aspects play a key role in shaping their transitions. Understanding these relationships is a way of constructing a narrative through which I can capture the essence of students' stories and find out more about the nature of the Algerian context. Ultimately, this touches upon many dimensions, including the social, educational and psychological aspects of students within the local context.

I attempted to explore the process of student transition in the Algerian context through a systematic approach. This approach has a chronological occurrence to understand the way students' experiences develop over time. This starts from disengagement with HS until establishing integration at university. In doing so, I endeavoured to understand new students'

expectations and perceptions about having a university experience. This allowed me to understand their personal goals and aspirations and how they anticipated the experience.

Moreover, since transition encompasses a notable change in one's life, it is therefore, full of uncertainty. My next aim is to understand and reveal the way transition affects students' social and psychological well-being. For example, when there is a mismatch between initial expectation and unfolding experience at university. At this stage, theories and models of transition are necessary to track and understand the dynamics which happen while engaging with a new situation in life.

The core aim of this research is to discover the mechanisms students may use to mitigate various aspects of transition within a university context, which does not introduce students to effective strategies to support meaning-making. The focus here is entirely on students' personal outlook in weathering demanding situations. In this, personal circumstances (degree of hardship, appraisal, engagement, familial background and social resources) are generally factors which determine students' active coping behaviours. Understanding students' outlooks and engagement mechanisms are important aspects to understand. This is to find out about whether students' involvement in reducing the effect of transition has contributed to their personal development and the way they perceive the world. In other words, what kind of lessons and meanings students have learned and constructed throughout their experiences of transition. Consequently, my research questions are as follows:

Q1. What expectations and perceptions do first-year university students have before and during the transition to university in Algeria?

Q2. What influence does transition have on students' psychological and social well-being?

Q3. How do both on-campus and off-campus first-year university students cope with change?

Q4. What is the educative significance of experiencing transition to HE?

To answer these questions, below I set out my research positionality in researching the subject of transition. This also includes insights into the interrelationship between the ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings.

1.10. Ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions

In order to answer the research questions, I need to adopt a worldview, which will set out the guideline on which this study will be based on. Although this is a recurrent aspect across the thesis (e.g., theoretical section and methodology), I wanted to introduce it more explicitly in this chapter to enable the reader to understand better my position within the existing research paradigms. This will also help the reader to engage at an early stage with nature of the study and potentially anticipate and reflect on the dynamics which will shape this inquiry.

Ontology and epistemology are two philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality and how to know about this reality. Guba and Lincoln (1989) view ontological assumptions as “those that respond to the question ‘what is there that can be known?’ or ‘what is the nature of reality?’” (p. 83). Throughout this research, I attempted to set an object of inquiry which is based on the idea of the social world of experiences and meanings. I consider the people of the world I research as having their own personal understandings, interpretations and meanings. Therefore, their voices are important to hear in relation to the object of inquiry (reality), since through their own experiences, it becomes possible to portray various aspects of the world. Knowing about the social world through the lenses of others provides understandings about real episodes lived in real life.

On an epistemological level, Crotty (2003) defines the idea as “a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know” (p. 3). Unlike the realist approach, which considers that meaning is discovered, my own epistemology supports the interpretivist and social constructionist [SCo] view that meaning is rather constructed. The process of knowing is based on human practices in the social world (Abdelhamid, 2008, p. 3) via interaction and

transmission of knowledge generated from a variety of interpretations and outlooks. The SCo assumption about reality, in this regard, can provide the opportunity to find an answer to the question about how new university students cope with transition in relation to their own approaches, insights and interpretations of situations.

Methodologically speaking, auto/biographical narrative inquiry is the methodological underpinning which I employ to investigate the subject. The slash ‘/’ in auto/biography approach refers to the process of writing stories of others and jointly reflecting on our (researchers) own histories, resulting in an interrelationship between biography and auto/biography (West, 2009, p. 71) or “the ways in which our own lives may affect the way we perceive others’ lives” and vice versa (Reid, 2015, p. 132). Del Negro views this framework as “(...) a transitional space: it stands on the slash between self and other, where creative living happens” at both personal and professional levels (Del Negro, 2021, p. 201). This strategy places both individuals’ inner and outer worlds at the heart of the knowledge construction process. Its added value is having the ability to create a space where diverse perspectives take part in the research without impacting my ontological and epistemological assumptions. That said, all the three elements (ontology, epistemology, and methodology) should be congruent in their assumptions in order not to create contrasts and discrepancies at the level of narrative comprehension and discussion, but especially should not impact coherence of the research process.

1.11. The structure of the thesis

Before presenting the structure of the thesis, I want to highlight that each chapter of this study begins with an excerpt from a Kabyle poem/song followed by a participant’s quote. The reason for this is twofold. First, this acts as a reminder of the context of this study and engages the reader to anticipate what the narrative may consist of. Second, there is a significant interplay

between the essence of the poems and the participants' words, reflecting contextual values and challenges.

The thesis starts with an introductory chapter, which sets out the underlying problem in researching student transition within the Algerian context. It then presents in Chapter Two a review of the literature on the topic of transition. This encompasses an understanding of the topic of transition in relation to previous scholarly works. The chapter also reviews a range of transition theories and models which are deemed to be useful for understanding the subject.

Chapter Three offers a theoretical framework which aligns with my ontological and epistemological approach. This chapter defines key concepts and situates relevant theories which I will employ to understand various instances of students' stories.

Chapter Four maps the methodological underpinnings, which define the modalities I will implement and use to collect stories in the fieldwork. Autobiographical narrative inquiry forms the overall approach of this study. I draw on the works of Professor Linden West and other scholars of auto/biographical research in addition to Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) narrative inquiry strategies.

Chapter Five takes us to the process of narrative comprehension in relation to the fieldwork data. This includes a detailed process of generating organising concepts using thematic analysis. Also, this stage provides details about the process of generating themes on which the discussion or narrative analysis will focus.

In Chapter Six, I present the findings in relation to participants' voices and perspectives. This part of the thesis is a place where I interpret different instances with reference to participants' backgrounds and understandings. Here, there is also opportunity to seek congruency between what I have already generated as organising concepts and themes and what participants have communicated.

Chapter Seven is where I draw on substantial theories, perspectives and interpretations to discuss participants' stories using narrative analysis. Finally, the concluding chapter (Chapter Eight) recapitulates important aspects of the study and answers the research questions. It includes my reflection on the process of this research and highlights research possibilities and the aspects I consider worth investigating in the future. The last section of the chapter invites people to constantly search for meaning even amid unpredictable adversities within crucial stages of experiences.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Ur sihsif ara xass yim yumbass wul
heart is broken
Aya d leqraya, dunit d-ellakul
(...) txilem ut-ayssara
Lahlak ur-yetdul
(Matoub 1998)

Don't be ashamed even if the
As to education, life is school
(...) Please, don't despair!
The sorrow won't last for long
(translation)

My thoughts about undertaking a university course were characterised by positivity... I wished to reach the university level Currently, however, my view has slightly changed.... I felt like studying or not, attend lectures or not, and being present at university or not is the same (Fatiha: research participant)

2.1. Introduction

This instance in Fatiha's story of transition echoes Schlossberg's (2008) view; we remember the transitions which encompass "noteworthy events that happen to us, expectedly or not expectedly" (p. 9). The nature of our lives is constituted of noteworthy transitional periods which shape the essence of each individual's life history. We experience more than just passages and that our lives are marked by other transition events that might have their importance and impact on us. Throughout this chapter, I aim to understand the complexity of the topic of transition in relation to existing theories and concepts from different disciplines. This is also in relation to the studies undertaken within a variety of fields: psychology, sociology, education, human development, and cultural change. This provides the context within which my study takes place and later, the possibility to interpret the empirical data referring to multiple perspectives.

This research aims to find out the strategies that students follow to adapt and cope with the transition to HE in Algeria. To recall, the main contribution of this research is to find out the extent to which new university students can mitigate transition in a context where support and transition activities are scarce. It is, therefore, an imperative task to refer to and discuss the literature around coping and adjusting to situations that individuals face in their lives to mitigate

and accommodate change. Although some of the selected theories do not exclusively discuss the transition in terms of student passage from HS to university, they do highlight the significance of transitioning to an unfamiliar background.

The nature of these theories and concepts appears to be malleable and can be used to understand student transition. Notwithstanding, the common drawback between these theories and concepts is that they do not build a strong rapport between the subject of student transition in education and the dynamics which characterise being a person and a learner (Bainbridge and West, 2012, p. 3). This task involves understanding both the inner and outer worlds of students and even that of teachers in terms of perceptions, thinking, repressions, emotions, and social self. Therefore, by attempting to understand these psycho/social dynamics, professionals and institutions can better be positioned to support students during their lifelong learning, which involves perpetual transitions (Bainbridge and West, 2011).

This chapter is organised into three parts. The first explores the topic in relation to research studies, considering students' expectations and motivations about university. The second part seeks to present relevant models and theories of transition drawing on different disciplines. Part three documents the coping mechanisms which are deemed to help individuals to mitigate life transitions.

Part I

2.2. Understanding transition and its implications on students' experiences

We live in a world of transitions wherein experiencing passages is inevitable (Adeyemo, 2010). This renders most of us susceptible to experiencing cyclical breaks. Zittoun (2007) considers a successful transition as the ability to attain three independent components: social relocation, knowledge construction, and meaning making (p. 193). These can be classified as indicators of a successful adjustment to a particular setting. Achieving these three elements

marks the end of the *liminal rites* (Van Gennep, 1960), referring to the acculturation process within a particular community. Fulfilling those three factors at university, therefore, adds a significant sequence within individuals' history indicating the motives that help them to continue in HE as it represents an important phase in their whole lives (West, 1996). To understand such dynamics within personal biographies, the following sections explore the subject of transition in relation to different studies to situate the uniqueness of this study.

However, transitions are not only related to the way people experience change, but rather these can be related to how, biographies, historical events and reasoning undergo substantial change. This section below explains how transitions and transformation are at the heart of life histories, involving education, contexts and movements.

2.2.1. Transition and transformation regarding students' experiences and higher education systems

Experiencing a major change/transition may entail levels of transformation in cognitive development resulting from the interaction with new processes. Exploring 120 Algerian PhD students' perceptions of the impact of studying abroad on their identities shows that their sojourn in the British context involved a short loss of social networks and support sources, however, engaging in positive social interactions helped to mitigate the transformation (radical change) (Ghodbane, 2020, p. 3). Saoudi's (2021) research on Algerian PhD students in the UK, however, provides other levels of challenges and learning students had undergone. Her research results show that PhD students in Britain experienced two kinds of transitions, including geographical and role transition. The latter entails a significant transformation in terms of taking on a new role of becoming independent doctoral researchers amid challenges. The presence of a supportive system played a major role in mitigating the two transitions and creating a space for students to explore their inner selves with the aim of developing new skills and competencies (Saoudi, 2021). Transition and transformation, in this regard, may have a

reciprocal relationship, since the former posit the experience through which meaning, learning and development occur, resulting in change via new experiences. Notwithstanding, transitions can occur at different micro, meso, and macro levels by taking different shapes.

The term transition is not only confined to processes by which people move from one physical setting to another or from one state of mind to another; it can rather be a matter of creating a new space, whether social or educational, rooted in individuals' histories. To illustrate, the emergence of feminism and research regarding biographical narrative methods is a concrete example of how transitional processes can have various shapes. Such combination enables questioning ideas (e.g., power and knowledge) beyond the application of the realist paradigm, which reduces individuals to statistical numbers and not taking experiences, feeling and emotions into account (Merrill and West, 2011, p. 145).

While transitions can have a strong relationship with historical movements, they are also at the heart of transformative learning processes. Since Mezirow's (1975-1997) pioneering conception of transformative learning, there has been an ample supply of literature across continents about what and how transformative learning can be achieved, particularly in education (Formenti and West, 2018; Nerstrom, 2017; Tisdell, 2012; Dirks et al., 2006). Regarding adult education, Conway (2022) explored the concept of andragogy within a custodial context in the USA and concluded that such a strategy can be a buffer against most harmful dynamics (e.g., when prison staff engage with prisoners) inside detention centres, promoting a degree of agency in students over their learning. Moreover, considering internal features, such as grit, can help the process of transformative learning in college students and achieve educational outcomes (Hamilton, 2021). According to Hamilton's study, persistence and graduation intentions in addition to social and academic integration can be foreseeable features considering students' perseverance and grit, particularly for location-bound adult students (Hamilton, 2021, p. 179).

Considering the complex state of the world, which is characterised by “wicked problems”, Sork (2019) argues that the field of adult education needs to be revisited to work beyond the globally oriented perspective (Sork, 2019, pp. 143-144). To bring such a transition into existence, Formenti and West (2018) metaphorically explain how constructive knowledge, meaningful learning and criticality can be achieved through various aspects, including connectedness, body and embodied learning (good enough positioning, relational, interactive, interdependent and auto/biographical) amid an era which involves complex life and difference (e.g., culture and personal histories). Higher education can be a complex space where both young and adult learners, from different backgrounds are prone to meet various challenges (e.g., inequality) like those in society (Finnegan et al., 2016). Therefore, access to HE can have a significant impact on students’ lives, as this involves a multidimensional structure (class, ethnicity, gender, age and disability) (Finnegan et al., 2016, p. 1). Such transitions and transformations are not only confined to students attending HE, but institutions across different contexts (e.g., the UK) also undergo constant transformation to keep up with the ongoing expansion of HE both locally and internationally to accommodate the different needs of students, non-traditional in particular.

Examples of how HE can be either a transitional space or ephemeral for young and adult students, regarding identities, agency and structure, can be illustrated in relation to students’ voices in different European contexts. Bron et al.’s (2016) research on the intersection of ethnicity and class in the formation of identities amongst non-traditional students with ethnic minority backgrounds in Sweden concluded that there is a complex relationship between ethnicity and class in the formation of identity in HE. Referring to Bron’s (2000) theory of floating, the struggle lies in feeling an outsider and experiencing low levels of self-confidence. This generates a feeling of floating, which according to Bron involves a “basic underground uncertainty of self, identity, place and belonging” (Bron, 2000, p. 123).

Furthermore, although there is a significant increase in participation rates for a diverse student population within the Polish HE system, the challenge resides in the universities old teaching approaches and structures, which are still taking effect, at times, major changes have already occurred (Kurantowicz and Nizinska, 2016). In such a context, however, although there is a lack of synchronisation between the current transformations and the modalities (e.g., student support) which should go with these, the score of student persistence is high. This is related to many reasons which can be put under the theme of ‘benefits of learning’, involving motivation around growth in the human, social and identity capitals, new learning culture, and social skills (Kurantowicz and Nizinska, 2016, p. 119).

Referring to the rapid expansion of universities, for example, in the UK, students' backgrounds and psychosocial aspects are crucial to consider when it comes to managing transitional processes. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1986, 1990) sociology and Winnicott's (1971) and Honneth's (2007) psychosocial ideas, West's (2016) longitudinal auto/biographical study in southeast England invites HE systems to generate a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of a university habitus and non-traditional students. This is suggestive of the idea that HE is a melting point of various capitals. This can result in dissonance if university systems do not offer an interdisciplinary, psychosocial understanding, which ultimately may cause non-traditional students to mitigate their transitions (West, 2016, p. 48). This can be mitigated by constructing a safe environment in which students can tell their stories openly to negotiate their places within such a transitional space, involving different backgrounds and histories. Schömer's work in the German HE context, for example, demonstrates that some habitual dispositions influence students prior to commencing university. He adds that issues of inequality/inferiority become apparent when students from privileged backgrounds (e.g., high level of cultural capital) are likely to demonstrate a high level of performance, advantage and

progress over those with limited social/cultural capital, resulting in undervaluation of oneself (Schömer, 2016, p. 94).

Irish HE has experienced significant growth in recent years, but their system has been criticised for being unequal and needs reforms regarding non-traditional students (Fleming and Finnegan et al., 2016). The authors make a strong link between the construction of an egalitarian and democratic society as being contingent on the formation of democratic individuals. HE is an essential element to achieve such an objective, however, this is unlikely to happen without an effective approach which promotes recognition and equality. Therefore, Fleming and Finnegan consider Honneth's (1995-2009) work on recognition theory as a powerful instrument to move beyond the traditional trend within the Irish HE and a remedy to solve social conflicts. This includes, for example, getting students from different faiths and believe systems into a similar context such as university, promoting friendliness, assonance, connectivity and interactivity.

The literature presented above is a collection of some critical works about the nature and forms of transitions and transformations European universities have undergone or should implement and develop to create an effective space where, for example, adult learners can find a transitional space which can accommodate their different personal aspects and needs. The beginning of this section provides some examples regarding Algerian students' experiences within UK universities. Whereas access to a diverse student population is a common aspect that universities consider achieving, the parting point is at the level of the kind of approaches and structures European universities implemented to successfully mitigate such changes, considering how to accommodate students' circumstances (e.g., disabilities) to maximise student persistence. It is a matter of how to create a convenient environment in which there is space for everyone to progress, construct themselves, and achieve their intended goals.

2.2.2. Researching student transition into higher education

The general argument about transition to HE is that students experience such a period in different ways, but for the majority, the change from familiar to an unfamiliar environment represents as period of disequilibrium (Jackson, 2010, p. 341). Kyndt et al., (2017) provide a taxonomy through which they explain the three major strands of research within students' transition to HE. The first strand investigates the transition from a product-oriented view, which refers to students' outcomes and achievements. The second strand focuses on understanding student transition in relation to some variables such as students' expectations, experiences of social and academic adjustment, and how they develop social identity. The last strand deals with understanding the process and growth students are undergoing in transition in terms of developing important academic competencies over different periods of transition to HE.

The present study is situated within Kyndt et al.'s (2017) second strand with an emphasis on students' perspectives in navigating transition within a context where little attention is directed to supporting student transition. This idea, as will be highlighted throughout the next sections, identifies a dearth in the literature. Researchers have investigated students' experiences of transition with reference to many aspects. To illustrate, Wilcox et al., (2005) suggest that social integration acts as an influential factor in whether students decide to stay or leave university. Their findings show that making compatible friends during the first-year experience of HE is crucial to retention as this provides emotional support, similar to family relationships. Indeed, sources of support, Bulter et al.'s (2022) findings show that peer support acts as a protective factor among children and adolescents with low mental wellbeing, low family, and school adult support (p. 776).

Christie et al., (2013) provide valuable insights into what makes successful transitions through a direct entry route from college to university. They concluded that successful

transitions are associated with the students becoming independent learners. They found that students who have the potential to understand what independent learning involves and have suitable strategies for time management progress in their respective transitions have more chances to manage the transition. Others have researched student transition to identify early transition needs to discuss the implications and inform effective intervention practices to improve student retention and engagement (Wilson et al., 2014). Wilson et al.'s results show the problems that students encounter during their early transition, such as accessing resources, balancing work, family, and study commitments, establishing peer relationships, and difficulty understanding assessment task requirements (2014, pp. 1024-25).

These studies provide a thorough explanation of student experiences of transition. However, little has been researched about the extent to which living locations (e.g., on-campus and home-based) influence students' involvement in navigating transition, or whether students develop different approaches according to the setting where they live. These are some aspects this work aims to explore as they are important facets which can offer not only an understanding of the current subject in relation to its context but also contribute to filling a gap in the field.

The transition from school to university has generated interest towards investigating the topic because of the strong relationships between the two constituents. Examples include studies on transition programs and student success (Wesley-Esquimaux, and Bolduc, 2015), the stress of the transition to university (Fisher and Hood, 1987), the impact of debt as a deterrent to HE participation amongst students coming from less advantaged backgrounds (Evans and Donnelly, 2018; Callender and Mason, 2017; Callender and Jackson, 2005), transitional needs and experiences of students leaving high school and entering Western University (Cossy, 2014) and even student transition from home country to host country, as international students (Ploner, 2018; Fischbacher-Smith et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2015).

On the one hand, these studies can be situated within the subject of strains hindering student well-being and integration within HE. On the other, they spur awareness and concerns of policymakers to look for alternatives and effective patterns towards facilitating learning and transition for new university students. Moreover, numerous quantitative works have been undertaken in relation to students' outcomes and achievements (Noyens et al, 2017; Shields and Masardo, 2015; Richardson et al, 2012) emphasising, for instance, variables such as grade point average [GPA], drop-out, and students' background before attending HE.

The focus of all these inquiries in the literature is framed within specific concerns such as outcomes, constraints, and students' needs. Few studies, however, have been undertaken to explore the students' perspectives in navigating transition (Trowler, 2019; Gibson et al., 2019; Gyamera, 2018). This study will fill a gap in the Algerian literature through researching the interplay between students' perspectives and the psychosocial forces over the transition period. This research adds a crucial aspect, which touches upon mitigating transition challenges in a cultural context (Algeria) where little importance if any is given to programs of orientation, preparation, induction, and counselling.

Researching whether constructing a personalised approach can help students to mitigate transition is not among the interest of the previous studies. Hence, this study aims to fill the gap in the literature by finding out about the actions which students adopt to mitigate the transition to achieve integration in their new educational contexts. Additionally, this research seeks to understand how aspects like intrinsic motivation (Legault, 2016) and resilience are developed to reduce the impact of entering a new space and promoting self-determination (Ryan and Deci, 2020; 1985).

There is scarce literature that focuses on the exploration of students' experiences in relation to their personal approaches to navigate transition, which would illuminate the extent

to which they are involved in the process and the kind of actions they adopt to establish a balanced academic, social, and psychological life at university. Therefore, investigating this subject within an Algerian context can provide new insights and perceptions on the extent to which students can independently be involved in negotiating the transition to university. Ultimately, this can offer the opportunity to bring about new knowledge to the field through exploring student experiences of transition in relation to contextual values and structures.

2.2.3. Students' educational expectations prior to and during the university life

Students can have elevated expectations and aspirations towards attending university, but they rarely match their subsequent experiences (Kankindo and Mawer, 2013). Seemiller et al.'s (2021) results show that enjoying knowledge acquisition is one among the other students' interests in learning. A shared expectation among students is that undertaking studies at university will promote their academic and career prospects (Kankindo and Mawer, 2013; Lowe and Cook, 2003). Others view HE as a mere continuity after secondary school (Hassel and Ridout, 2018). Although students at university are considered responsible for their learning (Crabtree et al., 2007), some still expect great input from lecturers similar to a teacher-driven learning environment in school (Killen, 1994).

According to Tinto (1987), a successful and faster transition takes place when students are more certain about their future career goals than those with unclear future pathways. Students who are about to enter HE bring with them a set of pre-thoughts (expectations) about what a university is like and the way they should behave (Malashonok and Terentev, 2017, p. 1). However, during their transition, mismatches may take place and can shape students' experiences during the first-year (Hotlon, 2015; Kankindo and Mawer, 2013).

Aspirations are referred to as expressions of a person's motivations towards educational attainment, but these aspirations are not linked to the individual's chances and potential to

realise these goals or match all the expectations (Stocké, 2013). Accordingly, this can be associated with the long-established term ‘lost talent’ (Hanson, 1994, p. 159) which “describes the concept of the underutilisation or ‘wastage’ of human potential” (Sikora and Saha, 2011, p. 8). A decrease in educational expectations, having low aspirations over time, and the inability to realise earlier expectations and plans are some indicators of talent loss (Hanson, 1994). Others identify several disadvantages such as difficulties in adaptation, dissatisfaction with studies, and a tendency to withdraw (DeWitz et al., 2009; Lent et al., 1984).

Studies show the negative effect that expectation mismatches have on the process of coping with HE in relation to students’ pre-university expectations and reality of the university life (Smith and Hopkins, 2005; Tranter, 2003). Generally, students encounter many difficulties in anticipating what life is like at university and predicting their experiences (Longden, 2006; Smith and Hopkins, 2005; Tranter, 2003). Difficulties are not only confined, for example, to academic teaching-learning processes, but these may extend to university student accommodation (Holton, 2015). Tinto (1975, 1986) views students’ pre-university perceptions and expectations, individual characteristics and motivational attributes as influential factors of academic and social integration. Thus, the more expectations are per the university experience, the more students achieve academic and social integration (Braxton et al., 1995). Nevertheless, drop-out rates and student disinterest in attending HE is increasing due to changing expectations about HE life, personal material status and motivation, and particularly institutional incongruence (Matsolo et al., 2018; James, 2002; Tinto, 1988).

Lehmann’s (2007) study shows that students do not feel that they fit in because of the clash between previous and newly developed habitus. Bourdieu’s concept of habitus is defined as dispositions, or:

(...) a principle of differentiation and selection that tends to conserve whatever confirms it, thus affirming itself as a potentiality which tends to ensure the conditions of its own realization (Bourdieu and Turner, 2005, p. 215).

This implies how individuals perceive the social world and react to it through generating perceptions, appreciations and practices which are encapsulated within the term dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990). However, the findings by Lehmann (2007) provide a different view in relation to the so-called first-generation students within a stratified university. Even though the idea of habitus remains an open system of disposition, it is still reasserting (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 133) in relation to the history of individuals. Therefore, the notion of habitus and capital can influence student transition in many ways and can make student experiences of the university life more challenging. Arguably, habitus cannot be viewed as an ultimate instrument which can offer immediate behaviour to negotiate change despite of the presence of dispositions. It is rather open to alteration depending on the extent to which individuals are required to comply with a given situation.

Cultural capital can be anything that marks an individual's background, such as culture, levels of education (parents, siblings), social class, and even living location. These determine a given habitus in the individual who ultimately adopts specific attitudes, practices, and behaviours within a given social background. Once an individual experiences a situation involving change, he/she may not comply promptly with the new circumstance because of the old habitus which can persist over the adjustment period until the habitus transformation is achieved. Developing a new habitus is not always an easy task; it needs many endeavours from the individual and often institutional assistance is a prerequisite. These two components are crucial as they provide students with the ability to achieve their pre-established goals.

2.2.4. Students' motivations for attending university

Intentions and reasons for pursuing HE vary from one student to another, depending on how students view themselves after the university experience. The self-motives, the social-

motives and the market-motives (Al Fattal and Ayoubi, 2013) are three fundamental areas that summarise why people prefer to enrol in a particular university course.

Students' decisions to pursue HE are categorised into instrumental reasons. For instance, individuals aim to get academic qualifications from prestigious institutions to form social status and security as most professional jobs require graduate entry qualification (Brown and Scase, 1994, p. 21). In this respect, Dweck's (2017) Unified Theory of Motivation, Personality, and Development [UTMPD] can have a link with students' need-fulfilling goals, regarding, for example, their beliefs in attending HE. This extends to having opportunities to acquire knowledge that is socially scarce and restricted that allow students to have greater chances to establish a career advancement or career change (Saiti and Prokopiadou, 2008; Townsend, 2003).

Scholars and researchers have also classified student motives into further personal intrinsic reasons and social reasons (Mullen, 2009; Pasternak, 2005; Antonio, 2004; Collier et al., 2003). To illustrate, self-belief, study enjoyment, aiming for personal satisfaction in terms of favouring personal interest and skill acquisition (Pasternak, 2005; Collier et al, 2003) are among the personal motivational aspects towards enrolling at university. On the social level, networking and gaining more privilege in society, in some contexts, can be also important elements among university students (Gyamera, 2018).

In summary, academic interest (intellectual interest), future career, and engaging with a new social life are the main reasons that motivate students to attend university. These reasons are primarily for the sake of enhancing the self and looking for more opportunities to establish a meaningful position in life (Noyens et al., 2017, p. 3). However, some motivators can work for some students while others can find it hard or even an illusion after engaging with university life. Thus, some of the assumptions that students may have already formed about HE can turn upside down. It all depends on the extent to which a student is psychologically ready to

negotiate any inconsistencies during transition and the nature of programmes, courses and activities that institutions provide, including how students are supported and sustained to achieve their goals. Ultimately, investigating students' psychological and social adjustment form the foci of this study to understand the process by which students engage, assess, and act to accommodate to change within the university context. This is usually assisted by university activities during the early weeks; however, this research investigates a context in which students are not given sufficient support but navigate the transition from their own perspective.

This part of the chapter has covered some of the background around student transition into HE with the aim of providing clear insights into the subject. It then referred to the gap in the literature both locally and internationally with an emphasis on the variables that this inquiry will investigate. It also discussed potential expectations, behaviours and motivations that students can have before entering HE. Part Two below reviews a number of theories, models, and conceptualisations of transition.

Part II

2.3. Models of Student Transition

2.3.1. Introduction

Transition has been conceptualised in relation to organisational change (Bridges, 2004), anthropology (Van Gennep, 1960), psychology (Risque et al., 2008), education (Burnett, 2007; Tinto, 1975, 1993) and sociology (Menzies and Baron, 2014). This section offers a review of some transition models/theories, attempting to explain their relevance to student experiences of transition into HE. Some models and concepts do not have an explicit relationship with the topic of student transition, but their overall frameworks or some of their concepts can be used to generate understandings about the subject of transition to university. Most of the frameworks explain the processes through which people experience transitions applying a variety of assumptions and terminologies.

2.3.2. The rites of passage

Arnold Van Gennep's major work *The Rites of Passage*, first published in 1909, is among the most pioneering and influential research that explains the concept of transition from an anthropological perspective. This work has inspired and has been referred to by many scholars (Hockey, 2018; Tinto, 1988; Bridges, 1980) as it provides a grounding in the processes and mechanisms of transition in terms of rites within communities and cultures. According to Van Gennep, every rite of passage, whatever the type (historical, religious, and ceremonial) within the setting in which it occurs, is composed of three stages comprising separation, liminality and incorporation (Journet, 2001). These stages capture the process by which individuals disintegrate and reintegrate within cultural dynamics. Individuals' transition within communities begins with rites that indicate separation from the old role, life, routines and space. They then move on to the phase where individuals are neither detached from the old roles nor incorporated into the new. This stage is referred to as rites of the margin. However, it is not until the third set of rites of incorporation that individuals reintegrate to the society in which they understand and perform new roles (Van Gennep and Kertzer, 2019, p. xviii).

The concept of rites of passage has often been applied to conduct inquiries related to different subjects, such as researching daily routines as transformative processes through a sporting perspective (Hockey, 2018) and community interventions for youth development (Blumenkrantz and Goldstein, 2010). Through a poetry lens, reading William Blake's (2008) *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794), echoes the idea of liminality. He invites people to embrace the new despite going through traumatic and adverse conditions, pervaded by uncertainty. Interestingly, Blake comforts the youth of delight by writing:

The Voice of the Ancient Bard.
Youth of delight come hither:
And see the opining morn,
Image of truth new-born.
Doubt is fled, and clouds of reason.

Dark disputes and artful teasing.
Folly is an endless maze,
Tangled roots perplex her ways,
How many have fallen there!
They stumble all night over bones of the dead;
And feel -they know not what but care;
And wish to lead others, when they should be led (Blake, 2008, p. 31).

The concept of rites of passage, therefore, can be applicable not only for understanding people behaviours in specific cultures, but rather, it can cover a range of subjects. Student transition is among these topics, which can be referred to as educational rites of passage. This can involve understandings about the extent to which universities offer effective rites of passage to new students or whether students construct their own passage pathways to reach the incorporation phase.

The concept of liminality can also be linked to Winnicott's (1971) transitional space. Transitional space is a concept introduced by psychoanalyst D.W. Winnicott (1953-1971). He proposed that between the subjective reality of the individual and the objective reality of the external world, there exists an intermediate area of experience known as transitional space. In Winnicott's words referring to infants, he writes :

In infancy, this intermediate area is necessary for the initiation of a relationship between the child and the world, and is made possible by good enough mothering at the early critical phase. Essential to all this is continuity (in time) of the external emotional environment such as the transitional object or objects (Winnicott, 1991, p. 13).

This process is not limited to childhood stages but also extends, thanks to *continuity in time* to adulthood (Winnicott, 1991). This space, therefore, is characterised by creative and imaginative interactions between the individual and their environment (Winnicott, 1991). It is in this space that individuals engage in activities such as play, artistic expression, and symbolic communication, which contribute to the development of a sense of self and the ability to relate to others (Formenti and West, 2018).

In this regard, Both transitional space and liminality highlight the importance of recognising and understanding the intermediate stages of human experience, where individuals

have the potential for growth, creativity, and transformation. They offer valuable insights into the complexities of human development and the dynamics of social change. The following provides details related to the dynamics of student attrition and/or retention in educational institutions

2.3.3. Tinto's longitudinal student departure / integration framework

2.3.3.1. Overview

Vincent Tinto (1971) is among the most influential theorists in the field of HE, particularly in relation to student persistence, retention, attrition, and learning communities. Tinto's (1975-2012) longitudinal study on student departure forms one of the initial bases for many researchers who undertake topics related to student transition into college and university (Braxton et al. 2004, p. 29; Bean and Eaton, 2000). Despite revisions and critiques of this theory, Tinto's model seems to continue to be a fundamental text for research, professional development and for graduate programmes (Braxton, 2019). Moreover, the framework was designed as a response to the research failure to define and classify dropout adequately, or a conceptualisation of its process (Tinto, 1975, p. 89). This failure led to apparent inconsistencies in assigning measures for the different types of student dropout, including permanent, temporary, and/or transfer behaviours within HE. Consequently, this poses significant challenges for administrators and even for state policy planners in providing flexible admission and transfer procedures, which allow students to integrate more easily into the HE system (Tinto, 1975, p. 1). Although the ultimate objective of Tinto's work is capturing and addressing the forces that shape student retention in HE (Tinto, 1993), he further outlined what a successful transition is through his student integration and withdrawal framework.

2.3.3.2. Tinto's student integration / dropout model

Since Van Gennep's work can fit in to myriad situations, Tinto (2012) applies these assumptions on a micro level (educational settings), reflecting a movement from one

educational community to another, to provide a student integration/departure framework. Moving from one study setting to another consists of experiencing a separation phase and “such movements necessarily entail moving from a position as a known member in one group to that of a stranger in the new setting” (Tinto, 2012, p. 93). Usually, the disassociation from the membership of the past community entails moments of stress, bewilderment, isolation and disorientation (Tinto, 1988). At this level, individuals are considered to disengage with past associations and beliefs and experience a difficulty in incorporating the new norms (Bridges, 2004), denoting the second stage of transition.

This can be further explained with reference to Tajfel and Turner’s (2004) social identity theory in relation to intergroup (ingroup/outgroup dichotomy) relations (p. 60). People who share similar social identification aspects, such as collective perception, are considered as having an ingroup interdependence and associations. By contrast, an outgroup refers to a social group with which an individual does not identify or belong. These occur “through social comparisons in terms of value-laden attributes and characteristics” (Tajfel and Turner, 2004, p. 60). In this regard, we can understand that students who experience transition into HE are also shifting from an ingroup into an outgroup state. Therefore, it is important to disengage with previous associations in order to construct a new social identity, which can accommodate the functioning of the new setting. However, moving between groups or the creation of an affiliate group necessitate a cohesive and stabilised reciprocal behaviour to establish solid social relationships (Tajfel and Turner, 2010).

Some students, however, find it too hard to mitigate the separation phase and, ergo, are unable to persist in the new setting. Generally, this phase includes students who live for the first time away from their local communities, schools and families (Tinto, 1988, p. 443). This implicitly consists of moving to a HE context having different composition, values, norms and intellectual patterns in comparison to schools. Tinto (2012) considers this stage as critical for

student persistence because they are still floating without assimilating the new values, and such gaps can influence the likelihood of departure (Tinto, 1988). Ultimately, rites of passage are a prerequisite that offer individuals more chances to successfully be incorporated into the subsequent community (Van Gennep and Kertzer, 2019). In education, rites of passage can be partially understood as institutional student retention interventions, and partially as existing social and intellectual communities such as family (Tinto, 2012). This gives rise to an analogy in which Tinto (1988) considers institutional persistence as equivalent to Van Gennep's social community norms and guides; the failure to concretise such behaviour can result in student attrition.

The second phase is transition (liminality), or as Turner names it, "betwixt and between" (1967, p. 94). Turner views the liminal phase as potentially a stage of reflection (1967, p. 105). Here, students retain a few associations with the past and are attempting to embrace the new norms. The liminal phase is a moment of transaction within individuals' transition and a time of negotiating new roles and values. Nevertheless, even in the transition phase, students are at risk of withdrawing because many can be in a "highly anomic situation in which they are neither strongly bound to the past nor yet firmly tied to the future" (Tinto, 2012, p. 97). In addition, the ways in which norms and values associated with membership in previous school communities differ or align with those of higher education are also influential factors for students in the transition stage (Tinto, 2012).

The final stage, incorporation, consists of the quest of adopting the appropriate norms and behaviours to establish competent membership in the new intellectual community. However, even after the disassociation from previous norms and behavioural patterns over the two previous stages, persistence and incorporation is not yet established (Tinto, 2012). That said, in some educational contexts, this phase can be critically taken for granted, especially if the institutions provide only short-lived periods of attention. In this regard, Tinto says:

In most situations, new students are left to make their own way through the maze of institutional life. They, like the many generations before them, have to "learn the ropes" of college life largely on their own (1988, p. 446).

From this perspective, social interactions are among the imperative steps to consider minimising the absence of integration, isolation and departure (Tinto, 1988, p. 446). Although Tinto's (1993) view favours the idea that students need to completely "break away" with past associations to become integrated into the college's social and academic realms, this view has been referred to as a limitation of his work in the literature (Guiffreda, 2006, p. 451). That said, Van Gennep's (1960) transitional model based on cultural transition is the source where Tinto borrowed the idea of breaking away. However, Thierry (1992) considers this inapplicable in the context of college students because Van Gennep's framework does not describe an assimilation from culture to another, but instead a developmental progression. Therefore, while cultural transition can be viewed as a collective task which involves people to work on collective integration, educational transitions have to do with individual aspects, hence generating distinct experiences from one person to another.

2.3.3.3. A longitudinal model of institutional departure

Tinto's departure model attempts to explain why and how it happens that some students come to withdraw from their institution before the completion of their intended degree (Tinto, 2012, p. 112). It argues that dropout from college results from the longitudinal process of individuals' interactions with the academic and social systems of the institution (Tinto, 1975). These external elements continually shape the individuals' experiences through changing their goals, plans and institutional commitments (Tinto, 2012, p. 115). Accordingly, this can lead either to persistence or to forms of dropout such as temporary, permanent, and institutional transfer (Tinto, 1975, p. 94). The last statement sheds light on the fact that persistence and dropout are associated with the extent to which individuals' values match or diverge with those

of social and academic systems. Therefore, the more students' values match those of the new learning context, the more students achieve integration in that community (p. 96).

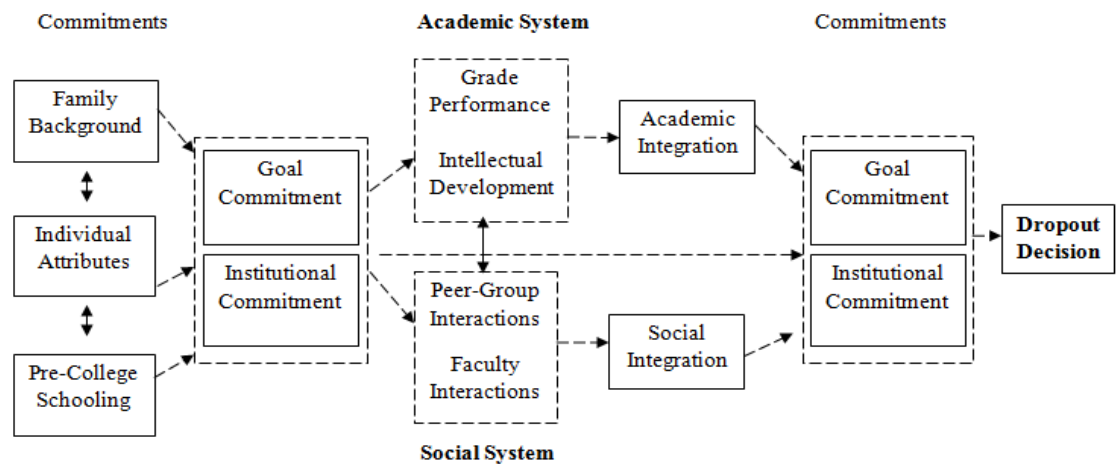


Figure 2: Tinto's conceptual schemata for dropout from college (1975, p. 95)

Tinto's diagram shown above indicates that students possess some degree of background and attributes (cultural capital) before entering college. This can include personal attributes (abilities, gender), precollege experiences (GPA, academic and social attainment), and family backgrounds (social status, values and expectations). Tinto (2012) asserts that each of these aspects has both a direct and indirect effect on dropout as students are continuously formulating further intentional commitments and institutional attainment in achieving goals. Background characteristics and individual attributes, for example, have an impact on the development of the educational expectations and commitments individuals bring with them into higher educational institutions (Tinto, 1975, p. 96). Arguably, goals and institutional commitments can help in predicting and reflecting on the person's experiences, disappointment, and satisfaction in the new educational setting.

Moreover, the model points to individuals' interactive experiences resulting from the students' development of affinities with the intellectual and social systems, which harness student persistence and strengthen their commitments (Tinto, 2012, p. 116). Finally, due to the fact that students are also members of the larger society (family, work and community), external

experiences can impact students' persistence (Tinto, 2012). This synthesis indicates that Tinto's model is open to both possibilities in terms of persistence and dropout. That is, the extent to which external events give rise to the student experiencing low goal commitment and low social and institutional interaction, significantly contributes to the likelihood of dropout (Tinto, 1975, 96). By contrast, the greater an individual's commitment to the intention of college completion and to the institution, the less likely a dropout decision is to take place (Tinto, 1975).

Tinto's student dropout model appears to focus more on students' social capital and the way this influences students' commitments and interaction within a higher educational setting, i.e.: whether these qualities help students to persist or contribute to their dropout. Nevertheless, Tinto, in his revision of his work on student dropout, considers departure as part of the experience process through which individuals construct their intellectual and social maturity (Tinto, 2012). The relevance of Tinto's work is that it describes and provides consistent picture of what might be the causes of student departure, the way this can occur and what institutions can do to improve student retention in HE (Tinto, 2012, p. 4). Hence, this model can assist researchers in capturing the complexities of students' perceptions about their experiences of transition. Additionally, this model helps with an understanding of the extent to which students' capital is beneficial or disadvantageous for their goals and in terms of their social and institutional commitments. Eventually, Tinto clarifies that the decision of leaving higher education should not be understood as a failure, but it can represent a positive choice for leavers seeking goal fulfilment elsewhere (2012, p. 3).

2.3.4. Psychological processes and student retention

Based explicitly on psychological theories, Bean and Eaton (2002) developed a transition model in which they explain how psychological processes lead to both social and academic integration. This framework identifies how psychological qualities and attributes help students to achieve social and academic inclusion, which ultimately maximise their

retention decision. According to the authors, social and academic integration are outcomes of psychological processes (2002, p. 75). This implicitly refers to Tinto's (2012) claim about the contingent relationship between social and academic integration with value congruence.

This framework takes effect when students enter an institution with psychological attributes structured by particular experiences, abilities and self-assessments (Bean and Eaton, 2002). At this level, the most important psychological factors are self-efficacy assessments (having the level of confidence that they can perform well academically in HE, normative beliefs (attitudes and advice of important people in his/her life about undertaking a particular course), and past behaviour (the extent of preparedness and whether the necessary social experiences and academic skills can help them to succeed at university). Subsequently, students experience a series of interactions inside and outside of their new educational settings. These interpersonal relationships allow students to engage in a series of self-assessments through which they can connect and react emotionally to the new environment and to the experiences that they have had in the institution. Accordingly, students can gain motivation to engage in adaptive strategies. Essentially, the more academic and self-efficacy increase, the more students achieve social and academic integration (Bean and Eaton, 2002, p. 77).

Coping behaviour and locus of control are also seen as outcomes of academic and social self-efficacy, especially if the rate of internal locus of control (the extent to which an individual views their past outcomes and experiences to be caused by internal or external forces) in students is high (Bean and Eaton, 2002, p. 77). This can stimulate students' motivation to study and socialise better than those with external locus of control. The authors added that social and academic integration can be boosted with the inclusion of retention programs consisting of service-learning, learning communities, freshman orientation seminars, and mentoring programmes. Such programmes are beneficial for students as these can have a positive effect

on psychological processes, including coping behaviour, locus of control, academic and social self-efficacy. It appears that Tinto's (1975) departure model and Bean and Eaton's (2002) framework share the aspect of student retention through different modes and structures. Whereas the focus in the former is on the strong relationship between students' attributes, background, and dropout behaviour, the latter emphasises the extent to which having an internal locus of control can help individuals in managing change and persisting within HE communities.

2.3.5. Bridges' transition model (2004)

William Bridges' (2004) *Transitions: Making Sense of Life's Transition*, originally published in 1980, offers a triadic conceptual framework which characterises the process of sense making amid transitions. It is noteworthy to bring out Bridges' distinction between the two terms 'change' and 'transition'. Change is the physical/outer events (starting a new job, moving to another place to live) of the daily life circumstances. Transition, however, is psychological which characterises "the inner reorientation and self-redefinition that you have to go through in order to incorporate any of those changes into your life" (Bridges, 2004, p. xii). This depends on the individuals' decision to let go of what is no longer appropriate to the life stage they are in (p. 128). Change therefore, acts as an uncontrollable variable, as a trigger to process an internal/personal adjustment (transition) to accommodate and respond to external encounters. Change occurs when transition is achieved and, therefore, it is reliant on individuals' ability to reorient themselves during a transition (Heathcote and Taylor, 2007, p. 2).

Drawing on the work of the French anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep (1960) on cultures and how transitions happen in societies through rites, Bridges (2004) provides three phases of transition which he refers to as *Endings*, *the Neutral Zone*, and *New Beginnings*. Appealingly, from a modernist literary standpoint, Eliot (1942), in his work *Little*

Gidding, views the end as the place where we start from. The beginning is usually the end, and being in an end implies making a beginning (Eliot, 1942). In this regard, graduating from school stands as the end of one educational cycle and potentially the beginning of another at college or university. Enrolling at university is engaging in a new experience which marks the end of the previous one.

Bridges defines *Endings* as events that we try to move beyond as quickly as possible because they begin with something going wrong (2004, p. 108). The ending experience is characterised by aspects such as disengagement, dismantling, disidentification, disenchantment, and disorientation. These can be experienced during the early transition of students at university when they start to have contact with the external demands of the new setting (Cheng, 2015). Individuals in this period unpack and dismantle their relationships with the previous interpersonal and social world.

In the context of student transition, endings stand for anything which students have already known (rules and structures of school, friendships, teachers, graduation). This can be exemplified with reference to the early stage of students at university, where they experience external changes such as a new location, culture, and sharing accommodation (Cheng, 2015). Consequently, students become prone to experiencing feelings related to homesickness, isolation, anxiety, and confusion (Denovan and Macaskill, 2013; Thurber and Walton, 2012). This directs students' experience to the neutral zone as an interim to disengage with the old context, thinking, behaviour, and regularities towards constructing and accommodating the new ones. Bridges says:

The point is that disenchantment, whether it is a minor disappointment or a major shock, is the signal that things are moving into transition. (...) The disenchanted person recognises the old view as sufficient in its time, but insufficient now (2004, pp. 120-121).

The neutral zone in this sense bridges between the former and the final stage of this model. Although the neutral zone is a time when the real process of transition takes place

(Bridges, 2004, p. 154), it is as a period of emptiness in which people feel uncertain about how to respond and give meaning to the events happening in the actual experience (Bridges, 2004; Tinto, 1988). This situation is essential for the process of disintegration and reintegration because it stands as a source of renewal (Bridges, 2004, p. 141). However, the neutral zone is a period of quest for meaning that varies from one person to another in terms of length, assimilation, and incorporation.

The last stage, “the New Beginning”, is the result of the deconstruction of the old life’s structures and perspectives during the ending phase, and particularly the neutral zone (Bridges, 2004, p. 157). However, this does not mean that all the beginnings are better or more structured than the old life, rather, it is a process of negotiation of meaning to fit in the new, which is not free of challenges. Galsworthy, in his novel *Over the River*, views the beginnings and endings of all human undertakings as untidy (1933, p. 4). New beginnings are triggered by particular events coming in different forms, such as meeting another person, reading a book, advice, and others’ experiences. In Winnicott’s terminology, these are termed *transitional objects*, which aid individuals, particularly infants, in transitioning from a subjective realm to a shared reality via a *transitional space* and supportive environment, where dependence is necessary step towards achieving self-dependence (Winnicott, 1991). These also can help the person in transition to have a meaningful interpretation and acquire necessary understandings to progress in the unfamiliar environment. From the student transition perspective, this can be explained by capturing the variety of tips and aspects which aid students in returning from a state of disengagement into the ability to take on new commitments within the social and institutional systems.

2.3.6. The U-Curve theory of adjustment

This theory was initially introduced by the Norwegian Sverre Lysgaard (1955) and developed by other scholars, such as Kalervo Oberg (1960), as the milestone for investigating

cultural adjustment within communities. Appealingly, Oberg's (1960) work on expatriation and culture shock provides a thorough explanation about the stages through which people experience a culture shock from the time they move from a familiar environment to an unfamiliar one. Culture shock, in this sense, has referred to the hardship in establishing congruency within the new cultural system. This kind of situation has been metaphorically referred to by the expression "a fish out of water" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 108) to denote an experience within an unfamiliar setting or a context that a person does not belong to. Oberg's (1960) culture shock model encompasses gradual stages, including the honeymoon stage, regression, adjustment and recovery stage.

Risquez et al., (2008) have adopted the U-curve theory and applied it in an Irish context to investigate the process of adjustment among adult learners during transition into HE. The main stages they highlight are the honeymoon period, culture shock, and adjustment phase. Below is a figure displaying the theory including a time frame based on Risquez et al.'s (2008) research:

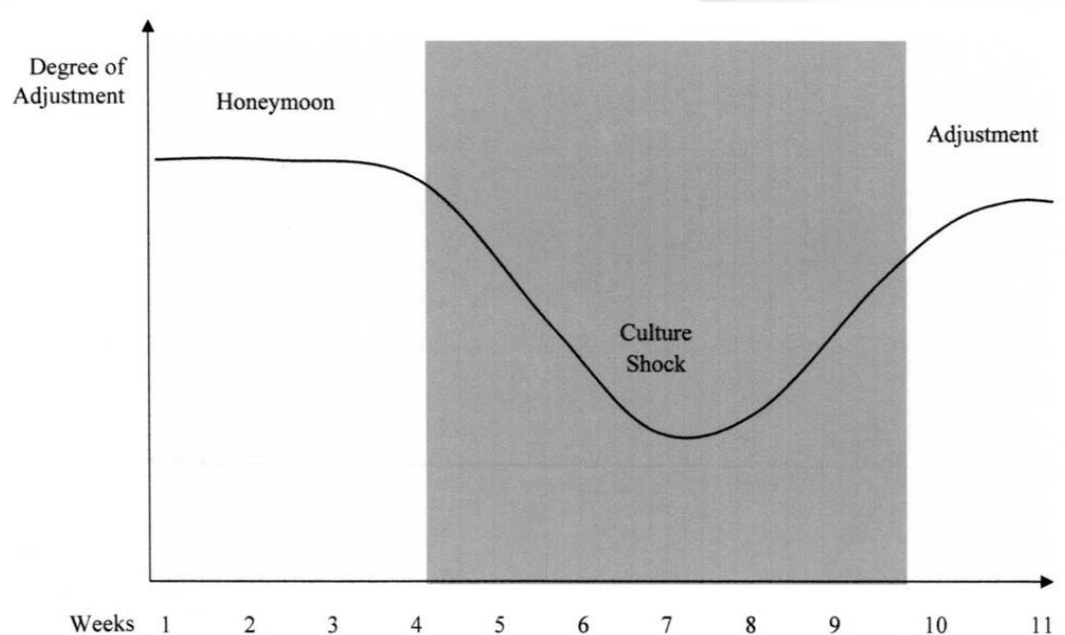


Figure 3: The U-Curve theory of adjustment

The figure shows that the honeymoon phase is a short-lived period (one to four weeks). Most students during this phase have superficial adjustment, fascination, fear and anxiety even when they demonstrate excitement and positive insights (Risquiz et al., 2008). After that, culture shock takes place and contrasts with the former period. The characteristics of the second stage can be grouped as emotional, academic and social concerns. Their results show that the culture shock phase is accompanied by disillusionment, anxiety associated with academic demands, isolation, alienation, emptiness, and boredom (Risquiz et al., 2008, p. 193). Furthermore, the second period seems to persist for longer before the beginning of the process of adjustment. At this level, students start to make meaning through developing new learning routines, establishing a sense of community and experiencing an increase in motivation. Although this model has been assigned to understand people's experiences within international contexts, it also appears relevant in understanding other topics, such as student transition journeys into HE. Ultimately, the U-curve model can offer an effective framework to strengthen students' preparedness for the initial shock, which is likely to happen during the first-year of university life (Risquez et al., 2008, p. 200).

Additionally, although the authors have extensively presented the principles of the U-curve theory in their work, Risquez et al.'s results (2008) suggested further implications in relation to mature newcomers' transition experiences. Findings show that this category of students can adjust faster because initially they experience earlier shocks and quickly identify problem solving skills and then develop coping behaviours (Risquez et al., 2008, p. 202). In this, the culture shock time frame is reduced compared to the U-curve culture shock stage. Subsequently, based on this evidence, Risquez et al. (2008) suggest a V-curve framework in relation to their findings.

2.3.7. Menzies and Baron's model of student adjustment (2014)

Drawing on the work of De Cieri et al., (1991), Menzies and Baron (2014) developed a model of student adjustment to examine the transitional issues faced by international postgraduate students (IPSs) within an Australian context. This model can be considered as similar to the U-curve theory of adjustment, but its added value resides in the acknowledgement of the emotional orientation of students before entering university. This model then, to some extent, attends to both the endogenous (subjective) and exogenous (objective) worlds which have an interplay in shaping life histories (Bainbridge and West, 2012). However, it does not refer to the very act of being an IPS contribute to the process of constructing a personal capital based on experience.

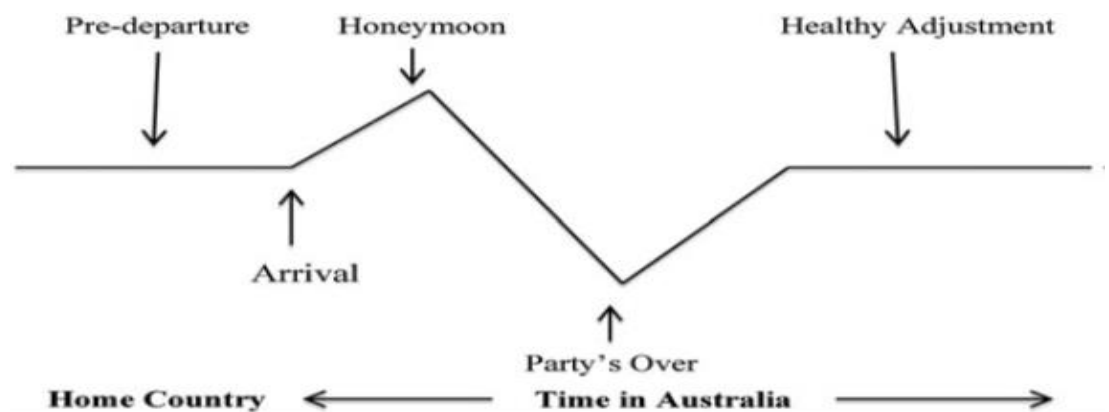


Figure 4: Menzies and Baron's Adjustment for IPSs [Adapted from De Cieri, Dowling, and Taylor (1991)].

Figure Four above summarises the five stages of the student adjustment model, which was applied on IPSs to understand their adjustment process. The pre-departure phase corresponds to the time when students are still in their home countries. Students are believed to be in a neutral mood as they are still engaging with their daily routines. Then, upon arrival, students appreciate the situation and get a sense of excitement, referred to as the 'Honeymoon stage'. The latter lasts only for few weeks, until students move into the 'party's over' stage, where they start to experience several shocks related to changes at the level of the social

and academic environment. Depression, confusion and high levels of stress are signals indicating that students are in the ‘party’s over’ phase of their transition (Cheng, 2015). After having been offered support from both the university and the student society (student union), adaptation is likely to take place. This indicates that students are transitioning into the healthy adjustment stage in which they regain the neutral mood similar to the one of the pre-departure stage.

In the context of this study, however, the healthy adjustment stage cannot be considered as a prominent factor within students' adjustment process, since the primary concern of this research resides around the lack of support and orientation for new university students. Therefore, this model appears to have a gap as it does not point to students’ attributes and capacities in shaping their own adjustment.

2.3.8. Burnett’s model of student experience (2007)

Previous models seem to focus only on students’ transition during the initial stages of students’ transition. Burnett’s (2007) model identifies key phases of students’ experience of transition in relation to the first semester and beyond at university as the figure shows below:

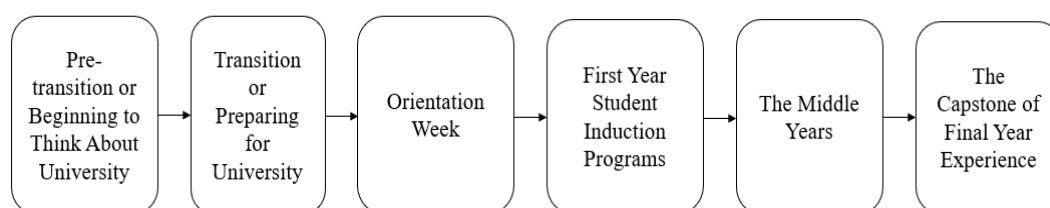


Figure 5: Burnett’s (2007, p. 24) Longitudinal Model of Student Experience of transition.

Implementing a longitudinal investigation and action research framework, Burnett’s (2007) framework extends to cover more nuances within the students' transitional journey over the first year at university. This model endorses Krause’s top five misconceptions about the first-year in HE, such as first-year students going through the same experience (2006, p. 3). Additionally, it offers six key stages of the university experience, which include pre-

transition, transition, orientation week, first-year student induction programs, the middle years, and the final year or the capstone (Burnett, 2007, p. 24). The model offers an inclusive approach as it considers the topic of student transition over different time scales: before transition, during transition, and after transition in which students are longitudinally engaging with the university setting.

The initial phase, pre-transition, stands for the time when students start to think about attending university. Krause (2006, p. 1) believes that thinking about university should be processed at an early stage as it is a way to know in advance whether attending university is worth considering. Deciding to pursue HE might be related to the nature of aspirations and motivations individuals have in terms of relevance for career planning, knowledge and familiarity of programmes, university culture, family and work commitments and financial factors (Burnett, 2007, p. 25). Meier's (2010) conception of positive mindset can provide further insights into how people (e.g., students) can think pragmatically about what a person can gain and achieve regarding a given situation (e.g., university).

However, imagining what university life is like seems to be insufficient because those who set anticipatory expectations and beliefs about HE can experience disappointment and significant stress, particularly when mismatches take place against their previous expectations (Denovan and Macaskill, 2013, p. 1011). The next stage, transition, covers the time when a student has been granted an offer and is then looking forward to the orientation week. This period can be characterised by emptiness because usually thorough engagement with the university structure is not yet established to help students in their transition. Consequently, students have mixed feelings of excitement about attending HE and apprehension resulting from not having any contact with the institution (Cheng, 2015; Burnett, 2007).

Furthermore, the orientation week refers to the period when students arrive on campus, where the institution offers a range of activities to support students to familiarise themselves

with the new setting. At this level, external changes (the new context and the new social life) can influence students and, consequently, can cause emotional instability. This includes, for instance, homesickness, isolation, depression, feeling of being ignored, and a sense of loss in the new environment (Denovan and Mcaskill, 2013; Wrench et al., 2013).

The remaining three stages of the first-year induction programme, the middle years, and the final year offer insights into the importance of implementing a student-centred approach to managing additional experiences of change in the academic environment. This is because students are still encountering issues and needs throughout their undergraduate studies and, therefore, require support to overcome any inconsistencies.

Additionally, Burnett's transition stages share common goals with the framework developed by Briggs et al. (2012) around mapping the formation of student identity during transition. Their emphasis is on the extent to which fundamental organisational influences at school and university help to establish a positive learner identity. The latter is considered as crucial for students to adjust to the university environment and develop autonomy (Briggs et al., 2012, p. 4). The collaboration between university administrators, academics and students' school services enables not only the growth of learner identity but also constructs a transitional bridge between the two educational settings (Briggs et al., 2012, pp. 1-2).

Overall, these two models focus primarily on the work that should be achieved before students arrive at university. This requires in-depth research and coordination between the different educational services present at both schools and universities. This has been further argued that parental involvement in decision-making with school activities are considered as having partnerships by developing responsibility to promote students' academic achievements (Đurišić and Bunijevac, 2017). In doing so, institutions will be able to maximise the likelihood of congruency between students' expectations and university life (Pitkethly and Prosser, 2001;

Longden, 2006). Nonetheless, this seems to be problematic in the context of this study as there is still a significant gap between theory and practice in terms of the application of such an integrated process in supporting student transition. However, Briggs et al.'s (2012) framework focuses more on the physical modalities which institutions need to implement for assisting students in their transitions. However, little attention is directed to understanding "the emotional, inter and intra-subjective" aspects of those at the receiving end of education (Bainbridge and West, 2011, p. 10).

From a psychoanalytical stance, sustaining learning and transition should expand to cover the inner realms of both students and teachers to understand, for example, unconscious processes such as transference and countertransference between students and teachers (Bainbridge and West, 2012, p. 2). The call for bridging education with psychoanalysis is to reduce the effect of unconscious processes (e.g., what is referred to as repressions (Freud and Rieff, 2008)), which contribute to directing thoughts, feelings, and behaviours and potentially causing mental illness (Pilecki et al., 2015). This can enable individuals to become more reflective, independent and less controlled by their inward beings within periods of separation and change, such as transitions (Bainbridge and West, 2012; Honneth, 2009). Considering, therefore, the inner and outer worlds of students can result in developing their resilience in "keeping on keeping on" amid challenges across lifelong learning (West, 1996, p. 27).

This section reviewed some transition models that are considered to be appropriate for this study. It provided a brief description and explanation of each model to widen understanding from a variety of perspectives. These frameworks can provide a strong underpinning to explore the subject of student transition into HE within the Algerian context. Although some models' emphasis is on the importance of institutional support in assisting students in their systemic transitions, they also provide insights into the processes and forms that transitions can take and how people can mitigate them.

The dearth in the literature to date on student transition in Algeria makes it challenging to say the extent to which these frameworks fit the context because most of them are more or less associated with how institutional and organisational interventions take part in the student transition process. On a practical level, the models consider a variety of elements, for example, the relationship between institutional interventions and student retention, social life and student motivation, which shape students' experiences. However, they do not provide insights into the extent to which establishing "good enough relationships between tutors and learners" inside the classroom can benefit the process of student transition (Bainbridge and West, 2012, p. 17). Finally, Van Gennep's work on *Rites of Passage*, which has a socio-anthropological dimension, is an influential framework as it formed the initial basis of many transition models. The final part of this chapter discusses the coping mechanisms from psychological and social perspectives.

Part III

2.4. Coping and meaning making during transitions

2.4.1. Overview

The literature on coping can be traced back to Sigmund Freud's (1894) work *The Neuro-Psychosis of Defence*, which provides explanation about self and external world. Drawing on this, Anna Freud's framework of ego psychology, first published in 1936 was also one of the pioneering works which conceptualised coping from the ego's unconsciousness perspective (Freud, 1992). Coping, adjustment and adaptation are some key terms which denote the overall processes of managing stressful encounters to establish congruency within new settings. Although seeking compliance to both internal and external demands is a shared aspect among these terms, the literature distinguishes between them with reference to the particularities of each term.

Lazarus and Folkman (1984) define coping “as constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person”, (p. 141). From a self-management perspective, this involves overseeing one’s conduct and evaluating the choices one makes via developing the ability to systematically manage one’s behaviour, emotions and behaviour to achieve goals and expectations Ghali et al., (2018, p. 48). This, therefore, refers to developing persistence via active engagement, including, for example, problem-solving, decision-making, and resource utilisation (Lorig and Holman, 2003).

These definitions explain the term coping as a process based on individuals’ efforts and attempts to evaluate negative stimuli (Mitrousi et al., 2013, p. 132). The ability to utilise one’s cognitive and behavioural coping resources to approach stressful encounters is classified as “active coping”, which opposes avoidant coping (Wills and Hirky, 1996, p. 288). This suggests the strong reciprocal relationship between individuals and their environments (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004), and the way individuals’ cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects react to external and internal adversities.

Similarly, adjustment is defined as establishing balance between internal and external demands, self and others, and maintaining continuity and adaptability to the new (Mortisugu et al., 2017, p. 3). In Piaget et al.’s (2000) stages of cognitive development, adjustment can be explained as a process of assimilation and accommodation through which people understand and integrate new perceptual circumstances to the actual schemata (assimilation) and embody the new to be part of their background (accommodation). This combination allows individuals to restructure their schemata and patterns of behaviour which results in manifesting cognitive growth and development (equilibrium) (Wadsworth, 1971, p. 17). Arguably, adjustment may not consist of a significant alteration in

one's assumptions and behaviour to fit in the newly perceived situation, which implies a low engagement compared to coping.

Adaptation, on the other hand, is viewed as a process by which individuals learn to cope with a situation whether they fit in or not (Bean and Eaton, 2002, p. 77). This indicates the necessity of developing the quality of resilience, which is viewed as “the process that leads to positive adaptation despite significant life changes” (Werner, 2007, p. viii). In the literature, many consider the term adjustment as an outcome of adaptation but not a process on its own (Aspinwall and Taylor 1992; Helgeson, 1999; Stanton et al. 2007). The assumption is that most models explain the use of adaptive tasks and coping strategies to achieve adjustment (Samson and Siam, 2008). However, this can be contested in the field of psychology and specifically in relation to Lazarus and Folkman's definition of coping and distinction between the three terms above. Both terms, coping and adjustment, address the tasks and motivations why people should consciously process alterations to accommodate change. Adaptation, however, indicates that individuals' chances to achieve positive coping is minimal.

This distinction between the terms offers insights into what process can better describe a given experience of transition. An experience can consist of a pro-active behaviour (coping), partially modified behaviour (adjustment), or being overwhelmed with the situation itself until adaptation is achieved. Generally, the three processes, regardless of their differences, have one single goal which is offering an explanation about how individuals can respond to both internal and external encounters involving stress and uncertainties. Their relevance for this research is to understand students' experiences of transition and explain the mechanisms they use to construct their identity at university.

Coping consists of both functions and outcomes. The former refers to the purpose a given strategy serves, while the latter stands for the effect that strategy has on a given condition (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 149). For instance, social and academic integration are seen to

be the outcomes of developing coping strategies (Bean and Eaton, 2002, p. 77). There is a significant literature which explains how people can mitigate situations using a variety of strategies (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; McCrae, 1984; Deci and Ryan, 1985; Parker and Endler, 1996; Lazarus; 1991; Hobfoll, 1989, 2011). These can include, for instance, internal dispositions and environmental resources. Below is a selection of potential approaches which can offer insights into interpreting student experiences of the transition into HE.

2.4.2. Psychological and behavioural forms of coping

2.4.2.1. Lazarus and Folkman's cognitive and behavioural framework of coping

Researching coping and stress proliferated during the 1970s and 1980s and became a major area within many disciplines, specifically in psychology (Zeidner and Ender, 1996). The earlier work of Richard Lazarus (1966), *Psychological Stress and the Coping Process*, is among the influential underpinnings in the area of coping with an emphasis on individual's efforts and consciousness. Other scholars who studied coping in terms of defence mechanisms are Anna Freud (1936), Haan, (1977) and Vaillant (1977). Recent literature considers Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) work as having a non-archaic aspect because it forms a milestone of the coping research, psychological stress and is still referred to across a variety of fields (Biggs et al., 2017). Others suggest that such a framework is an effective model to follow in studying the coping process and useful for managing both controllable and uncontrollable events (Jones and Frydenberg, 1999; Eisenberg et al., 1997; Aldwin, 1994).

Approaching coping implicitly involves the presence of adversity and eventually how individuals manage stress and threats associated with specific experiences (Carver, 2013, p. 496). Experiencing stress is the outcome of the individuals' appraisals and interpretations of situational demands (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Billings and Moos, 1981) through the identification of whether the stressor is a threat, a

loss, or a challenge (Skinner, 2015; Carver, 2013; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). This, however, differs from Anna Freud's (1936) assumption that a human's ego has a set of defence mechanisms, and each is utilised against a particular danger (1993, p. 84). This appears to have a static mode of functioning in relation to the variety of new environmental and emotional stressors which keep emerging. Defence mechanisms have been criticised in terms of the presence of difficulties in understanding the relationship between the coping process and the adaptational outcome - difficulties to attain interrater reliability, and the inability to observe a person's altruism (Lazarus and Folkman, 1980, p. 220). Managing stress therefore requires conscious efforts, embedded in reflection and action, rather than spontaneous reactions (Mitrousi et al., 2013).

2.4.2.2. Problem and emotion-focused forms of coping

Problem and emotion focused forms of coping, as a rational approach, are considered to be effective cognitive and behavioural strategies to adapt to daily stressful events (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Folkman and Lazarus, 1980). The primary functions of this approach are either solving the environmental stressor (in contexts in which this is controllable), or regulating the emotional consequences of the situational encounter, which in this case are an unmanageable condition (Skinner, 2015; Mitrousi et al., 2013; Jones and Frydenberg, 1999; Aldwin, 1994; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

Folkman and Lazarus's (1980) results indicate that both forms were frequently involved in their analysis of how 100 community-residence men and women coped with stressful situations. The scholars further highlighted aspects, such as observation and assessment, context specific, and constant change in coping, thoughts and actions were at the heart of the process of coping (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 142). This enables an interrelated transactional sequence of coping, which can take place as the stressor is continuously

evaluated jointly with the identification of coping options to mitigate perceived unfolding threats (Folkman and Lazarus, 1985).

In summary, problem-focused coping involves a pro-active engagement from the part of individuals to find out strategies and solutions to the problems causing distress, whereas emotion-focused coping consists of regulating emotional distress to the perceived stressor (Smith et al., 2016). Arguably, although there is an apparent difference between the two forms, Carver (2013) views that both forms of coping serve each other and have an interwoven relationship. A range of problem-emotion coping strategies have been identified which include denial, rumination, venting of emotions, positive reinterpretation of events, and seeking out social support (Baker and Berenbaum, 2007). Some of the emotional forms, however, have been criticised as they tend to promote avoidance rather than approaching situations or regulating emotions (Roth and Cohen, 1986). This category of emotional forms has been amalgamated in a third cluster, referred to as avoidance-oriented coping. The latter encompasses disengagement, helplessness, wishful thinking, seeking distractions, and substance use (Carver, 2013; Wills and Hirky, 1996; Endler et al., 1993).

Additionally, avoidance coping has also been identified as an emotional coping strategy in many studies (Smith et al., 2016; Cohen et al., 2006; Skinner et al., 2003; Endler and Parker, 1990). Avoidance-oriented coping consists of deliberate tasks and/or cognitive strategies, such as, seeking distractions and substance use to disengage from hardship (Endler et al., 1993). To a certain extent, using avoidance coping is likely to let stressful events happen until they end by distancing the self without any active engagement.

Eventually, this mode of coping can offer to a person an emotional ease at the first stage, however, s/he will experience negative repercussions characterised with a state of vulnerability (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Accordingly, Carver (2013) suggests that disengagement does not provide effective impact in managing setbacks and does not contribute to altering adversity

conditions. Avoidant coping, therefore, is often referred to as a maladaptive behaviour because it involves passive engagement with the stressor (Carver, 2013; Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004).

2.4.2.3. Strategies and resources of coping

The following section is a review of a range of resources and coping strategies which are considered as effective ways to mitigate both controllable and uncontrollable situations. It sheds light on Hobfoll's (1989, 2011) theory of Conservation of Resources [COR] and documents most of the strategies that Lazarus and Folkman (1984) have highlighted in relation to their longitudinal work on coping. Additionally, this part discusses other coping resources which seem to have a strong relation to this inquiry with reference to empirical findings. Reviewing these is with the aim of understanding the students' approach in constructing their personal coping behaviour to fit in the new educational setting. According to Bean and Eaton (2000), students who cope well with difficulties can reduce stress with positive outcomes and are likely to establish academic and social integration (2000, p. 51).

2.4.3. Hobfoll's conservation of resources [COR] framework

In the past three decades, the COR theory has become among the leading frameworks of stress and trauma, originating from Lazarus and Folkman's appraisal theory (Hobfoll, 2011). The predominant assumption of COR theory argues that "individuals strive to obtain, retrain and protect their personal, social and material resources" (Hobfoll, 2014, p. 22). In Frydenberg's words, this "framework is proactive rather than reactive. People strive to develop a resource surplus to offset the possibility of future loss" (2014, p. 84). This provides the potential to understand how different environmental conditions can have "the association of linked resources, are created and sustained within a resource caravan passageway" (Hobfoll, 2014, p. 22; Hobfoll, 2011). Principally, this can occur through resilient responding and resources investment. Whereas the former component "must counteract or complement the

powerful, usually rapid, and often long-term impact of resource loss”, the latter necessitates efforts towards getting as many as possible of the resources or taking stock of the resources at disposal (Hobfoll, 2011, p. 129). The last statement can also be explained through the idea of how Bourdieu’s (1986) cultural/social capital can place individuals in a better position to mitigate or understand situations at an early stage. Therefore, considering COR theory, people can either protect against resource loss, recover from resource loss, and obtain other resources.

The idea behind the concept of passageways in COR theory is to explain the reciprocity among resources as they are likely to connect in the form of a chain or travel in “resource caravans” (Hobfoll, 2011). To illustrate, cultural/social capital, as referred to in the beginning of this chapter, can stand for anything which shapes an individual’s background. Coming from a multilingual background; for instance, parents, society and schooling, can assist children to construct a range of linguistic styles and skills. This can help them to access and perform better in certain social circles more easily than those with a limited linguistic background. The connection between these elements form resource caravans in which each component supports the other for the benefit of individuals in life (Hobfoll, 2011). In the context of this research, this might be explained as the extent to which students are prepared for transition, the kind of social skills and psychological attributes either they possess or learn, and whether schools and universities work jointly to assist student transition and retention (Briggs et al., 2012). On a personal level, however, this can be approached through the way students interact with the new setting relying on their cognitive and behavioural coping skills, and how protective factors (social and family relations) aid students in establishing their goal commitments and community membership.

2.4.4. Psychological properties

2.4.4.1. Emotion regulation

Emotion regulation is the process by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them and how to experience and express them (Gross, 2002). Emotion regulation has its roots in the stress and coping prisms (Gross, 1998). It can, therefore, be classified as emotion-focused coping since it is generated from appraising a stressful situation (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004, p. 763). The task lies in developing an inner capacity to control one's own behaviour accordingly and knowing how and when to act as situations unfold (Gross, 1998). It is the ability of individuals to have perceptions and judgements of their experiences, providing the possibility of having an observer's perspective about the actual event (Lazarus, 1991, p. 16). Emotion regulation involves a set of interrelated processes in which individuals can influence and be influenced (Crocker et al., 2013; Davidson et al., 2003). These processes "attempt to promote adaptation by responding to the pursuit and attainment (or lack of attainment) of individuals' needs, goals, and concerns" (Berenbaun et al., 2003, p. 208).

Research in the cognitive and neurobiological sciences shows that the relationship between cognition and emotion is more interdependent than separate (Crocker et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2009). However, Tuncel has contested this idea and claims that cognition is not central to emotions, but is only one of its aspects (2019, p. 120). From a psychoanalytical perspective, Bainbridge and West (2012), by referring to teaching-learning processes in education, consider the interplay of emotions with both cognitive and behavioural dynamics (p. 8). Lazarus further asserts that emotion "is always a response to cognitive activity, which generates meaning regardless of how this meaning is achieved" (1991, p. 353). This suggests that emotions cannot be disassociated with individuals' coping behaviour, since emotions inform and reflect whether a situation is a threat or benign. Additionally, emotion is the first aspect which is affected during

transition and to engage with change and situational demands, this requires the modulation of negative emotions (Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004, p. 747).

2.4.4.2. Positive beliefs

Positive beliefs in this work are considered as holding optimistic attitudes about the self and considering the positive side of stressful situations. From a psychological level, viewing oneself positively is believed to stimulate an individual's internal locus of control denoting that an individual "is instrumental in his/her own success or failure" (Bean and Eaton, 2002, p. 77). In other words, as an important psychological resource of coping, positivity can make a desirable outcome possible and build trust in oneself (Conlow, 2014; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Studies show that students having more of an internal locus of control can develop better resilience among their year group, demonstrate a higher level of self-efficacy in life skills and manifest higher academic performances (Kronborg et al., 2017; De Caroli and Sagone, 2014; Kutanis et al., 2011).

Similarly, positive beliefs can be associated with the notion of self-efficacy, the view of having high expectancies to fulfil what a person sets out to do (Bandura, 1997). Efficacy, therefore, "is a generative capability in which cognitive, social, emotional, and behavioural sub-skills must be organised and effectively orchestrated to serve innumerable purposes" (Bandura., 1997, p. 36). This determines individuals' coping efforts in mobilising a set of resources to develop the necessary skills to work on pre-established goals. Therefore, positive beliefs trigger the potential to solve daily challenges giving individuals access to their internal locus of control. The latter sustains the development of self-efficacy in managing adversities.

2.4.5. Competencies

2.4.5.1. Problem solving skills [PSS]

Living with uncertainty and problems are inevitable aspects of life, however, it is also an opportunity for development and improvement (Centre for Good Governance, 2006, p. 1). The

ultimate task through PSS is to mitigate issues to achieve the desired goal. This requires the ability to analyse and identify the problem and thoughtful weighing of alternatives with the aim of selecting the appropriate action to achieve the desired outcome (Jervis, 1978). Studies show that students who have PSS strengthen both their innovative behaviour and perceptive opportunities in the context of an entrepreneurial education (Kim et al 2018). Others found that students, who receive peer support in higher education, become more self-aware of their PSS and can identify strategies to improve their university experience (Smith and Burton, 2013). PSS is not only limited to taking actions at the individual level but drawing on these skills is also key in understanding others and developing sustainable social relationships.

2.4.5.2. Social skills

Social skills refer to the ability to exchange information with others and behave compatibly and effectively with the norms that are socially appropriate (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984, p. 163). Developing social skills is perceived as one of the transition competencies enabling successful student transitioning (Clafferty and Beggs, 2016). This competence makes the process of constructing interpersonal relationships more accessible and ultimately allows for the harnessing of social self-efficacy and self-confidence, particularly within unfamiliar settings. Bandura et al. (2001, p. 187) assert that social interconnectedness contributes to people's psychological well-being, implying good mental health, satisfaction, diversity acceptance and a sense of purpose in life. Indeed, researchers indicate that social competencies have a positive connection with self-esteem and negative correlation with both social anxiety and loneliness (Riggio et al., 1990). Others support this claim, arguing that students with social skills are likely to develop more confidence, and implement the appropriate competencies in the teaching process (Daraee et al., 2016).

2.4.6. Environmental resources

2.4.6.1. Social Support

Living in a supportive social network can have a positive impact on individuals' social identity formation. In the context of student transition, social support is regarded as an effective element in protecting student mental health (Alsubaie et al., 2019). Studies demonstrate the importance of social support on individuals' wellbeing, student adjustment and on other student categories regardless of their age and educational level (Vitran et al., 2019; Alsubaie et al., 2019; McMillan, 2013; Tao et al., 2000 Schaefer et al., 1981). Social support in terms of peer mentoring contributes to increasing student behavioural engagement and academic achievement (Virtanen et al., 2019).

Although the individuals' conduct is viewed as a social construct per se (Foucault, 1991; Durkheim, 1982), people can also use society to seek emotional and informational support, including empathy, acceptance, and guidance, to prevent stress and anxiety (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Schaefer, 1981). Notwithstanding, Bainbridge and West (2012), from a psychoanalytical lens, argue that anxiety is an evident reaction in education because it is "a product of very real tensions between how an individual might wish to respond to a situation and psychological, societal, and cultural expectations" (p. 10). Their argument, therefore, causes us to consider ways to co-exist with anxiety in various situations. Because it represents a moment of discomfort, it can also lead to deeper forms of learning, characterised by reflection towards meaning making and seeking solutions (West and Bainbridge, 2012). This can be achieved through, for example, considering experiential circumstances, individual's faculties, external resources, and making use of what has already been learned in life.

2.4.6.2. Taking stock of the 4-S system: Situation, Self, Support, and Strategies

Schlossberg defined the four S system as “a combination of resources that we bring to each transition”, including our reactions and potential resources for coping (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 43). These four components outline “the factors that make a difference in how one can cope with change” (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 61). The former definition implicitly points to the several types of transitions that individuals may experience in life. These include anticipated, unanticipated, non-event and sleeper transitions, which are considered as important aspects in understanding individuals’ experiences of transitions (Goodman et al., 2006; Schlossberg et al., 1995).

This combination takes effect when individuals assess the set of resources, they have in hand in terms of the extent to which these resources can aid them to manage transition (Schlossberg, 2008). This is in line with Lazarus and Folkman’s (1984) cognitive appraisal theory which emphasises that both primary and secondary appraisals are important for the coping process. The four S system is considered to have an interrelated dimension and cannot be distanced from the types of transitions. Schlossberg (2008) explains the four aspects as follows:

Situation stands for the process by which individuals either consciously or unconsciously attempt to understand their actual circumstance. This can be processed through taking a reflexive stance to find out about the characteristics of one’s *Situation* in terms, for example, of their planning for it (anticipation), its timing in their life, the extent to which it is controllable, whether it is permanent or temporary, whether previous experiences can sustain them, and its fitness or impact on the rest of life. Providing answers to these statements enables individuals in the identification of their transitions through meaning-making (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 46).

Self is predominantly about personal characteristics and psychological resources (Anderson et al., 2012). *Self* in this sense refers to individuals' inner strength which allows them to construct their own resilience amid adversities (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 58). In the domain of adults counselling in transition, internal resources are viewed as factors which indicate "the degree by which they (counselees) are optimistic or pessimistic, able to tolerate ambiguity, or inclined to act autonomously" (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 157). Understanding *Self* is identifying the extent to which you trust in your self-esteem and self-efficacy in the perceived stressful situation (Schlossberg, 2008).

Support stands for the ways in which support systems, including intimates, family, friends, strangers, and institution and organisations, assist individuals in deploying their resources through providing them with affection, affirmation, and aid (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 64). Individuals can take stock of their surroundings by evaluating the range of support types they can refer to and assessing which kind of support they need to sustain as transition may variably affect support systems (2008, p. 72).

Schlossberg asserts that "the effective copier is someone who can use many *Strategies* flexibly, depending on the *Situation*" (2008, p. 78). *Strategies* consists of assessing the existing repertoire of coping strategies which previously assisted people in solving specific situations and deciding on the extent to which these strategies are useful, need to be expanded further or whether new ones are required for the actual *Situation* (Schlossberg, 2008). Researching the social origins of personal stress and coping behaviour from people's engagement with daily required pursuits, Pearlin and Schooler (1978) identified three major categories of coping strategies from the 17 coping responses. These include strategies that modify the situation, those that control the meaning of the stressful encounter before experiencing stress and those that control the stress itself after it occurred (p. 6).

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I engaged with the literature, which is informative and relevant for this research, insightful for the interpretation of students' experiences of transition to HE. The literature distinguished between the types of transition which include anticipated, unanticipated, non-event and sleeper transitions. In each type, an individual is likely to encounter specific challenges as the situation unfolds and as his/her environment relationship changes. It also highlighted the extent to which the subject of student transition has been researched across different perspectives and contexts. This is with the aim of identifying a lacuna in research into student transition to higher educational in the Algerian context. The chapter goes on to discuss students' motivations for attending HE and their expectations of the university life before and during transition.

The second part of this chapter has been exclusively dedicated to reviewing a number of transition models and theories. Models of transition are considered in order to understand both the process of transition and the aspects individuals are said to experience during transition. This is with the aim of identifying the essence of students' experiences in terms of persistence and/or attrition from the literature. Furthermore, the chapter articulates transition stages and how each stage impacts a given experience and the way students are able to mitigate a challenging stage and progress from one phase to another. Many transition models share common elements in terms of establishing a membership within the new community after experiencing a set of fluctuations. Vincent Tinto's longitudinal study (1975-2012), however, offers a bipolar dimension in which students can either persist in the new setting or decide to drop out. This is related to value congruence and the longitudinal interaction with both institutional and external social contexts which impact the students' commitments, decisions and movements. One of the apparent facets among these models is that some of them are rooted in the work of Arnold Van Gennep's (1960) *Rites of Passage*, where he explains the process of transition within a macro cultural community. Subsequently, this model has been used to

discuss transitions related to different perspectives including organisational changes and student transition.

The final part of this chapter accounted for the coping behaviour mechanisms individuals can draw on during transitions. It discussed Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) work, amongst others, on psychological stress and coping theory in which they introduced an interrelated form of coping, namely problem and emotion forms of coping. This theory challenged Anna Freud's (1936) assumptions that human coping responses are predominantly triggered by a set of inner defence mechanisms. However, it has been argued that coping is generated through the individuals' cognitive and behavioural efforts for managing adversities. Additionally, Hobfoll's (2011) COR theory has also influenced the coping prism, despite its strong relation to the aforementioned model. The final part of this chapter also highlights a set of strategies and resources that are beneficial for the coping process. These resources are classified into three categories including psychological, competences and environmental. Finally, Schlossberg's (2008) four S system suggests a systematic approach through which individuals can take stock of these elements to achieve a personalised coping behaviour. This approach can be applicable whether a transition is anticipated or not, since every passage is different from one to another and the availability of coping resources vary from one person to another as well.

Chapter 3: Theoretical framework

A mmi leqraya tekfid Dacu yer i k-id-tessuffey Ayen akw i tættbed teyrid Ml-iyi-d ad ak-ferhey	Son, you now completed education Tell me what you've achieved from all the arduous work you did Tell me, I'll rejoice for you
Yenna-d: a baba xtarey Abrid-iw iban-iyi Usiy-d ar yur-k a k-cwirey Fk-d rray-ik eiwn-iyi	He said: father, I chose My path is now at sight I came to consult you Help, give your advice
A mmi baba-k tzegl-it Tezrid ur yriy ara Nek llakul-iw d ddunit Leqlam ur s-zmirey ara	Son, your father! It's late for him You know I'm uneducated Me, my school is life I can't with the pen
(Aït Menguellet, 1983)	(Translation)

Studying at university is just to satisfy my parents who wanted me to consider undertaking studies at university. For them HE is key for my future (Amina: research participant).

3.1. Introduction

From Aït Menguellet's (1983) poem/song and Amina's quote, we can understand the extent to which parents and their children have divergent attitudes about education. The quote portrays an example of the impact of illiteracy on many parents- first generation after independence (1962) in Algeria- who formed 85% of illiteracy rate (UNESCO, 2015). This may cause attitudes about education to take different directions regarding parents and their children. Each group have their own perspective, resulting in various realities within the social context (Dixson, 2001).

Amina's quote can also be understood in relation to Marxist thinking about how individuals' beliefs, desires and actions are determined by factors emerging from the social system in which people are embedded (Pleasants, 2019, p. 4). This also aligns with structuralist thinking within sociology, which claims that human behaviour should be understood in relation to the broader social systems or structures (Calhoun, 2002). Additionally, Durkheim's (1982) concept of *Social Facts* may explain how social norms and values, in forms of social rules and

expectations (Herzog, 2018), impact individuals' choices. It has been argued that people are the product of social conditions (Berger and Luckmann, 2011), and vice versa. Foucault's concept of power is helpful here as it views these social conditions as carrying a kind of power which we rarely question and understand (Kelly, 2013; Foucault and Sheridan, 1977). This is because social conditioning is so embedded within the composition of social life.

Throughout this chapter, I will seek to explore the interplay between social constructionism (suggesting multiple realities), post-structuralist ideas of text and its meanings and Bourdieu's (1986) habitus and cultural / social capital. Bourdieu's work, in this study, will operate as a system of support, sustaining motivation, and of 'keeping on, keeping on' (West 1996, p. 27) amid hardship; however, not as a social reproduction system (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 142-158). This is because Algeria does not have a social class system which generates its capital through production, rather, procuring status (wealth) is dependent on the relationships between businesspeople and political power (Ouaissa, 2021, p. 55). Using different theoretical lenses has the potential to be challenging. However, drawing on various disciplines and paradigms provides opportunity to uncover not only the surface level of experiences but also the 'psychodynamic' insights in which people's actions and 'unconscious processes,' are embedded within 'socio-cultural and historic contexts' (West et al., 2007, p. 14).

Bourdieu's theory is employed in this study in relation to understanding participants' backgrounds. Social constructionism is utilised in the study for the dynamics which characterise researcher-participants interaction. Finally, a post-structuralist lens is used in order to illuminate my interpretations of social realities. In this way, the relationship between the three lenses (even if they seemingly operates in different directions) is as follows: first, meaning resides in the way people may understand situations according to their perspectives and ingroup associations. Second, the way interactions (involving various backgrounds) take place within a social context

generates myriad realities and understanding of the world. Third, the post-structuralist, in this regard, offers a ‘discursive turn’ to understand life histories from various perspectives (West et al., 2007, p. 14). It also attends to not segregating ‘subject’ to ‘object’ in social research because researcher and participants are “co-implicated in the social processes under investigation” (Strain, 1997, p. 370).

The following sections will discuss the interplay between the three lenses, explaining their relevance in undertaking biographical research in this study. In addition, this chapter offers a new model which I title ‘Biographical Structural-Interactional Model in Transition’ [BSITM]. This model provides an explanation of how the social realm moves from a structured to a restructured experience over time. It then describes the ongoing influence of social forces (e.g., families, schools) on people and the way the latter negotiate and generate meanings through reflections and interactions. This, therefore, can open new horizons for further perspectives and insights which can challenge social narratives and at the same time bring new structures and modes of thinking into societies. This model also offers insights into the way individuals construct narratives within the social world, paving the way for narrative continuity and change (Reid and West, 2015). The dialogue between the father and his son, in the opening of this chapter, is an example of how each communicates meaning based on life history and worldview.

The following sections contain ideas which, it could be argued fit better within the methodology chapter. My objective, however, is to weave and explain the interrelationship between my research approach and the theories I consider relevant for explaining the dynamics, which shaped participants’ experiences of transition within the Algerian context.

3.2. The interplay between the theoretical approach and auto/biographical research

Biographical research offers insights, and even signposts, to understand and transcend the often ignored or defended darker side of the human condition, alongside its inspirations (...) to generate insight into people's fears and anxieties but also their capacity to keep on keeping on and to challenge forces that would diminish their and all our humanity (Bainbridge et al., 2021, p. 2)

Biographical research aims to interpret and capture how different systems shape stories. Schools, families, communities, and universities are examples of the ecological interactions which direct narratives (Bainbridge et al., 2021), however, they vary from one person to another. This difference indicates the idea of multiple meanings among people, considering, for instance, their backgrounds, motivations, and views of the world. This takes place from the time people start to interact and exchange ideas within the social context, either between peers or researcher-participants. This results in “a dynamic of co-creation of text or story” grounded in auto/biographical perspectives to understand meanings within life histories (Bainbridge and West, 2012, p. 142).

West developed a psychodynamic approach to research, considering the interaction of the psychosocial perspectives within individuals’ lives. However, his clinical approach is beyond the predetermined interventions, which appear to suspend people’s experiences. Therefore, West’s clinical work is grounded in the auto/biographical method, which considers the emotionality of the person. This creates an inter-subjective practice and space in which both practitioner/researcher and patient/participant contribute to understanding a given situation based on their meanings and different psychosocial drives.

Similarly, the poststructuralist approach, which is epistemologically congruent with the social constructionist worldview (Burr, 1995), is not congruent with the idea of having one single reality or fixed meaning. Jacques Derrida’s (1976) idea of deconstruction, in relation to literary texts and discourse and how text can have multiple meanings, forms the umbrella under which I draw on a poststructuralist worldview. I refer to it to support the idea of diversity of meaning-making throughout individuals’ narratives in identifying, for example, particular instances, which involve similar situations, but differ in results or meanings. The poststructuralist stance views meaning within texts as infinite once they are deconstructed into smaller constituents (Williams, 2005).

Interestingly, Reid and West (2015, p. 178) state that “the same text, or ‘voice’, is shaped by self / other dynamics, including unconsciously, and may be open to diverse readings” through reflexive tasks and interpretations we process. The multiple meanings a text can carry provides significant benefit for auto/biographical research, involving various perspectives on a single subject and at the same time delving into different social realities. In this sense, participants’ narratives and my experience are the *text* on which meanings are derived and interpreted in relation to various social and contextual forces. That is, instead of understanding sociocultural dynamics via literary text, I take our experiences and interpretations as a source of meaning about the research context and its implication on our narratives.

Researching life histories is attempting to understand people’s backgrounds, which can be summarised through Bourdieu’s (1986) concepts: habitus, social and cultural capital, and the field where experiences take place. For example, attending to the five ‘Ws’ and one ‘H’ (who, why, when, where, what and how) in researching human experiences can generate insights into the general structure of a story, including time, context, motivations, factors, dispositions, and challenges. This can provide information about a person’s history in relation to their realities. Bainbridge and West (2012), from a psychoanalytical background, argue that understanding life histories should be further extended to considering people’s inner worlds (e.g., emotions and unconscious dynamics) to understand the interplay between external social structures and subjective experiences (West et al., 2013). Below, I provide an explanation about how Bourdieu’s work will be considered in this study.

3.3. Habitus, social and cultural capital with the actual process of student transition

I aim to employ Bourdieu’s (1986) social reproduction system beyond the trend which argues that people’s engagement with the world is contingent on the culture or social class they belong to. Bourdieu (1990) views these dispositions as “the product of conditionings associated with ... distinctive properties acknowledged as socially desirable” to perform

practices (p. 108-109). He further adds that the idea of habitus is ‘a limited spontaneity’, since it is conditioned by objective (collective/social) structures which become embodied within the subjective (individual). Therefore, the capital (e.g., the economic behaviour) is the product of social conditions (Bourdieu and Turner, 2005, p. 211).

The objective, therefore, is to consider the role of habitus, social and cultural capital within students’ learning journeys. I will explore the very act of transition to university which may bestow on students a form of capital in learning new elements. In this, instead of using Bourdieu’s work as a social reproduction system, I refer to it to understand students as person becoming in terms of development through their educational and transitional journeys.

Moreover, on the idea of person becoming, Ahcène Mezani, in one of his Kabyle songs, attempts to motivate the young generation to consider education and self-instruction as forms of capital and enlightenment. In his text, the singer becomes an educator who urges instruction by saying:

Leqraya t-emal; tina ḍ-rass el-mal.... ma-ta-yrid.... a tenjed gel-hif, mat-etved
ad-ateylted (1960).

education/knowledge liberates the mind; it is the capital If you invest in it,
it is a remedy for mental misery, a way to prosperity. Your efforts will pay off
(translation).

The idea of habitus and capital, therefore, can be acquired assets instead of being transferred, considering the overall essence of life as being an ongoing learning experience even if a person comes from a less privileged background. This can be achieved instead through the ongoing engagement with goal pursuit and other life aspects and the way individuals contribute to constructing knowledge within the social context. Drawing on these, therefore, is a way to understand how students in transition to HE strive to become ‘fish in water’ instead of ‘fish out of water’ (West et al., 2013; Tranter, 2003; Bourdieu, 1990).

Considering habitus and capital as transferable assets, the question in this study does not seek the extent to which these elements are reproduced, rather, the attempt is to understand how people use these dispositions to negotiate new experiences. Or what are the meanings they establish after experiencing the new and how cultural capital, for instance, lies in transitional processes which create in us new backgrounds and values over different stages of life? The journey of learning at school and university, for example, is a set of dispositions which generate in people the necessary knowledge to construct what they want to become in the future. Therefore, instead of considering Bourdieu's theory as a fixed system, I draw on its principles to understand how the actual participants' habitus and capital can be used to mitigate transition. Additionally, this will assist in understanding whether habitus and capital can be enhanced through experiences and meaning making. The following provides further explanation about the place of Bourdieu's work within the thesis.

3.3.1. The place of Bourdieu's argument of higher education and social reproduction within this study

In this thesis, to understand the place of Bourdieu's work on HE and social reproduction, I shall refer to both objective and subjective structures. Both influence the process by means of which *habitus* becomes a consolidated system of structured and structuring dispositions (Bourdieu, 1990). By subjective structures, Bourdieu refers to habitus, but "not individual systems of internalised structures, schemes of perceptions, conception, and action common to all members of the same social group or class" (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 86). These structures have central subjects, which make people share common practices, hence forming groups or what are referred to as social classes. At this level, social inequalities are likely to take place as habitus involves groups who have, for example, an advantage over other groups. However, if these social classes have specific structures on which their assumptions are based, the place of the underlying culture, social values, and principles of the context where habitus takes place seems to be blurred regarding each social group's worldview and practices.

Here, I support Bourdieu's view that HE is a place where social reproduction and inequalities become apparent and perpetual. Indeed, this would contribute to the dissonance, for example, in building strong relationships between students, coming from different social backgrounds, faiths, kinds of education received, and culture within a single university context. Social reproduction within HE is not only apparent within a context in which students have different nationalities, but it is also embodied in settings where people share the same background. Indeed, this study shows clearly how students from the country have differences in social backgrounds. For example, some participants have educated parents and others do not. Ultimately, coming from different structures entails different habits and mindsets, which can only match with those which share similar trajectories or 'collective habitus' (Scambler, 2015).

Although HE is a space for social reproduction, considering the option of the free university in Algeria may render such a phenomenon noticeable in the view that free university attracts students to undertake courses free of charge regardless of their backgrounds. While HE contributes to social reproduction (inequalities), attending a free university promotes more egalitarian participation at university. For example, students who come from advantaged family backgrounds (e.g., economically and intellectually) to undertake a free course are likely to study the same course as those with less privileged backgrounds. This renders university in Algeria, chiefly, a means of achieving goals and self-actualisation even if, in line with Bourdieu's statement, social inequalities among students are likely to manifest over the course of learning at university.

Social class, in this regard, can be problematic within the Algerian context for most of the population's view, considering cultural values and the religious principle which states that there is no difference among people (whether rich or poor, educated or illiterate, advantaged, or disadvantaged groups) except in terms of the degree of *righteousness*. Social class in Algeria, however, can be understood as the result of historical circumstances and experiences

individuals and families have undergone and these shape the current situation of individuals. Since experiences and circumstances cannot be the same for everyone, the outcome comes in the form of diverse backgrounds which differ in some aspects and are the same in others, contingent on what has been experienced and learned. However, they still share the overall objective structures or the cultural structure and social norms which are defined by people's action and interaction, and the way people represent the world. These ideas are not to refute Bourdieu's theory, but rather to attempt to provide some nuances focusing on specific contextual aspects, considering Algeria as a complex setting throughout history in North Africa. Indeed, differences in backgrounds students may bring with them to university can fall into the process of social reproduction, considering the dispositions, norms and values individuals bring with them. West et al., (2013), in this regard, provides a thoughtful understanding of this phenomenon via an holistic and interdisciplinary lens. Their approach is to bring students' backgrounds into coexistence by connecting the intersubjectivity (external social structures and subjective experiences) considering Winnicott's (1971) views of changing experiences of selfhood (West et al., 2013, p. 120). In this way, amid transitional spaces, we "may develop more open, less defended orientations to experience" (West et al., 2013, p. 120). These give rise to a complex process of negotiating who we are and ways of being in the world (West, 1996), which inevitably involves transitions and transformations.

Psychological perspectives show that Bourdieu's work can be utilised beyond the idea that cultures are a fixed reproduction system. For example, West et al. (2013) endorse, through drawing on the interplay between Bourdieu's social theory with ideas related to social attachments and the conception of selfhood, the idea that forms of capital can co-exist within a context regardless of what background (e.g., less privileged background) a person belongs. However, this is contingent on how the wider context (e.g., family, university systems) contributes to strengthening recognition in learners, including aspects of self-confidence, self-

respect, and self-esteem, and through creating ‘good enough’ relationships (West et al., 2013, pp. 123-125). On the one hand, their work can be viewed as a critique of Bourdieu’s social theory in impeding new forms of habitus and capital to emerge. On the other, it highlights the extent to which Bourdieu’s work can have an interplay with other disciplines in researching individuals, for example, in becoming aware of their selfhood over their lifelong learning.

Interestingly, considering transition as a process of learning (construction of capital) may align with Carl Rogers’s (1951) view of self-enhancement and Erik Erikson’s psychological stages of development (1997). Rogers explains the idea of self-enhancement as a continuous nonlinear process, involving struggle and challenge (1951, p. 490). This also includes a process by which selfhood is developed through reflection and reinterpretation, which enables individuals to recover from hardship, experience change and develop (Perera, 2020; Rogers, 1951). Erikson, on the other hand, provides eight stages of psychological development over the lifespan, however, these stages are characterised by permanence as his theory involves a set of binaries, which are contingent on the outcome of the first stage and then progress accordingly.

In my view, this universal approach to ego development contradicts Rogers’s concept of self-enhancement as it involves a fluid process, considering the mind as an asset which develops over time and through experience. Furthermore, Erikson’s view of an individual’s success as the result of attending to social mores has been criticised in relation to the way some patterns of relationships within society may constrain individuals to perform tasks (Bainbridge and West, 2012; Tennant, 1997, p. 34).

Indeed, attempting, for example, to move from one habitus and capital to another - as we will see in the coming chapters - with the aim of reaching one’s potential may pose a significant challenge to people. This is due to the presence of psychosocial perspectives, which generally constrain individuals to perform tasks which do not align with the social narrative (West and Bainbridge, 2012). For example, Lynda and Amina (research participants) wanted to undertake

a vocational course instead of university, but their parental attitudes were not congruent with those of the participants.

At this level, the chance to hear such personal information is a privilege but one that requires the researcher to establish strong relationships and consider how to create a “good enough space” (West and Reid, 2015, p. 5) where people can overtly share their experiences and become involved in generating narratives with others. Vygotsky argues that the construction of knowledge is contingent on the presence of an environment which can stimulate cognitive functioning through interactions. One of his well-known concepts is the *Zone of Proximal Development* [ZPD] (Vygotsky et al., 1978, p. 84), which stands for the distance between what learners can achieve by themselves, their actual development, and what they can achieve with the help with others (Alanazi, 2016 p. 2). Therefore, such social-relational interactions moderate the development of thought processes, including knowledge exchange, using pertinent language and artefacts (Bainbridge and West, 2012, p. 11).

The idea that meaning and knowledge are social constructs, involving the creation of distinctive sense-making through which we express ourselves (Gergen, 2015) is of paramount importance in this study. This allows various perspectives to interact, understand and generate knowledge about the world. Burr, in this regard, states:

If our knowledge of the world, our common ways of understanding it, is not derived from the nature of the world as it really is, where does it come from? The social constructionist answer is that people construct it between them. It is through the daily interactions between people in the course of social life that our versions of knowledge become fabricated. Therefore, social interaction of all kinds, especially language, is of great interest to social constructionists (2015, p. 4-5).

The ongoing interaction among social members offers a dynamic space where communication and negotiation of meaning and complex matters can take place. SCo, in this regard, does not merely help people to mutually generate knowledge, but also maximises the development of individuals’ construction of collective meaning and artifacts. In order to allow

interpretation of participants' views and experiences of transition, I will utilise post-structuralist view of text as open to various readings.

3.4. Texts: meanings and interpretations

The inclusion of the post-structuralist stance does not have the aim of freezing the function of the auto/biographical approach, but rather to empower the idea of the intersubjective dimension while working with people's narratives. For instance, the expression "God's will", for example, used by Farida and Rezki (research participants) is interpreted from different perspectives, including religious, function in discourse, cultural, active, and passive coping behaviours. The fact that both participants' narratives are different, the phrase "God willing" was used differently when I read between the lines (Poland and Pederson, 1998) and when I drew on my background as we share the same sociocultural context.

Identifying various readings of a text requires engagement and understanding of participants' circumstances and how events are connected to each other. Thus, auto/biographical research allows participants' narratives and that of researchers to come together as a text, communicating various levels of meanings. Drawing on the function of the phrase 'God's will' within participants' discourse can be a pertinent example to explain how text can be consciously and unconsciously driven (Reid and West, 2015) and at the same time how a single idea can have different readings and functions.

Considering the theoretical lenses, I referred to in this chapter, I offer a transition model based on my understanding of the dynamics which shape societies over time similar to what happens within the ecosystem (e.g., seasons). In this regard. Aït Menguellet, throughout his poetic texts, writes:

Yenna-d umyar:
(...) Ayen d-ıderrun
Xas akken-nniden
Yedra-d zik yakan

The wise man said:
“(...) All what's coming to existence
even if in a relative way
This has previously happened

Ur tesaq d acu i d-yennulfan
(Aït Menguelett, 2005)

There's nothing novel (...)"
(Translation)

This model is based on three elements: the dynamics between individuals' (internal) and social (external) values, the effect of value incongruence, and the regenerative process. It considers the relationships between, for example, (a) social/contextual structures, including the power of values within groups, (b) The kind of dispositions that Bourdieu (1986) referred to as habitus, cultural and social capital, which individuals have in their societies, and (c) individuals' interactions, negotiations, and appraisal processes. The latter provides insights into how individuals either critique situations or mitigate challenges.

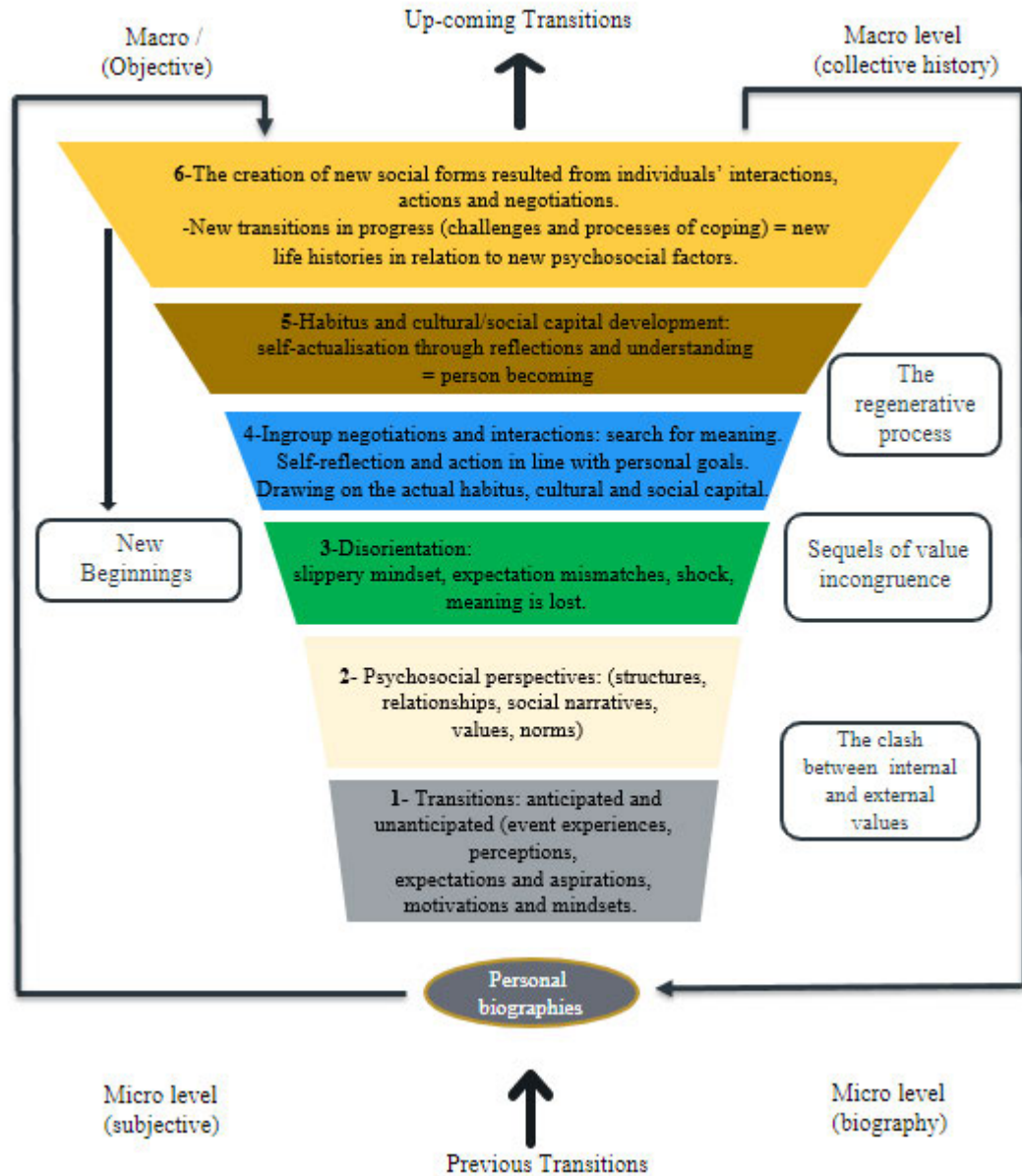


Figure 6: A Biographical Structural-Interactional Transition Model [BSITM]

The way stories communicated different meanings and views in relation to the individual and social world in the Algerian context provided the opportunity to bring different aspects into a range of stages within personal biographies. These stages can operate and be applicable across different contexts, considering the timeline (past, present, and future) of social change.

The diagram demonstrates the ongoing changes which sociocultural settings undergo as a result of transitions which individuals experience over time. From the diagram, we can understand that the model cannot take effect, unless the fourth phase is in progress. This

suggests that individuals should be actively involved, both in terms of the inner and outer world, to understand the implications of a given situation and to negotiate ways in which a given circumstance can be approached and solved. This provides people with the opportunity to engage with different meanings and the ability to construct a suitable approach in managing, for instance, contextual challenges.

Previous and up-coming transitions in the diagram are suggestive of the timeline in which transitions occurred and will occur, implying changes in peoples' behaviours, attitudes and contextual norms in general. Social change, in this sense, is open to possibilities for both new dynamics which may contribute to positive development or potential deterioration. This is analogous to the ecosystem in which, for example, climate change can affect people's lifestyles on both counts. Similarly, considering the individual and social drives, both controllable (thoughts, self) and uncontrollable (social conditions) aspects shape individuals' life histories (West and Bainbridge, 2012).

While the model suggests a static movement of events overtime from a micro to a macro level inversely, the difference resides in transitions - experienced and to be experienced - and the kind of perceptions and aspirations people hold and develop. The latter are likely to change in every social setting due to several reasons, such as globalisation, and the media, which indeed made connections and exchange easier, however, at a cost. Such systems became uncontrollable and powerful; uncontrollable in terms of their hegemony in conquering, for instance, the 'inner space' of individuals (West and Reid, 2015, p. 1). This, therefore, influences people's thinking, attitudes and other life considerations (Ambirajan, 2000), as forms of power are multiple, discursive and omnipresent (Foucault and Gordon, 1980, p. 246; Foucault and Sheridan, 1977).

3.4.1. BSIT Model: evolution and application

This model is chiefly developed following empirical work, based on the idea of diversity in perspectives, exchange of experiences and meanings with participants and also with reference to literature. Although it evolved from intersubjective experiences and interactions, it has a significant potential since it portrays the dynamics that characterised participants' experiences along with my own regarding what we went through, thought and acted according to the transition we experience within the Algerian sociocultural context. This premise can be applicable to various situations where there is a conflict between the inner and outer worlds.

Referring to the participants' narratives, the model provides potential projections about the relationship between students' motivation and HE participation rates, which may challenge the dominant narrative about the importance of HE after school. To recall, four participants out of ten had no intention of enrolling at university and previously, I would have considered taking a sporting pathway if my school had a student advisory service to help students make the most appropriate choice for them after school. This should not be neglected even if it had emerged from a small sample; it presents a significant change in thinking within a micro level. For me, the latter is a source which moderates the appearance of new narratives and modes of viewing the world.

I view this as a prominent idea in the data and will be a recurrent one in Chapter Seven in particular. Ultimately, I take the criteria of motivations and education as examples to emphasise the need for new policies which can create multiple spaces for different students' needs and motivations beyond school and into HE. It urges directing what Honneth's (1995) work refers to as recognition to promote students' good relationships, first with themselves, which can benefit the wider context in reducing, for example, social conflicts. Secondly, it explains how change and transitions occur within a society embedded within peoples' experiences, moving from a micro to a macro level.

The model, therefore, sets out potential steps through which social change occurs over time in relation to individuals' worldviews, the construction of meaning within ingroups and how this can have the potential to expand and result in new narratives within a society. In addition, with the rapid development of technology and communication, it can render the process quicker as people are more widely connected. Even if the model is the result of the nature of participants' stories of transitions and my interpretations, embedded within the Algerian sociopolitical-cultural dynamics, it provides glimpses around change on a larger scale regarding both micro and macro levels.

To illustrate how this model can operate from a micro-to a macro level needs reference in relation to how social structures and subjective experiences can operate on the same level. Here, individuals' motivations and worldviews about, for example, social inequalities and hardship are at the heart of the process. In Chapter One, I referred to the 'Hirak' (mass movement) in Algeria in 2019. This is a strong example which portrays the operation of the BSIT model about social change rooted in people's agreement in challenging the system by calling for new consistent structures in which everyone should find a space in which to fit. Considering the core of this movement, we find that it stemmed from individuals whose psychosocial experiences converge in many instances, involving proactive criticality and analyses of the current situation within the Algerian sociopolitical system. This resulted in an ingroup shared narrative, which was quickly viewed as an expansion through social media platforms. Ergo, this allowed people, to mutually agree on the importance of denouncing publicly through a mass movement the hardship most Algerians are facing to urge new pertinent measures that can aid people in having a better life.

3.5. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I established a theoretical framework, which I suggest provides insights into how to connect various aspects of auto/biographical research, such as the intersubjective experiences in understanding the world. I drew on three fundamental areas, including Bourdieu's habitus, cultural and social capital in relation to participants' life histories, the social constructionist view of generating knowledge and meaning through individuals' interaction and finally, the 'discursive turn' within the post-structuralist tradition in viewing texts as having multiple readings. Considering these, it will be possible to engage with narratives at different levels with the aim of generating understandings in relation to contextual factors, participants' perspectives, and my interpretations.

Additionally, I generated a Biographical Structural Interactional Transition Model which explains the regenerative process which societies undergo because of the dynamics (reflection, interaction, negotiation) which happen within small ingroup relationships. This creates new meanings and even challenges social structures and narratives. It results in moving from a structured to a restructured society over time as to what happens in the ecosystem. The social narrative that education should be an important stage people have to consider is one of the cultural themes within the Algerian context. This has been called for in different forms (e.g., songs). However, not all individuals share the same attitude, particularly in relation to attending HE, considering personal motivations and drives. I consider this model as a valuable tool to understand social change and explore other topics, involving any relationships between people and their contexts. These two are unlikely to diverge as they are interrelated.

The next chapter focuses on mapping the methodological approach I aim to employ to investigate student transition into HE. It considers auto/biographical narrative inquiry as its underlying methodology which informs the different aspects I engage with in the fieldwork.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

S-y-issem n-Allah anevdu asefru a poem Yer Rebbi ad yelhu, ad inadi deg lwedyat it'll travel far Wi t-islan ard a t-yaru, ur as-iverru write it and remember it W' illan d elfahem yezra-t. it.	In the name of Allah, I begin God will bless it, that's why Anyone who hears it, s/he'll And the wise will understand it.
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(Mohand-ou-Mhand and Mammeri, 1969). (translation)

My main motivation is to realise one of my dreams which is having overseas experiences and exploring the richness of the world through travelling (Farida: research participant)

4.1. Introduction

The ability of individuals to symbolise their experiences through language reflects the essence of human nature (Seidman, 1998, p. 2). Experiences are those events that shape individuals' lives, typically comprising both good and challenging situations in forms of biographies. The biographical turn, then, is a paradigm shift which challenges the mainstream model which demarcates how to understand the world without reference to the intersubjective dimension of people's perspectives and the social realm (West and Reid, 2015). Many approaches (e.g., realism) to researching people and cultures appear to have a critical position in relation to contemporary societies and cultures, characterised by mobility, change and uncertainty (Bauman, 2000).

Dewey (1938) reminds us, through stories, the teller aims to make meaning and deduce the educative significance of a given experience. Experience is therefore a learning journey through which individuals can construct new capital (e.g., via a process of search for meaning) and understand their selfhood within macro contexts via continuity and interaction. Ultimately, in order to further understand people's interaction with their communities, I will draw on an auto/biographical narrative inquiry approach. This is with the aim of exploring the interplay

between the macro (social forces and history) and micro (inner worlds) in generating meaning (West et al., 2007, p. 279).

The ‘narrative turn’, therefore, provides the opportunity to understand the dynamics which shape the world, and individuals/groups’ life histories in relation to sociocultural drives (West and Reid, 2015; Polkinghorne, 1988). Undertaking narrative research, then, reflects the nature of life wherein people experience, live and tell stories of their lives and how researchers inquire, collect, tell stories and write narratives of experiences (Clandinin and Connelly, 1990, p. 2). At this level, auto/biographical narrative inquiry gives the merit “to tell and retell stories in our efforts to break with the taken-for-granted in our lives” (Saleh et al., 2014, p. 271).

There are a range of scholarly works that develop understanding around the meaning of undertaking narrative research (Cresswell, 2012; Webster and Metrova, 2007; Kramp, 2004; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Each attempts to describe the process that the researcher should consider for conducting an effective narrative research. Narrative research is not confined to a particular discipline, but it is widely used in a variety of domains such as nursing, occupational therapy and education (Riessman and Quinney, 2005). The flexible aspect of narrative inquiry [NIn] (the possibility of generating knowledge via stories and experiential exchange) provides the inquirer with the opportunity to explore subjects within a range of contexts and understand how events are related one to another from individuals’ perspectives embedded in sociocultural dynamics.

Exploring students’ stories of transition into HE is approached through the lens of Clandinin and Connelly’s (2000) narrative inquiry strategies. Although their work has been viewed as not telling researchers what to do (Speedy, 2008, p. 58), it is still a fieldwork experience which provides insights into, for instance, how and what aspects researchers need to consider prior to, during and after undertaking fieldwork. For example, they refer to the

importance of reflecting on ways to be useful to participants and considering different drawbacks within Nin, such as narrative ownership.

Throughout this chapter, I aim to provide a detailed account related to the methods and methodology I implemented over the processes of data collection and interpretation. The chapter consists of three main components: methodology, methods, and the process of comprehension procedures. The former is more theoretical in terms, for example, of research tools and plans I used to access the setting, recruiting participants and what ethical issues and attitudes I encountered. The second includes a range of headings to explain the rationale for using a particular approach and shedding light on the aspects that contributed to shaping the process. For example, considering my position as a researcher within a context of qualitative research and the way participants and I interacted, negotiated meaning and established relationships in the fieldwork. The final part focuses on the comprehensive tools I selected for understanding participants' narratives. It also shows how the inquiry was processed chronologically, weighing up the nuances which shaped the process of this research. Below is an explanation of the rationale behind considering auto/biographical narrative inquiry in relation to students' experiences of transition to university.

4.2. Why Auto/biographical narrative inquiry?

In the social sciences, a researcher is likely to undertake narrative research regardless of the approach he/she adopts (Andrews et al, 2008, p. 1). The inquirer is always on the move from one stage to another which can be viewed as a narrative account of the process. However, working with human beings, it is quite difficult if not impossible to surpass our senses albeit this can be viewed as a critical aspect within research (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 181). The interrelated relationship between the various components, particularly researchers' and participants' histories (West, 2007) give a significant merit for narrative research to take place from an auto/biographical perspective.

Adopting a narrative approach to investigate student transition is related to the fact that phenomena can mark unforgettable and significant moments in life, which can be retold in an interactive setting (West and Reid, 2015). In everyday speech, we always talk about transitions (the day I moved to this city, the time I was given my first job, when I was a little child) to relate specific events to others moving backwards and forwards in time. Consequently, we are constantly producing narratives based on our experiences in life and in relation to the factors which shape and impact our lives. Humans cannot live without making stories as from these, humans can make meaning. Gottschall states “we are, as a species, addicted to story. Even when the body goes to sleep, the mind stays up all night, telling itself stories” (2012, p. 9). We can understand that the overwhelming aspect of human life is living side-by-side with narratives which reflect interpretations of human actions and thinking.

Educational transitions are among the stages individuals are likely to go through at the micro level. Engaging with people in relation to this topic consists of exchanging ideas and experiences based on personal background, considering the interplay between the five ‘Ws’ and one ‘H’ (who, what, why, where, when, and how) in generating a meaningful story. This results in the emergence of a transactional process by which individuals contribute to co-creating narratives, infused by intersubjective dynamics. This feeds into the endeavour in understanding “the whole human being” both at different levels, such as thinking and emotions (Bainbridge and West, 2011, p. 10).

Moreover, the field of social sciences was revised at the beginning of the 1970s around qualitative inquiry questioning the principles of the positivist hegemony in doing research and generating knowledge (Schwandt, 2000). Since then, the idea of undertaking research mainly in relation to researcher and participants has offered new insights and new forms of undertaking inquiry beyond the realist mainstream. Therefore, I view Merrill and West’s (2009, p. 75) principles of regarding positionality within biographical research (e.g.: textualism, subjectivity

and dialogical positioning of the researcher) to be among the aspects which will shape this study. These promote a holistic understanding of the subject in relation to various life histories in addition to the possibility of delving into the inner realm of people's lives. After all, they are the ultimate subjects who can make meaning and forms of understanding based on their life stories (Coulter and Smith, 2009; Feldman et al., 2004).

The fact that the social sciences involve humans and their relations with themselves and their environment, means that the notion of 'experience' is considered as central for all social science inquiry (Clandinin and Connelley, 2000, p. xxiii). The purpose of undertaking fieldwork is to bring about new understandings and ways of approaching the research topic. In so doing, inquirers ask people to give their views and experiences in order to seek fresh perspectives on what researchers have documented or to generate new insights based on fieldwork data. Emphasis on experience paves the way to achieving an authentic account of how a given phenomenon shapes peoples' lives. The surest method through which to ensure this is through inquiring into people's narratives. Ultimately, inquiring into experiences without emphasis on narratives, is likely to lose some substantial meaning which individuals create or add through retelling of those experiences.

Narratives can be located within different periods of time and consequently, they are prone to change depending on the context and circumstances in which individuals live. In this, Czarniawska (2004, p. 13) states that "whole communities as well as individual persons are engaged in a quest for meaning in 'their life', which will bestow meaning on particular actions". Subsequently, people are likely to use their memories to recall some events in the past which may connect to some events in the present, and possibly may also shape some aspects of the future, in the form of an account. Working with narratives necessitates an explicit presence and a mutual relationship between the participants and the inquirer to succeed in understanding the research subject from their own perspectives.

My wish to undertake an auto/biographical narrative inquiry was shaped by the poor quality of transitions I experienced at school and, particularly, transition into HE. Little, in terms of how to handle education transitions, was communicated to me or other students. Therefore, the act of transition was not given explicit preoccupation (e.g., in schools) as a process to enable learners to understand its potential impact and its relationship to the context, where a particular transition happens, and shapes people's behaviour. Consequently, my understanding was not complete because some substantial knowledge was missing. The lack of preparation before engaging in a new transition caused issues such as losing momentum and dislocation in every phase of transition, and this resulted in me enduring several challenging moments from both a psychological and social perspective. Therefore, the main motivation towards adopting a narrative inquiry approach (drawing on biographical methods) was informed by my personal experiences of educational transitions and wishing to better understand the extent to which this phenomenon still persists. I ultimately wanted to seek the realities individuals would communicate based on their biographies.

Furthermore, Merrill and West (2009) deduced that researchers who use biographies as a source of data usually work with marginalised people, to give meaning to their lives. I concur with this claim, although in this context people may not experience marginalisation per se; the present inquiry involves people who do not receive adequate support from HE institutions during their transition. Therefore, this can be considered as an academically marginalised population. This premise seems to carry a strong claim if I apply it to the relationship between students and experiencing issues with transition. However, the data provides another concept (student being ignored) which may align with what Merrill and West considered as marginalised groups.

Additionally, West's (2009) work on marginalised groups, within family learning programs, highlights different dimensions in relation to the complex circumstances in which

groups might be involved. This study may partially relate to the idea of marginalisation in relation to the way students experience transition within a margin, considering the scarcity of support services within HE institutions in Algeria. Some participants felt that students were ignored (e.g.: Yacine) and the circumstances in which they experienced transition were not only clear but outside of their control. I refer to the term marginalisation because the students' experience can be viewed as involving an educational deprivation by which they were not given suitable support. To establish a meaningful course of action on which I draw to collect stories, the following sections highlight the approach of NIn in the fieldwork.

4.3. Researching life histories via narrative inquiry

4.3.1. Overview

The emergence of narrative inquiry methodology is based on the work of many scholars including Polkinghorne (1988); Lakoff and Johnson (1980) and Dewey (1938). Their assumptions cover various aspects that are necessary for conducting research, which ensures the foundations of NIn are methodologically rigorous and ethical. NIn is "...a process, a narrator or participant telling or narrating, and a product, the story or narrative told" (Kramp, 2004, p. 104). It does not consist merely of inquiring into people's stories about a given subject, rather it has layers of significant aspects that researchers need to consider, such as the relationship and cooperation between researcher and participants, power relations and ethical attitudes. This directs attention towards the nuances which reside in the narratives, referred to as understanding "the overall form or Gestalt of lives" from the individuals' perspectives (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 136).

The 'Gestalt of life' can be understood by capturing participants' perceptions about their experiences in conjunction with their motivation and values towards achieving goals. It should also be in line with the historical and cultural context, which shapes experiences, and the fact that those factors are also reflected in people's discourses (Gergen, 1999). Such psychosocial

drives can be communicated by means of stories, which “reflect and constitute the dialects of power relations and competing truths within the wider society” (West and Reid, 2015, p. 2). In this, one of the important aspects researchers need to consider is developing attentiveness in listening without interruption and judgmental attitudes. These were said to impact the interviewee Gestalt through imposing the researcher’s relevancies (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

A narrative becomes the phenomenon studied in inquiry as this provides a way of thinking about experience as a story. Conducting research using this style of methodology is to take a position within a particular vision which considers experience itself as a phenomenon of research (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p. 477). Student transition into HE is ultimately a series of life experiences that individuals embed into their life histories.

The criteria for "good" narrative inquiry are constantly under development (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p. 478), however, researchers need to develop “good enough” space and relationships for researching life histories (West et al., 2013, p. 121). To achieve this task in the field, below I draw on Clandinin and Connelly’s procedural assumptions in processing NIn in the field.

4.3.2. The process of undertaking narrative inquiry

Clandinin and Caine (2008, p. 542) define NIn as a continuously reflexive and reflective methodological process by which researchers inquire instantly into his/her experiences before, during and after each inquiry. This is a way of helping research participants as the researcher can share some of their experiences, raising aspects of empathy and positive rapport during the process (Prior, 2017). The aim of gathering real-life and lived experiences is to promote an understanding of the outcome of interpretation over explanation (Kramp, 2004). Inquiring into students’ experience of transition does not require the researcher to set out to discover why a

particular event has happened or the causes of a given situation. Rather, the objective is to understand the participants' meaning making processes amid contextual challenges.

4.3.3. Narrative inquiry in the field

Whereas many research methods begin the process of data collection as soon as participants are recruited, a narrative inquiry methodology requires considering some aspects before researchers engage with their participants. One of the features I learned from my experience in the fieldwork, using a narrative approach, was giving the appropriate time for conducting research involving human participation. In other words, attempting to hasten the process would potentially lead to creating a controlled environment and triggering distress in participants. This would be helpful neither for them nor for the objectives of this research. Being aware of these aspects was important in undertaking fieldwork with minimal risks and disappointments. Below are pivotal elements I considered before engaging with research participants in the field. They consist of practical preparations and being aware of ways of doing before, during, and after data collection.

4.3.4. Negotiating relationships

Researcher-participant relationships are “at the heart of thinking narratively” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 189). Establishing ‘good enough’ relationships is a crucial element to emphasise as this gives each understanding of what his/her role consists of (Berry, 2016). Making the necessary preparations and actions, such as the way to approach individuals before interviewing, ensuring participation would not cause any harm to participants and bringing respondents into their comfort zone, was a requisite step to establish a non-threatening environment. Relationships may stand as a sensitive aspect to manage within any inquiry, especially if both researchers and participants engage in face-to-face conversation. Below, I explain my attitudes towards establishing positive relationships with participants.

Relationships may not be predictable or easy to establish at the outset. This is related to “the perceived power differential in the narrative research interview (that) generally favours the researcher who is often believed by the participant to be the expert in something” (Josselson, 2007, p. 546). The researcher is supposed to gain understandings from respondents and, therefore, roles should be reversed. To reduce power relations, it is important to acknowledge the central position participants have in the research, as well as the fact that they are the only ones who can provide substantial information about their experiences. It is crucial to negotiate and balance power relations, for example, by sharing personal information about my experiences, hence allowing exchange from both counts.

Researchers need also to consider the possibility of being within the boundaries of the Hawthorne effect (Oswald et al., 2014). Participants should understand that the researcher’s knowledge or study level should not exert any undue influence or place the participants in a situation in which they are obliged to tell what the inquirer expects to hear from them. During the interviewing process, some participants’ (e.g., Yacine) answers did not match the direction of the questions because their experiences were characterised by other elements they considered important. Therefore, instead of indicating that their answers are not reflecting the aims of the question, I let them carry on talking about their experiences in order not to impact the actual narrative.

Trust was also a crucial element in balancing our positions. Trust was key in terms of our cooperation, as well as the negotiation of meaning. I also believe that trust is a pertinent aspect to break down all barriers and misunderstandings, especially between people who meet for the first time for a particular reason. Additionally, having conversations with potential participants before undertaking interviews was among the useful strategies I drew on to establish trust. This was related to the way we allowed time for relationships to settle down in understanding each other’s position via pre-interview engagement. In this way, respondents would gain

assurance and an idea about who am I and what my attitudes and objectives are before participation.

Moreover, considering how to be useful for participants during the interviewing process was also an important aspect of undertaking narrative research (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). This can be reflected in the way interpersonal dynamics play out throughout the process. It is important to develop the ability to engender confidence in participants while they share personal narratives. To do this, I needed to contain situations by listening empathetically without displaying any judgmental attitudes (Josselson, 2007) because personal experiences are unique cases that may provoke complex and painful emotions.

The most overwhelming situations that some of my participants shared was the fact that their transition turned upside down because they could not achieve their plans after completing school. Subsequently, their aspirations were altered, and this significantly affected their university experience to have an unsuccessful dimension in some way. At this level, I shared some of my previous aspirations (e.g., the possibility of becoming an athlete instead of a university student), explaining how this did not concretise because my institution did not advise accordingly considering my overall performance. Therefore, speaking about my school and university experiences was quite useful as our experiences overlapped in terms of how we experienced unpredictable change. Being aware of such complexities helped to establish positive attitudes and good enough relationships based on mutual exchange and acceptance of each other.

4.3.5. Negotiating research puzzles

Research puzzles consist of identifying the core elements and the purpose of undertaking the research. It was not a strategy through which participants were told what to do or what to share, but a phase where participants were positioned in a particular frame to reflect on their own experiences. This offered to participants the opportunity to understand the rationale of

their contribution and the objectives of the research in terms of what I aim to achieve through investigating this topic. Clandinin and Caine (2008) refer to research puzzles as the aspects which both researcher and participants need to negotiate before starting interviewing. In other words, clarifying any ambiguities related to the research and making sure respondents understand the objectives of their participation and those of the research in general. In this way, contextualisation of the subject was to help participants to situate themselves in the process. This also facilitated the process of cooperation and construction of meaning. However, participants' consent, which Clandinin and Connelly (2000) suggest is controversial in NIn, was required prior to each interview.

4.3.6. Consent

From an ethical perspective, asking participants for their consent prior to undertaking fieldwork was a necessary step. This, however, is viewed as influencing researcher-participant relationships because issues of the signature may pose concerns and discomfort for people (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Nevertheless, having consent from participants was not the primary goal to start with, rather, establishing positive relationships and trust were helpful options in making participants feel comfortable and open for discussion. In this study, participants' consent is the result of flourishing relationships and negotiations.

It was also an option which offered time for participants to assess the extent to which their consent would harm them or not. In addition, matters of confidentiality and anonymity were recurrent during conversations to assure participants' safety in terms of not being identified and their contribution would be used only for this research. This task was beneficial in two ways. First, participants had the possibility to understand their experiences and how these evolved in relation to contextual factors. Second, it helped me to understand and locate their stories within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, as explained below.

4.4. Three-Dimensional Narrative Inquiry Space

Three-dimensional narrative inquiry space refers to the way in which inquirers frame participants' stories and meanings in relation to specific directions, for example, back and forth in time, feelings and perspectives. Additionally, I attempted to locate these aspects (backwards/forwards and inward/outward) in relation to the personal and the social aspects of the experiences to preserve their contextual meanings (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 54). This, for instance, can be located in the data in which a participant (Lynda) was overwhelmed in her transition because she could not realise what she planned after completing school. Recalling memories made her think (inward) that her university experience was a path towards failure in life: "my future is in danger". Moreover, living with the situation was hard as her family was one of the social factors (outward) which, to a larger extent, caused her non-event (Schlossberg, 2009) transition. However, undergoing such circumstances provided her with the potential to develop not only her understanding but also having attachment to accomplish her initial objectives in the future (forwards) even if attending university was not her ultimate choice.

Initially, these criteria were derived from the Deweyan work *Experience and Education* in which he studied experience in terms of situation, continuity, and interaction (Dewey, 1938). From this perspective, people are constantly living in a range of events over time within the environment. The latter consists of layers of conditions which interact with personal needs, desires, purposes, and capacities to create the lived experience (Dewey, 1938, p. 44). Appealingly, understanding such triadic relationship (situation, continuity, and interaction) which form the experience, Dewey provides a candid explanation in which he states:

The statement that individuals live in a world means, in the concrete, that they live in a series of situations. And when it is said that they live *in these situations*, the meaning of "in" is different from its meaning [...]. It means once more, that interaction is going on between an individual and objects and other persons. The conceptions of *situation* and of *interaction* are inseparable from each other. An experience is always what it is because of a transaction

taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment [...] (1938, p. 43).

These dimensions are the localities that shape individual experiences and NIn takes these boundaries to understand the meaning people make about their lives in relation to social and cultural boundaries, space and time. It is through these localities that experiences are unique. In West's (1996) words, "we may be culturally conditioned as people to think, even feel, in certain ways, but the impact varies from person to person" (p. 140). Ultimately, it is not only a matter of collecting students' narratives about the way they negotiate transition but also of paramount importance to attend and consider the uniqueness of stories. NIn is unlikely to reflect its purpose and objectives if there is no exploration of the three simultaneous dimensions. These enable us to understand a given experience and provide information about its evolution in terms of how it was before, how it is occurring in the present and how it may develop in the future in relation to social and spatial aspects (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). Below, I shall briefly explain these with reference to their salience in this study.

4.4.1. Temporality

On the surface level, the term temporality refers to the fact that living an experience has a time frame. However, it considers that life is experienced on a continuum (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 19). Fraser (2015) refers to this as 'moments of being' wherein people experience change and/or instability on a spectrum, hence they undergo transformations (e.g., behaviours, attitudes, actions) due to ongoing experiences (Fraser, 2015, p. 27). The intersection of these elements makes experiences interwoven over time and by understanding such connections, people can narrate and provide a meaningful story of their lives.

On a practical level, researchers should consider not only the need to understand experiences within a particular timescale, but also provide a focus on how a given experience is shaped by the past, the present and how it will contribute to shape the future (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). This is because events are prone to change at different points

within individuals' lives; consequently, different actions and reactions emerge from one state to another. This creates fluidity in storytelling while connecting the past to the present and into the future (Wang and Geale, 2015). This required me to engage in a constant reflection upon participants' meanings and uniqueness of their experiences, involving interconnected dynamics over time.

For example, the result of having conversations with participants helped to understand how participants coped with the university, managing expectation mismatches, and the way, for example, their perspectives changed from one setting to another. Temporality, in this sense, serves to highlight the underlying events which simultaneously shaped participants' experiences. Therefore, the interpretation or retelling of their stories should attend to the context of the storyteller's physical location, events and activities taking place in that context (Wang and Geale, 2015). Another important aspect is that narrative content should manifest a temporal picture and a sense of a told story, having some chronological and logical occurrence (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

4.4.2. Sociality

Sociality refers to how researchers can attend to both individuals' thoughts and feelings and understand how social structures and processes impact individuals' lives (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006, p. 480). Sociality, therefore, has to do with a triadic relationship, including personal conditions, social conditions, and participants-researcher relationships in addition to the inquirer's constant reflection throughout the process. The role of the inquirer is to capture and describe the inward condition (subjective) of participants, such as feelings, hopes, desires, moral dispositions, and their aesthetic reactions and attitudes about situations.

Understanding personal conditions was a key element which provided early hints about the nature of participants' narratives. The previous example of Lynda's experience of transition is a pertinent illustration to refer to. It was apparent from the beginning when the participant

revealed that her ultimate objective was not a university experience, but just “to satisfy” her parents. Her objectives, therefore, were undermined and her journey in HE was a mere unwanted interim. Understanding social conditions provide the possibility to establish a link between participants’ subjective experiences and their community (objective). In this case, Lynda’s social conditions during her transition were not helpful for her established aspirations because her family influenced her decision in enrolling at university. This was also worsened by a lack of clarity and academic counselling within the university context.

Considering sociality in research is to connect the outer and inner worlds, which are salient for understanding participants’ stories. Moreover, this provides valuable details to consider in retelling a story as accurately as possible. It is also a way to attend to the requirements of an ethically-sound narrative inquiry methodology.

4.4.3. Place

Connelly and Clandinin (2006) define the third dimension as outward or “the specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place where the inquiry and events take place” (p. 481). The term place may refer to a specific space or sequence of locations/places which play a role in shaping both life experiences and the inquiry. The importance of place in NIn is seen in the way in which any event cannot be disassociated from its setting, which has its particularities and values in shaping the evolution of an event (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006). Place is an important element while retelling narratives as it plays a role in acknowledging the relevance of the contextual aspects which contribute to shaping a given experience.

For instance, I investigated the subject of transition into HE considering both campus-based and off-campus students’ narratives. Here, we can account for a sequence of places which were involved in this research. On the macro level, this research took place within a local context (Algeria), having its sociocultural characteristics in shaping individuals’ lives. On the micro level, this inquiry is encapsulated within one specific HE institution in that macro

context. Delving further, this research considers the nature of students' experiences of transition in relation, for instance, to whether they are based either on-campus or off-campus, researcher-participant in the classroom, and interviewing within the university premises. Each setting has its impact either on shaping participants' experiences or doing the fieldwork. The next stage is planning how to collect stories from students; however, this necessitates a process of identifying participants as follows:

4.5. Accessing the research site and identifying participants

Before engaging with participants, an access letter (Appendix Four, pp. 368-369) was provided to the university, giving details about who I was and what I was aiming to achieve and the methods I planned to use within the institution. Gaining access to the research setting was easy, since I was a previous student at that institution. Having "previous links with organisations" can be used as a 'tactic' to secure access to the fieldwork (Shenton and Hayter 2004, p. 226). Second, I asked university lecturers to grant me access to their classrooms to talk with my intended participants. This method was among the discussion I had with gatekeepers (administration and university lead) prior to access approval). For transparency, I showed the signed letter to each lecturer to assure them that what I was doing was genuine. Afterwards, it was apt to them to accept if I could deliver a few minutes talk inside their classroom. University lecturers did not influence the process; rather they acted only as mediators. Recruiting participants using this strategy was much more consistent than posting information on a notice board. This is because I established direct contact with students, hence relationships were forged at the outset.

Inside classrooms, I explained to participants the topic and the importance of my research with reference to my motivation in undertaking this study and the objectives I aim to achieve. Acting this way stimulated students' interest in taking part in the research because personal contact inside the academic setting appeared to reassure students about the legitimacy of the

research in terms of how their information will be secured (Coffelt, 2017, p. 39). Furthermore, students were told that participation was voluntary and that their decision to contribute or not would not impact their marks and study progress and have the right to withdraw (British Educational Research Association [BERA], 2018, pp. 9-18). In addition, lecturers did not ask or had any access to what participants would share during the interview.

4.6. Participants and other considerations

By selecting a purposeful random sampling [PRS], I aimed to engage with ten first-year students who progressed to university just after completing HS. The objective behind PRS is to minimise the researcher's bias and influence on the study outcomes. For example, by avoiding the selection of specific criteria (e.g., education level, family background). Patton (2015) argues that PRS promotes credibility and manageability, but not representativeness since it is based on randomly selected case examples after identifying the intended participants (p. 286).

Participants in this research can be referred to by the phrase 'traditional student', who study full-time and have no major life responsibilities, skills, and experience, compared to the concept of 'non-traditional student' (Daiva, 2017, p. 40). Being a traditional student in this research context is due for many reasons. One of the major reasons is that the Algerian educational and administrative management system does not provide a blended scheme for university students to be able to balance, for instance, between studies and vocational expertise. That is, the older people get, the less chance to enrol on a university course. This renders university attendance for adults as a challenge, considering the accumulation of life attachments. In this regard, all my participants were full-time students and some of them viewed the university experience as their second choice in comparison to their ultimate aspirations in life. The lack of options and alternatives in the local context makes most students carry on studying to Master's level.

All participants were over the age of eighteen and did not disclose any health condition. The latter criterion was worth considering in order not to transgress the ethical conduct of this study. According to BERA (2018), some topics – related to health and clinical interventions - require clearance from specific bodies (e.g., National Health Service [NHS]), instead of an ordinary ethical system (p. 2). People with a mental health condition, for example, may be considered as vulnerable and the ethics of this research did not approve engagement with such a category because I do not hold any counselling qualifications to mitigate any critical situation which might occur during the process of interviewing.

The data collection took place inside the campus to ensure the participants' safety in case they felt psychologically distressed. In this way, it was convenient to ask the university services to provide quick interventions. This is in terms of means of transport and medical expenses in case any student needed a health assessment since students were registered with the university insurance policy.

4.6.1. Campus-based students

I refer to campus-based students as university students who live in university accommodation and do not travel back home regularly because of the distance which separates the university and their homes. The context of this research (University X) has an accommodation regulation which dictates that every student, who lives fifty kilometres away or comes from other provinces, has a priority to be offered accommodation within the University. This principle was put into practice because of the high number of student applications, which reached saturation point at the level of the accommodation sector. Five students in this category - Madjid, Sabrina, Amina, Samir, and Fatiha - have agreed to take part in this research.

4.6.2. Off-campus students

Off-campus students are those who commute daily from their living locations to the university setting. Living off-campus might be related to several factors including no

availability of places because of the shortage in student accommodation, personal choice, and not being eligible to live within university accommodation. Ultimately, students need to find somewhere to live, but most of them live with their families. Similarly, five participants from this category were involved in this research. Working with both groups provided the opportunity to amalgamate the characteristics of both categories, and to develop a deep understanding of the subject of student transition. Yacine, Rezki, Hakim, Lynda, and Farida represent the PRS of this category. Below, I explain the process of generating the data before, during and after the fieldwork.

For meaning and contextualisation purposes, the following is a description of participants, referring to the nature of their transitions and the major events that characterise each story.

4.6.3. Pen portraits of participants

The marital status of all my participants was single at the time of the fieldwork.

Amina is a female on-campus student, and she was twenty when she enrolled at university. Initially, she enrolled at university in the west of Algeria, but after a while, she decided to make a transfer to settle at University X in the Kabyle region. This was much more convenient for her as she could not find her bearings in the former university and there was considerable distance (approx. 315 miles) separating her from home and friends. Her goal was to undertake a culinary course aiming to start up a small business in the future, however, her enrolment at university was “to satisfy (her) parents” who wanted her to undertake as many studies as she could. Amina and her parents’ worldviews incongruencies brought to the fore some complications related to Amina’s motivation and progress while undertaking her university course. However, undertaking a course in economics and finance became an alternative towards becoming an accountant.

Hakim is a nineteen-year-old male student, who enrolled on a university course after he had an injury during sports competitions. Hakim’s dream is to become a professional athlete in Karate,

but the absence of support and follow-up he did not find within his sports club in addition to some unethical behaviours (nepotism/discrimination) hastened his departure from the team. Although he is familiar with transition processes while participating in various sports activities in and out of the country, coming back to university was not an easy move, considering his emotional status was not recovered from the previous experience and events.

Samir is a twenty-year old male student who wanted to pursue a career in the military forces. Likewise, Samir had no intention to undertake studies at university after he completed school. This might have triggered some tensions with his parents about dismissing university, but Samir was attached to his idea, and indeed, his application to join a military centre was successful. Samir's plan was running as expected until the day he was diagnosed with an injury which prevented him to keep up with the military training. University became his best option with the aim of a new transitional space which could help him to transcend the sequels of the previous experience. The latter, however, had also its psychological and social challenges, according to Samir. He questioned the university culture and later he was surprised when he saw students having illegal substances inside the accommodation. All these rendered Samir's university experience an uncomfortable one.

Madjid is an eighteen-year-old male student who transitioned into HE to study social sciences. Being an on-campus student, Madjid had a positive attitude about the benefit and what can be achieved at university motivated him to thrive and complete his course. Although there was little communicated to students about how to manage change, Madjid capitalised upon his friends' experiences in HE and this helped him to anticipate and understand the basic elements of transition. His major struggle was understanding the LMD educational system and how this is connected to assessment and student progress. Positivity, retention, and persistence in Madjid's discourse outweigh the challenges he believed to have impacted his overall transition experience.

Yasmina was a nineteen-year-old female first-year student who undertook a course in economics. Being proactive is the ultimate aspect of Yasmina's journey from school to university. The key to her smooth transition was related to the efforts and work/preparation she had already done before her transition. Initially, this helped her to have the transition she had positively anticipated and enrol on a course of her choice. Then, as she progressed in her transition, she kept thinking about potential situations which could posit challenges. She was systematic and reflective on taking a step forward. No room for unwanted surprises can be the motto which we can deduct from her experience, thinking and actions.

Fatiha was an eighteen-year-old female student who enrolled on a language course to study Tamazight. Although attending university was her personal choice, Fatiha struggled with social integration, which later affected her emotional well-being in and outside the student accommodation. Questioning her parents' little involvement in her new experience triggered strong emotions in Fatiha. This resulted in a fragile connection with the transition experience. Fatiha's statement "studying or not, attend lectures or not, and being present at university or not is the same" can portray the depth of how she was overwhelmed during her transition experience.

Lynda was a nineteen-year-old off-campus female student. She undertook a course in economics and finance as a mere interim option of her plan, which did not turn out as she expected after school. Parental worldviews about studies were prominent and diverged from Lynda's motivations regarding a university experience. Whereas Lynda wanted to undertake an apprenticeship course outside HE, which would maximise her prospect, her parents wanted her to attend university instead. The presence of incongruencies in both worldviews resulted in Lynda having not only a non-event transition, but also not minding the time spent at university. This can be illustrated by Lynda's expression "My future is in danger" to show the extent to which being a university student was not a convenient option for her.

Yacine was a twenty-two-year-old male student who did French studies and was an off-campus student. Despite “the beginning was a bit difficult” according to Yacine, capitalising upon his cultural/social capital, derived from his father as a university lecturer, helped him to learn about the new system at an early stage. This rendered expectations and reality closer once he started his transition. Interestingly, whereas Yacine’s father was an academic, Yacine had no intention of following the path of his father but rather his objectives were more about personal growth and exploring the richness of disciplines and the world via travelling.

Farida was a nineteen-year-old off-campus female student who studied economics at university. Farida’s early expectations about life at university significantly diverged from what she found out once she started university. Such expectation mismatches entailed a kind of disappointment in her and a loss of motivation. What rendered her experience more challenging is commuting daily from and to home. This offset her from engaging with her studies and making progress. Eventually, moving to her sister’s house in town over the university term was a major turning point in Farida’s transition. This shortened the distance she had to travel daily and subsequently, having the ability to study with her classmates at the library became possible once lectures and tutorials ended. Farida needed extrinsic motivation to catch up with the delay she had, and this was done by mobilising a set of resources to solve specific challenges.

Rezki was a twenty-year-old off-campus male student who undertook a course in the Tamazight language. Rezki’s transition was an anticipated one and he had great aspirations towards completing his course and then moving to do other things in life. His major struggle was paperwork and administrative processes in getting students started. Soon, Rezki started to encounter departmental challenges (e.g., student services) and at the same time, thinking how to get over these challenges without affecting the overall university experience. Having a reflective stance was an important aspect, but Rezki’s acquaintances (e.g., his brother and

friends as former university students) also played a significant role in Rezki's anticipation of university life at University X.

4.7. Procedure of collecting participants' stories

Studies tend to investigate student transition at the beginning of their academic year (Amundsen et al., 2021; Hughes and Smail, 2015), but I decided to allocate time for students to go through their transitional phase and get used to the new educational setting. As such, there would be a greater chance of them constructing a meaningful account of their experiences. Each interview is aimed to last from forty-five minutes to one hour. Two participants did not feel comfortable with recording, hence I opted for field notes and after the end of the interview, I wrote an account of the participants' story, remaining faithful to their ideas and words. Participants had no objection to keep their names in the research, but I assigned pseudonyms, in line with the BERA (2018) guidelines, for each participant. The interviews were exclusively about the participants' experiences and no personal information was collected (The General Data Protection Regulation [GDPR], 2018, p. 5) except when the participants intentionally had done so. These were generally events related to both participants' social life, personal conditions and university circumstances, which contributed to shaping their narratives.

I attempted to engage actively with students by sharing my thoughts and experiences to establish good enough relationships and trust. To do so, I selected narrative interviewing (N-I) as the technique for the process of co-creation of narratives/text with participants.

4.7.1. Narrative interviewing

Narrative interviewing [N-I] is a method, often used in the narrative approach, which provides space for participants to narrate their stories (Kartch, 2017, p. 1072). This technique is synonymous with interviews as conversations which are defined as unstructured, "...naturalistic, autobiographical, in-depth, narrative or non-directive" (Blaxter et al., 2001, p. 171). Unlike traditional methods (e.g., structured interviews), which place the interviewers in a

position of power and control of the information produced, content, in the narrative approach, is co-constructed and negotiated through the interaction between researchers and participants (Hollway and Jefferson, 2000). From the ethnographic point of view, the questions which are asked during an unstructured interview are “reflexive”, which flow from conversations, rather than “prestructured” before engaging with participants (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 117).

N-I is, then, a strategy to rebalance power relations and promotes participants’ agency, reflecting a shift in roles from interviewer-interviewee into narrator-listener (Kartch, 2017). Considering participants’ agency in research is to make their voices and personal experiences prominent throughout the research stages. The essence of this is to understand the overall form of experiences and capture the significance of any details and ultimately not lose “some of the contextual meaning or wholeness of the material” (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 136).

4.7.2. Piloting

In social sciences, pilot studies can be understood under the term feasibility studies which are "small scale version (s)", or "trial run (s), done in preparation for the major study" (Polit et al., 2001, p. 467). Piloting is defined as a "the process whereby you try out the research techniques and methods which you have in mind, see how well they work in practice, and if necessary, modify your plans accordingly" (Blaxter et al., 2010, p. 138). Piloting the technique of N-I is a non-negotiable step in this research with the aim of maximising adequate performance in the fieldwork in terms of how to open conversations and how to develop a reflexive approach, for example, in asking the right questions as the interviewing progresses.

In doing so, I investigated the experience of one Algerian PhD student in coping with the international context in the UK. Although the participant’s profile did not match with the criteria of the PRS, the investigation had the same focus which aims to cover and understand life experiences in managing challenging situations.

In November 2019, in England, I was given the opportunity to attend a conference organised by the International Professional Development Association [IPDA] and to share the pilot study in the form of a poster presentation. The conference topic was "Harnessing Creativity in Changing Times: Risk, Resilience and Professional Development Across the Professions". My aim in conducting small-scale research was to answer whether there is any relationship between creativity and resilience. Indeed, the findings show that creativity and resilience have a reciprocal relationship and ultimately can work together in circumstances that seem to put individuals within the circle of challenges, which can impede progress.

The pilot study indicated the appropriateness of N-I as a technique for generating narratives and inquiring into people's experiences. It also spurred reflections and ideas about how to improve my skills to conduct N-I with minimum mistakes in the future. I also concluded that N-I can be implemented in my research and is feasible for the topic because it is suggestive of the possibility of investigating life experiences and generating rich information from a particular life experience (Creswell, 2013). Eventually, N-I led me to understand the student's experience in relation to events, context, student's reflection, and self-appraisal. Below, I explain the stages of the pilot study.

4.7.2.1. Procedure of the pilot study

The student in the pilot study was an Algerian, who was undertaking postgraduate studies in the UK. The student agreed to undertake an interview via a social media platform after inviting them to set up a date and time. N-I started as soon as the student understood the objectives of my research. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained throughout the process of piloting.

We engaged in a virtual meeting; I wrote down notes and the ideas we covered in our conversation. I began the conversation with a broad question 'Could you please tell me about your personal experience as a student in the UK?' and then gave the participant the space to

share their personal experience. The question did not spur the student to have a flow of ideas, rather they were more reflecting on previous events and started to give some hints about their arrival to the UK:

Moving for the first time abroad to study.... might be a multi-layered challenge... Having to speak to strangers in their native language, for example, is a first step that was accompanied with a certain kind of stress and discomfort (participant).

They further made the connection between their first experience in the international space and how the student reached their present situation from temporal, social and spatial dimensions. Recalling memories can be described as sliding backwards/forwards in time and inward/outward within both the subjective and objective worlds. In their discourse, there is a degree of apprehension, confidence, and awareness:

Moving to another country, on my own this time, was somehow a shaking experience. What triggered this fear was the fact that I was conscious that there is no one I could count on in difficult situations ... For this, I gathered my courage, put aside my reserved and reticent self and embrace a positive attitude to talking to people, travelling and even getting a job which certainly helped me not only socialise but also discover my inner self and appreciate who I am (participant).

I attempted to share aspects of my own experience and express empathy with the student, especially during their talk about challenging moments. By the end of our conversation, we came up with meaningful points, such as the fact of meeting many challenges is usually accompanied by stress and reticence, which cause difficulties in communicating with people. For me, however, these elements were slightly vague and required more clarity. Thus, I asked the participant about the possibility of providing more information about these points. They asked if they could reflect further on the subject and get back to me as soon as they could. A follow-up conversation was made by phone to negotiate the content of the previous points. At that stage, the student showed a great interest in providing further clarification and the fact that they considered narrating their experience not only helped them to understand their journey abroad but allowed them to process a self-appraisal.

Throughout the comprehension stage, I classified the student's experience into three categories forming the phases of their experience. I have identified themes, sub-themes, and organising concepts within each category. The table below summarises the pilot study:

Categories	Main themes	Sub-themes	Organising concepts
1. Challenges and Constraints	Loneliness	/	-Reticent self, absence of company, home sick, and stress.
	Language Barriers	Interaction/ communication	-Native speakers' different accents were posing discomfort
	New Academic System	/	-Lack of knowledge about the UK educational University system
2. The process of coping	Academic Level	Skill development	a-Attending Workshops: -Developing attentiveness in terms of writing and building arguments. b-Supervisors' Feedback. c-Extensive Reading.
	Personal Level	Cognitive process	a-Positive thinking and establishing positive attitudes to talking to people. b-Developing awareness and solutions for situations that delayed her studies. c-Self-reliance approach
	Social Level	Networking	-Socialising and establishing good connections with peers at the university. -Working: maximising interaction and developing interpersonal skills.
3. Student's self-appraisal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Belonging: -Feeling to be a member of a large international community. • Harnessing and boosting confidence and self-esteem. • Discovering and understanding the inner self. 		

Table 1: Summary of the student's journey in managing the international context.

The following subheadings present my reflections about the fieldwork experience. I retrospectively recount moments of entry to the research context, relationships in the classrooms and my first narrative interviewing.

4.8. The fieldwork experience retrospectively

4.8.1. Moments of entry into the field of inquiry

It has already been four years since I graduated from university [University X] in 2016 and I am now back to undertake fieldwork. Entering the university

site prompted memories from the past, including some similar to those of my transition in 2011/2012. Feeling apprehension, resulting from having insufficient knowledge about updates the site had undergone, started to emerge at the outset. Although I spent five years on a full-time basis studying at the university in the past, I had a disconcerting feeling of being a stranger entering a non-familiar site. The changing nature of the physical site had a significant impact, which caused me to lose my bearings in the fieldwork. The impact, therefore, was not only spending more time to sort out some logistics of the research but reliving again, as an outsider student, what I experienced in my transition in the past. Quoting Albert Camus, in this regard, can provide a better image of my moments of being an outsider in my previous university:

(...) J'écoutais mon cœur. (...) Je n'ai jamais eu de véritable imagination. J'essayais pourtant de me représenter une certaine seconde où le battement de ce cœur ne se prolongerait plus dans ma tête. Mais en vain (1957, p. 164).

(...) I was listening to my heart. (...) I never had a real imagination. Yet I tried to present a certain second where the beating of this heart would no longer echo in my head. But in vain. (translation)

Living my story of transition in the middle of the inquiry did not end when I first entered the fieldwork but extended the time participants and I started to discuss, negotiate relationships and purposes to construct narratives. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) explain this moment as when researchers live their stories in each line of inquiry just as participants do, who also enter the inquiry by living their own stories (pp. 63-64). Since this provides an open space for both researchers and participants, one of my duties I considered was the necessity to provide a safe protective environment and an inclusive approach towards the different backgrounds of participants. This included the importance of listening without any judgemental attitudes and most importantly not asking leading questions which would render people uncomfortable to disclose information they did not want to.

From an insider researcher perspective, it involves the idea of situatedness in which the interplay between specific circumstances and the position of the researcher within these are

interwoven (Costley et al, 2010, p. 1). Holliday (2007) considers the researcher to be a part of the process and his/her experience, or story should be used as a resource to inform participants about the research. Others view insider researchers as having the ability to reflect on the ways in which insider status influences the relationships they construct with participants (Sherry, 2008, p. 433). Notwithstanding, the relational aspect that overwhelms narrative research makes distancing the self sometimes impossible within an inquiry (Josselson, 2007).

Our stories shared similar traits on several occasions, and other moments diverged. This brought to the fore the negotiation of meaning to understand better the underlying events and forces which shaped our stories. The connection of participants' stories with mine provided the process with richness in terms of understanding the subject from different life histories. Auto/biographical narrative method, in this regard, was illuminating because it helped us to enrich our interpretative repertoires and find direction in our lives (Reid and West, 2016, p. 562). In other words, the possibility of telling narratives that occurred in the past offers the opportunity of retelling those narratives in the present and then refer to possible occurrences for our futures (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

Narratives have temporality as their main aspect, which provides possibilities to be told and connected to how they shaped the present. This can contribute to shaping other aspects of life in the future or using previous background to mitigate unpredictable situations. Finally, the co-construction of narratives between participants and me helped to situate ourselves within the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space in which we could better understand our stories in the past, and the present and how they can shape our futures. This started to happen when I entered the classrooms.

4.8.2. Inside the classrooms and relationships at the onset

After having conversations with university lecturers within University X departments, providing them the university approval of my right to undertake research in the setting premises,

I was finally granted access to two classrooms. The number of students in each was between twenty to twenty-five. I delivered a short talk about my subject and distributed the information sheet, participant privacy notice, and consent form. I was aware that entering the classroom would be the start of establishing early relationships with participants before interviewing. I aimed to take advantage of that opportunity and spur interests in the subject. I had only a short time to spend in the classes before I left. This made me feel nervous about saying anything which may make participants uncomfortable or disinterested in taking part.

To minimise what I felt was apprehension in students, I presented myself as a student who was carrying out research about student transition into HE without introducing any details about my background, such as undertaking studies in the UK. The reason for this was a way of entering students' worlds and maximising students' spontaneous responses about their experiences. It was, therefore, a strategy to minimise the possible idea that potential participants might feel obliged to comply with whatever I might suggest during interviews. I believed that using the word 'student' instead of 'researcher' or 'postgraduate student' would make the atmosphere more conducive to openness and, therefore, would result in a smoother story collection process. This was an immediate strategy to put me in the same place as the students, however, my identity was not concealed, when I engaged with the actual participants.

The literature on reflective practice (Brookfield, 1998; Gibbs, 1988; Schön, 1983) shows us how important it is to practice reflection-in-action, within the field of practitioner research. This is a process of reflecting while acting in the moment; a given situation becomes more challenging and moves in the wrong direction (Costello et al., 2015). In this regard, constant reflection was one of my strategies in the field to look for alternative options and manage unpredictable situations before or during the process of interviewing. One of the situations which was likely to impede my fieldwork progress was the Covid19 outbreak. At this stage, if the situation was persisting, my plan was not to undertake face-to-face interviews, but

instead, undertake interviews online or invite participants to narrate their own stories via writing.

Before I entered the fieldwork, I had to translate the participant information sheet and the consent form into French to make everything accessible and understandable (University College London Hospitals [UCLH], 2020, p. 10), since most students' study subjects are not delivered in English (Please, see Appendix Five and Six [English/French versions], pp. 370-373/377-379, respectively). I aimed to get each student interested in my topic, therefore, maximising participation as I was inside the classroom. Some participants asked me if they could contact me via social media, and others requested my mobile number as their favoured contact option. Such suggestions from participants were not predicted to happen; I accepted their suggestions. Since individuals have an "agentic potential" to express themselves with minimal 'inhibition' (West and Bainbridge, 2012, p. 253) and not be bound by any specific principles as in the realist approach, unpredictable situations are likely to take place in the field.

What I experienced inside the classes in terms of feeling a stranger and moments of apprehension brought me to question again the nature of the research – the extent to which people would share personal histories with someone whom they never met before. I left the setting enthusiastic to hear from the participants. Shortly, I realised that my fieldwork was in a vulnerable position as it coincided with the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic outbreak, which could have hastened its end before even it commenced. The story collection process started as soon as I heard from participants and below is my reflection on my first N-I experience. For clarity, this is a reflection on my experience; the analysis of the interviews is undertaken in Chapter Five.

4.8.3. Collecting stories: My experience of undertaking the first narrative interview

It was already four days since I have been granted access to the research site. I finally received a call the next weekend from a participant to take part in the study. We agreed to meet inside the campus to work together and I again reminded the student of the need for me to establish consent.

The level of trust between us was progressive as we had a general talk about our backgrounds and university life, while we were searching for a place. We could not secure or book a room as spaces were permanently busy during study days and the research context had limited service regarding such modalities. Therefore, engaging with participants was important to compensate for the searching time and this helped us to establish relationships through sharing personal opinions and exchanging words from the beginning of our meeting. It was also a time when we came to know each other's backgrounds and our motivations in undertaking university studies and researching student transition as well.

Ensuring the participant's comfort was among my priorities, however, at some point during the interview consistency was lost in the sense that the participant's inability to establish a clear focus to recall events from previous experience. This was related sometimes to the nature and the way I addressed the topic and formulated questions, whilst other times the participant had difficulties formulating their ideas. All these were factors affecting both the participant's spontaneity and my ability to rephrase questions. This was not only applicable to the first interview, but some other conversations were characterised by inviting participants to talk about their experiences and it ended up with a short answer followed by silence, and vice versa.

In such cases, I was talking more than listening. To manage this, I realised that it would be more conducive if I undertook a three-phase interview with each participant to promote stronger relationships and more informative accounts (Seidman, 2019, p. 101). In this case, participants would have enough time to reflect on their experiences and formulate substantial

ideas and I would be able to develop more skills and reflect further on other aspects to cover next. Unfortunately, the actual research timeline and participants' exam schedules were factors that restricted me to undertake follow-up interviews with the same participants over defined periods of their transitions.

My reflections after the end of the interview directed my attention to how relationships remained intact despite communication issues. We simply recapped what had been discussed, before beginning afresh. It was a process of moving back and forth in time, which allowed us to reach key assertions about what we explored at the beginning. In this regard Clandinin and Connelly state:

(...), when one is positioned on this two-dimensional space in any particular inquiry, one asks questions, collect field notes, derives interpretations, and writes a research text that addresses both personal and social issues by looking inward and outward, and addresses temporal issues by looking not only to the event but to its past and to its future (2000, p. 50).

In this, negotiation of meaning (inwards, outward, backwards, and forwards) was key for a holistic narrative account. This, therefore, is a method to understand experiences from various angles in order to generate meaning but also the possibility to retell these experiences within their original frame. Notwithstanding, the co-creation of meaningful accounts should also be understood as the result of the researcher's positioning within specific ethical considerations in approaching life histories. The following sections highlight the ethical stances I considered for researching student transition.

4.9. Ethical attitudes and considerations

Undertaking narrative research is predominantly a relational venture, consisting of researching and reflecting on individuals' lived experiences (Josselson, 2007). However, implementing such an approach is likely to give rise to different ethical concerns, both implicit and explicit, such as anonymity and the extent to which participants are made unidentifiable during the writing-up stage (Goodley et al, 2004, p. 75). While these regulative principles of research ethics are intended to protect the identity of

participants, narrative ownership is questioned, posing further ethical concerns, considering personal stories (Smythe and Murray, 2000).

The duty of protecting the privacy of those we research is an important ethical aspect throughout the research stages. However, exceptions related to specificities of the nature of the research approach create ethical dilemmas for researchers, who must balance the need to establish a productive relationship with a responsibility to remain an unbiased observer (Josselson, 2007).

Conversely, there are no conventional guidelines which set the ultimate morals to follow in investigating individuals' narratives (Ellis, 2004; Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Rather, it depends on how narrative researchers balance and move between professional responsibilities (e.g., providing a safe environment) and interpersonal relationships with individuals in the fieldwork (Josselson, 2007). Moreover, it draws on both "implicit and explicit contracts" through which the ethical standards (consent, audio recording, withdrawal) are blended in the process of the ongoing evolution and formation of the researcher-participant research relationship. This implies the researcher's ability to avoid any judgmental attitudes, and the ability to mitigate situations that are potentially overwhelmed with emotions (Josselson, 2007, p. 539). Although I lack experience and a counselling qualification in working with personal narratives, awareness of these aspects made me ponder, for example, the idea of 'narcissism' (e.g., the urge to collect data only to satisfy research purposes) in viewing participants as a mere source of information.

On a concrete level, the overall ethical stance which was considered in this study primarily consisted of assuring participants' voluntary consent (Appendix Six, p. 377) to take part in the research (British Sociological Association [BSA], 2017, p. 5). They were assured that whether they participate or not would not impact their study progress. Protecting participants against psychological harm was also among the research priorities. However, since I had no counselling

qualifications to mitigate potential situations during and after interviewing, participants were given potential contacts in case they needed help and support (BSA, 2017, p. 6). This was to minimise harm and not leave participants alone without support alternatives. Data was also stored in a safe place (computer with a password, only accessible by me) and anonymised to ensure confidentiality. Additionally, reflecting on the narratives whether they contained sensitive events or people that participants might not have agreed to include in the final text was also considered (GDPR, 2018, p. 14).

Since narratives are “products of complicated research relationships” (Goodley et al., 2004, p. 195), having a clear frame of an ethical attitude towards narrative research appears more complex than the above principles (Josselson, 2007, p. 538). Researching student transition in the fieldwork was a journey which taught me that working ethically with research participants requires more than the guidelines already discussed. It has also to do with the researcher’s behaviour, politeness, transparency, respect and consideration of participants having emotions, attitudes and perceptions. These are crucial components for establishing trust, and alliance with research participants to enable them to express ideas and share their stories.

For example, one of the participants talked about undertaking a professional pathway after completing school. However, family influence, in convincing the participant to undertake a university course, was viewed as an unhelpful factor for the participant as this worked against their will and future aspirations. This was emotionally overwhelming for them. At this stage, expressing empathy with the participant appeared important to reduce the negative impact of their reality. I had to talk about the time I was studying in HS and the fact that the institution did not have any support service which could guide and help students to choose their affiliation after school. I excelled in sports, and I would have benefitted if the institution had directed me to a particular sports club to foster my skills to undertake competitions. However, this was not applicable at that time, and it was a sad moment at some point in the transition I felt that HE is

not the appropriate pathway after school. Narrating this story was quite helpful for the participant as this gave them more strength to withstand their situation and not consider themselves alone in such an experience. Empathy was a key feature in balancing power relations with participants and a basis for establishing a non-threatening environment (Leake, 2019, p. 237).

In addition, relationships can be enhanced with participants by offering them the opportunity of engaging in artefact construction instead of distributing particular roles and rules to follow (Parmaxi and Zaphiris, 2014). Participants in this study were not considered as potential sources of obtaining mere informed consent, rather they were given an active role in engaging, reflecting and understanding most of their stories of transition and what implications this had or would have on their lives. Investigating narratives with balanced relationships offered the opportunity to understand the authenticity of each participant and how their stories shape their interpretations of the phenomenon and what meaningful aspects they considered to be important for their lives. Working with narratives is not confined only to individuals' subjective experiences but also expands to generate understandings of the external objective world that impacted the phenomenon (West et al., 2007; Gergen, 1999). The process of researching participants' stories was a combination of views and perceptions in order to capture how those stories were woven with both participants' internal values and external factors.

Narrative ownership was also considered as an ethical concern, which generally emerges while composing research text (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). The fact that, at the end of an inquiry, the researcher's name, position and reflection upon data are likely to be more apparent than those who participated, raises questions of ownership. In this study, however, researcher-participant co-construction of meaning is the claim which can provide a rational answer to this issue of ownership. Throughout this inquiry, participant-researcher work was based on experiential exchange, which reflects the study's epistemological position towards generating

knowledge and reality. Interaction, negotiations of research relationships, engagement, and exchange of thoughts shaped the process of this research. Ultimately, the data is a mixture of the researcher's and participants' efforts in reflecting upon subjective experiences. This aligns with the ontological standpoint based on the intention of reporting multiple realities.

Such co-construction of reality should not only be referred to while undertaking and writing about the fieldwork. Rather, within qualitative research, this has to be extended to the interpretive phase because the researcher is still using participants' materials (stories), which represent the core of the research (Creswell, 2013, p. 56). That is, participants' personal histories are manifested in the process of the research and the weight of these stories cannot be neglected. Therefore, joint ownership between the researcher and participants was considered necessary for maintaining an ethical stance and a sense of responsibility towards the research participants with whom relations and negotiations are established (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, pp. 176-177). My approach in doing this was by inviting people to share, reflect and account important sequences of their lives and in my turn trying to relate aspects of my life to theirs. In this way, we were able to create a space where everyone had voice and uniqueness.

Individuals in this research were considered as research participants rather than research subjects. This might not be an apparent aspect that every research ethics considers, however, weighing the manner of naming those who take part in research appears to be an important aspect to discuss. Important in terms of the way this reflects a given researcher's epistemological and ontological positions. Phrases such as 'research subjects' and 'research participants' have strong implications on the overall nature of research. While the former is embedded with power and authority from the side of the researcher, the latter; on the other hand, suggests sharing and taking part in the process (Eaton, 2020, p. 850). Accordingly, referring to those who had interest in this research as research participants align not only with

the philosophical positionality of this inquiry, but also implies substantial consideration of individuals' agency and choice (Eaton, 2020).

Finally, the goal of this work is primarily to capture and interpret the underlying meanings of the experiences of transition in relation to the participants' perspectives and context. In this, participants' engagement was seen at the heart of the process. One of the strategies used during the interviews was to encourage the participants to generate stories in their own words, from a personal perspective (Smythe and Murray, 2000, p. 331). This helped to offset any potential multiple narrative meanings once the stories were brought into discussion and, therefore, interpretation would be more accurate and would not impact the participant's narrative meaning. Taking an ethical stance involves knowing how to establish equality, ensuring participants involved in the process, and understanding how to manage people presenting with emotional distress (Merrill and West, 2009). After all, approaching individuals' narratives is to consider first and foremost people as human beings before viewing them as a source of information (2009, p. 168).

This process empowers the plausibility of narratives as this becomes the product of the intersubjective construction of reality among individuals. This is further discussed in the following sections, emphasising the aspects which render this study trustworthy and credible.

4.10. Is this research trustworthy and credible or reliable and valid?

4.10.1. Background

In recent years, within human sciences, much attention has been directed to the personal and interacting subjectivities within narrative research (Reid and West, 2015; Riessman, 2008; Richardson, 2000). It is known that qualitative and quantitative approaches are two distinct perspectives belonging to two distinct paradigmatic assumptions, which have different approaches in investigating phenomena. Both positions, therefore, have distinct features to describe or present the extent to which an inquiry has met the criteria of validity and truth value

(i.e., reflecting participants' knowledge) about the claims (Polkinghorne, 2007). Riessman states that "the validity of a project should be assessed from within the situated perspectives and traditions that frame it" (2008, p. 252). My ontological/epistemological underpinning lies in my endeavour to investigate the topic of student transition to HE through the lenses of the social world of students' experiences and meanings.

4.10.2. Trustworthiness and credibility of the study

West and Reid (2015), drawing on Bruner's (1990) view about narratives and narrative research, argue that narratives have dynamics (e.g.: emotional force, aesthetic standards, and the complexity of lived experience) and can act as a mirror for the reader to understand themselves. Validity, for West and Reid, then has to do with the possibility of imaginatively engaging the reader with stories and construct new meanings about their personal lives (West and Reid, 2015. P. 10). However, although I concur with the idea that human experiences are a powerful source of meaning, I consider, for research purposes, that the trustworthiness and credibility of narratives are of central importance in the narrative approach. This includes knowing the extent to which the stories told by both research participants and researcher are plausible (Riesman, 2008, p. 250). Plausibility, according to Hammersley, refers to the extent to which findings are congruent with the existing "well-founded knowledge" (Hammersley, 2002, p. 17). This can be found in the discussion section and partially throughout this thesis in relation to participants' voices.

The term *credibility*, however, appears to work better with the nature of this research, considering my observations and experiences and engagement with participants in the Algerian context, which is a contextual/cultural aspect we all share. Below, I set out the criteria which I consider for the trustworthiness and credibility of this study. These are the result of reflection on my experience in the fieldwork, relationships with participants and contextual aspects. This

includes, for example, aspects of my epistemological position and researcher-participant involvement in co-creating stories.

The criteria of trustworthiness I present below are drawn from Speedy's (2008, p. 56) work *Narrative Inquiry and Psychotherapy*, where she provides some principles (e.g., transparency, accountability and reflexivity) to evaluate narrative research. I put these principles under the umbrella of trustworthiness and credibility. Although there are no foundational criteria of what makes research trustworthy and plausible (Riessman, 2008), this is still subject to the nature and purpose of an inquiry (Speedy, 2008, p. 57).

I come to write this text to understand my previous experience of transition to HE, which I consider unclear and challenging on many occasions. The question of why I did not manage to make meaning at an early stage has a strong echo. This was a puzzle, which needs to be solved, especially the time I realised that students in the context of this research are not given effective support to weather transition. In this way, I implemented an auto/biographical approach which allowed me to co-construct meaning with participants, drawing on our experiences.

This approach I used was a process through which our reflections and observations enriched understanding of the subject through the lenses of those who experienced it. In this way, I seek to consider different perspectives and positions (Speedy, 2008) - unlike traditional approaches which can alienate individual perspectives and subjective experiences, and this benefited the construction of the text. According to West et al. (2007), auto/biographical research provides a space for researchers to connect "the personal and the structural, individual life histories, and collective social movements and private and public worlds, (...)" (West et al., 2007, p. 168) to interpret a topic in its holistic understanding based on the connection of various aspects (e.g.: emotional, mental and social factors). Considering a variety of

perspectives was a way of ensuring transparency. After all, the idea of the social world of experiences and meanings is the dominant ontological / epistemological stance of this research.

Additionally, this study provides an account not only of individuals' experiences but also explores a range of contextual aspects, such as, Algerian social narratives, family relationships and people's motivation, in relation to HE. These were embedded within the lived experiences and therefore, became a constructed knowledge to capitalise upon to understand the subject from various angles. From my personal perspective, sharing the same cultural context with participants has also been a relevant aspect to consider for the credibility of this study. For example, some participants, with few words, stated that their parents wanted them to attend HE even if it was not their plans after school. From this, I attempted to understand both parental and students' attitudes and views of the world in relation to the social context. To recall this, I used some of my background by providing an example about my mother and I when I was a child (please, see discussion section) and what meanings each had about school. In simple words, my mother often borrowed the phrase "seek knowledge, seek knowledge, at least learn to write" (Mezani, 1960) - from a traditional Kabyle song - to remind me about the importance of learning whenever she felt I neglected my studies. For her, not having the opportunity to learn and attend school was a deep wound and regret in her. Therefore, she acted in different ways to urge me not to take the opportunity of attending school for granted.

Reflecting on these aspects provided an opportunity to connect the various aspects of life interdependently, thus creating what is referred to as an embodied narrative, involving contextual, cultural and personal embodiment (Formenti et al., 2014; Speedy, 2008). The following section discusses the accountability aspect of this study with reference to the nature of this text and the impact this research has, for instance, on third parties.

In qualitative research, the relationship between researcher and participants is a crucial aspect to consider. This is due, for example, to the process of recruitment, power differences

and rapport creation (Sandoval, 2017). Two main criteria summarise the quality and the nature of my relationships with participants. First, the researcher (I) becoming participant is deemed to have significantly contributed to the moderation of power relations. Speaking about my own experience, for instance during interviewing, to stimulate participants to have the desire to talk about themselves. This was beneficial for the creation of a reciprocal relationship in which we were able to develop a win-win approach. On the one hand, hearing about their stories helped to shape the study and gain substantial understanding of the subject. On the other hand, it was an opportunity for to make meaning about our own narratives and the extent to which some of the psychosocial perspectives (Bainbridge and West, 2012) shaped our experiences, sometimes trajectories in life. Considering these elements, this study should be considered as the product of co-creation of text based on weaving auto/biographical perspectives altogether.

Finally, this research has investigated a specific context, but I believe that findings can benefit a wider audience. This may not be necessarily in relation to institutional intervention, but students from different backgrounds can benefit from this research in understanding transition as a process from an individual standpoint. This can be achieved, for example, by asking questions such as: what type of transition I am involved in? what is the nature of the challenges I am encountering? and what are the resources I can capitalise upon to weather hardship? Above all, what is the added value of experiencing and engaging with transition has added to my personal repertoire (e.g., growth). Ultimately, this study has a side of accountability in terms of enabling people to have the opportunity to anticipate and understand the mechanisms they need to consider in subsequent transitions. Appendix Nine (p. 385) provides reflections and further details about the criteria which shaped trustworthiness of this study. The following accounts for the pitfalls of narrative research in relation to the literature and the present study. Before, however, I would like first to present limitations I had to mitigate during and after the fieldwork, regarding the collection of participants' data and the process of

comprehension of narratives. This also accounts for the reasons why the objective of this study shifted from biographical narrative research to semi-structured interviews, impacting the ultimate realisation of auto/biographical narrative approach.

4.11. Study's limitations and why the objective of autobiographical narrative research was not realised

In the following, I highlight the limitations which constrained the realisation of the ultimate objective of auto/biographical research and why semi-structured research interviews became the applicable strategy to generate stories.

Autobiographies may leave out significant events or details for personal or privacy reasons. Therefore, some people may find it hard to disclose things that they consider painful about themselves, while others may feel the need to talk or share their traumatic events (Cassata, 2023; Ravenscraft, 2020). The playwright Arthur Miller, for example, in his writings, including *Death of a Salesman* (1994), wrote extensively about the tension between father and sons, but not about his son who had Down Syndrome (Mullins, 2018). This is not to criticise the writer but just to show how difficult it sometimes is to share with others painful elements of one's life. In auto/biographical research, positive and negative moments are of paramount importance to capture the nuances which reside in the narratives, namely the Gestalt of lives and the relationship between the objective and subjective worlds (West and Bainbridge, 2012; Merrill and West, 2009).

To begin, my experience in undertaking biographical research in the fieldwork consisted of connecting conversations to the intended topic of student transition and institutional context. This entailed a careful approach to questioning participants, with a consideration for avoiding queries that might evoke strong emotions or discomfort. In addition, being aware of the cultural etiquette of most of the Algerian society regarding asking personal questions to strangers and women (Mok, 2020) is not well perceived. Therefore, being selective in asking questions to

people I met for the first time was a constraint in building a clear picture of my participants' life histories. For example, questions about the social class they came from- whether their parents were educated, rich/poor, and worked or not- were not asked in the process of interviewing, unless participants voluntarily brought personal elements into the conversation (e.g., research participants: Lynda, Yacine, Sabrina). The type of questions to ask in the fieldwork were discussed in my ethical application. Initially, I submitted to the University Research Ethics Committee a template of questions (Appendix Seven, p. 381) to give an idea of the type of questions to ask my participants and to ensure these would not cause any distress to participants. Even though the template was an explanation of what I intended to do, it became an effective tool (see below) once in the fieldwork, considering unexpected circumstances.

Avoiding asking personal questions was in favour of my commitment to behave ethically as some people may prefer not to disclose private information (please, see Social Research Association [SRA], 2021, p. 16), however, this did not allow me constantly to connect aspects of my story to those of participants, particularly while attempting to read and understand texts with little elaboration from some participants. I was, therefore, more engaged in finding potential meanings, interpretations, and relationships between events within their narratives than exploring elements that are intertwined and complement each other in understanding the representative dimension of life narratives (Abrahão, 2012). This was an apparent barrier in the study once the narratives were brought into discussion. The whole picture of the narratives in their context seems incomplete since the overall process (e.g., one-step interviewing) did not thoroughly capture the meanings of the social life of the various processes of construction of individual identities, group, gender, and class in the social context (Santamarinas and Marinas, 1994, p. 259).

Furthermore, coordinating between different research concepts (insider/outsider, objectivity/subjectivity, structure/agency), institution and ethical guidelines sometimes clashes

with the nature of narrative research. It was therefore challenging to reconcile these elements (Parsons and Chappell, 2020). According to Chappell (2014, p. 187), the difficulty resides in the possibility that “(...) using any one term resulted in the exclusion of the ideas of another; it created a dualism (...)”. To recall, the first example given can be found at the beginning of this chapter about providing signature/consent by participants, which was a requirement before undertaking interviews, however, some scholars challenged this idea as carrying out power and discomfort for research participants (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

The latter is another limitation, which affected both the quality and consistency of the auto/biographical objective in this study mainly in understanding the transitional space between self and other, recognising both internal and external (psycho/social) reality, and understanding the dynamic interplay between the two (Del Negro, 2021; Bainbridge and West, 2011; Long, 2011; Winnicott, 1971). This might be possible to avoid if the researcher can implement various empirical sources (e.g., life narratives, oral stories, diaries, memorials) and methods of triangulation of information (Abrahão, 2008) or spending enough time with participants in the fieldwork by doing, for example, a three-phase interview (Seidman, 2019). This would have enabled me to target one goal in each phase: e.g., focused life history in phase one, the details of experience in phase two and finally reflection on the meaning (Fox, 2009; Seidman, 1998). In addition, this could have promoted stronger relationships between my participants and me, hence more informative accounts (Seidman, 2019, p. 101), regarding the possibility of asking personal questions by the third phase of the interview. At this level, the researcher/participant relationship and trust could have developed further. Notwithstanding, even though the plan was to undertake in-depth narrative interviewing time with participants, this would not be possible with the beginning of COVID-19 and lockdown which was looming on the horizon days after I started fieldwork.

This unprecedented factor has not only significantly influenced research processes across various disciplines but has also impacted all facets of human society (Hwang et al., 2021). Being at the forefront of these uncertain times disrupted my original plan, particularly concerning the time allocated for interactions with participants. To address this challenge, I relied on the set of questions outlined in the template submitted for my ethical application, serving as a valuable guide for conducting interviews. This template offered a structured framework to explore students' attitudes and expectations before, during, and after the transition, prompting a shift in my approach from a biographical narrative to a semi-structured interview format.

The question of why interviews were not undertaken via Zoom or Teams after the COVID lockdown was related to a few reasons. First, while COVID-19 disrupted appropriate research practices related to research interviews, difficulty in establishing rapport and trust can be more challenging in an online setting compared to face-to-face interactions, possibly leading to shallow engagement (Cummings and Wallace, 2020). Second, lack of nonverbal language may constrain the ability to perceive nonverbal cues consistently, including facial expression, body language, and tone of voice (considering participants having technical issues, unstable internet or not having appropriate technology devices resulting in unequal participation opportunities (Hewson, 2020; White et al., 2020)), are crucial for capturing participants' emotions and intentions (Jack et al., 2020). Additionally, the limited physical environment during online interviewing can hinder the researcher's ability to observe contextual details, making it challenging to contextualise responses and understand fully participants' perspectives (Braun and Clarke, 2020).

Moreover, other setbacks in undertaking online interviews include participants encountering distractions and interruptions from their surroundings, which impact their focus and engagement (Martin and Shepherd, 2021). This may also contribute to raising confidentiality concerns in case participants are unable to locate themselves in a private space

(Stieglitz et al., 2020). Another prominent factor, which I kept pondering about and may have a strong relationship with the latter point, is the extent to which researchers can assist participants in case conversations prompt strong emotions in interviewees. Given the distance between the two, researchers are likely unable to know what the state of their interviewees would be after finishing virtual conversations (Hewson, 2020). In a face-to-face interview, the least action researchers can do is ask for help in case participants cannot do so. Therefore, online interviews are useful but not free of risks. In my view, considering narrative research which targets the very personal aspects of stories and experiences, conversations may prompt feelings.

COVID-19 had also an impact on my pace in doing the research, particularly during the lockdown. The feeling of uncertainty in the absence of family was frustrating on several occasions. Although the impact was intermittent, it was a challenge to gain the ability to regenerate motivation and mental health to progress in the process. In addition, since this research was a funded project, time for completion was an influential factor and following such a plan was unfortunately coincided with COVID-19 outbreak. Ultimately, COVID-19 contributed significantly to shaping the quality of the fieldwork interviews, which took not only a semi-structured format but also posited on me to do what I could at that time.

4.11.1. The rationale for semi-structured research interview

The choice to utilise semi-structured interview research, as opposed to structured or focus groups, is rooted in a specific threshold. Firstly, semi-structured interviews were deemed suitable for two primary reasons: (a) this method incorporates thematic focuses or areas that require coverage (Dicicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006; Jennings, 2005), and (b) they prove effective when there is only a single opportunity to interview a person (Barclay, 2018; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). These characteristics, to some extent, served as a safeguard against the impact of COVID-19 on the data collection process, especially in terms of time. That is, having some kind of structure in hand provided me with the opportunity to know how to start and what

to ask in the beginning and the way asking similar open-ended questions to participants resulted in different stories, perceptions and meanings. Indeed, possessing open-ended questions facilitated engaging conversations and cultivating ideas with participants. This was also helpful for me as a new researcher in the field, who is not strongly immersed in undertaking qualitative interviews.

Second, a semi-structured interview is often described as a purposeful conversation (Burgess, 1984) with the potential to uncover knowledge through interaction, stimulate conversations, and delve into topics based on different life experiences. This format allows the interviewer to explore specific themes and responses further (Kakilla, 2021; Barclay, 2018). Despite having a predefined set of questions guiding the process, semi-structured interviews offer the flexibility to explore with interviewees other relevant ideas and unforeseen topics emerging from the conversations (Barclay, 2018; William, 2015; Wilson, 2014). However, it's important to note that semi-structured interviews are considered demanding in terms of both time and participants needed to ensure validity (William, 2014).

Third, one of the objectives of qualitative research is to generate an in-depth understanding of the human experience; semi-structured interviews are one among many methods used to achieve this aim (Bearman, 2019). Although this study moved from the biographical approach including the narrative interviewing method, implementing the semi-structured method gives the researcher to set the scope and probe interviewees to talk and then follow relevant threads and equally provides research subjects with a space to express their thoughts and views in their own terms (Knott et al., 2022; Barclay, 2018).

Considering that the semi-structured interview method is likely to be in the middle of both structured and unstructured interviews (George, 2022). It provided an opportunity to gather valuable information from respondents while maintaining the focus on the objectives of

the study. Taking Lynda's case as an example, she said that pursuing a university education was not her goal after school. This revelation prompted a more in-depth exploration into the underlying reasons through a series of reflexive questions. This level of inquiry would have been challenging with a structured interview, as I might not have anticipated this information with a predetermined question or might have just asked the following question, leaving behind crucial elements of the narrative. Therefore, the semi-structured interview method aligned well with the type of *exploratory* questions I aim to ask (George, 2022), seeking to delve into the human experience within an educational context.

Furthermore, since this study seeks to understand personal experiences, the semi-structured interview format allows flexibility (Salomão, 2023) in developing specific questions for each research subject based on the flow of conversations. The technique also provides an opportunity for participants to express and explain their thoughts (Horton et al., 2004) by highlighting areas and aspects related to their stories. In my experience, these aspects of semi-structured interviews promote not only engagement among researcher-participants but also help to uncover substantial events related to both students' university experiences and personal life dynamics in many instances.

Lastly, on the interpretative level, semi-structured interviews are practical since this method allows researchers to scrutinise conversations to obtain multilayered conclusions (Kakilla, 2021). This also may involve obtaining other layers and latent meanings in the form of themes in the following stages of comprehension (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003). The substantial number of organising concepts and themes generated from the semi-structured interviews in this study is noteworthy. Once the stories were integrated into the comprehension process, a different form of interaction emerged, involving questioning instances within participants' narratives that might carry diverse meanings for different individuals. Examples of potentially varied meanings include parents' and children's worldviews regarding the university and

cultural/religious nuances in the use of certain expressions (e.g., "God will") with different tones. While it would have been more convenient to ask additional questions for clarification, even if not possible, these aspects should not be overlooked as they contributed to important themes. Acknowledging this gap, it is essential to highlight additional limitations that may arise after conducting semi-structured interviews.

4.11.2. Limitations during and after interviewing

Since interviewing is considered as a communication process (Blake, 2016), one of the issues we may encounter while undertaking qualitative interviews are communicative barriers between novice researchers and participants (Gesch-Karamanlidi, 2015). Indeed, one of the main constraints I encountered in the fieldwork was the difficulty of prompting some participants to share their stories with spontaneity, which caused some of them take moments of reflection and short responses from others.

To mitigate this, I started on many occasions to talk about my experience. This helped get participants to talk but affected the aim of listening more than talking. In addition, starting to talk first provided participants with some pre-thoughts (e.g., moments we had in common) on which they started their narrative in the beginning. Highlighting the presence of communicative barriers in this study is not to blame any participants; it is just a clarification of why some narratives were not informative enough, hence my constant engagement to understand potential meanings in some participants' speeches. Thus, conducting an effective interview is a skill that can be developed over time, consisting of using reflection and establishing strong rapport (Segal et al., 2010). Such communicative barriers can be mitigated by considering the significance of using a three-phase interview which could have provided the opportunity to elevate stronger relationships and rich narratives (Seidman, 2019).

Another limitation after completing the fieldwork is the process of translating interview transcripts by the researcher (I) without involving third parties. Small (2005, p. 1), in his report

Lost in Translation, stresses that “in qualitative research, if methods are languages, then the most important issue facing qualitative researchers – especially those concerned about the science of their work – is translation”. Although I have referred to the rationale of this (please, refer to heading: 5.2 in Chapter Five), many consider this process as influencing meaning and trustworthiness in the view of what can be lost in the translation process often caused by a language barrier (Bainbridge and West, 2011; Van Nes et al, 2010; West et al., 2007; Small, 2005; Barriball and While, 1994). Although I share the same cultural and linguistic background as my participants, I had to manage a linguistic phenomenon referred to as code-switching (Poplack, 2001)- (e.g., “L’avenir - iw atan en danger” equal to “my future is in danger” (Lynda: research participant))- involving the usage of more than two languages in a single speech.

At this level, the translation process had different layers of structures and meanings, which posed the need to bring the three structures (Kabyle, Arabic and French) into a unified discourse structure (English) for research purposes and clarity for the reader. However, for future research involving the translation of one or more than two languages, a consultant or a translator are a good resource for checking the reliability of the researcher’s translation. Although these limitations affected the objectives of the auto/biographical objectives, they are part of the research process, which encompasses a set of sequences that form the research narrative. Below is a reflexive account of the process of this research regarding different aspects, such as my role, reflections and how the lived experience influenced decisions related, for example, to the research design.

4.11.3. The lived experience of the research: a non-static process

4.11.3.1. Personal reflections on the overall research process and objectives

Ellis (2004) views that personal reflection in research adds context and layers to the story being told about the participants. Therefore, my strong impression of this study is a combination of both process and product. A process in terms of my endeavour to design a suitable approach

to answering research questions and a product, which involves relational dynamics (researcher/participants relationship), understanding, learning, interpreting lived experiences, and navigating a series of setbacks. Considering autobiography is also exploring subjectivity in terms of memory, identity and experience (Jayaannapurna, 2017). This study attempts to generate an understanding of the human experience based on what we experienced in terms of ups and downs, expectations, and our aims amid uncertainties and challenges. Considering these, the aim to understand others through their experiences and relate aspects of self to them resulting in an interrelationship between the researcher's story (auto/biography) and those of the researched subjects (biography) (West, 2009).

Since the auto/biography approach, for example, emphasises the link between biography and history and the public and the private (Parsons and Chappell, 2020), my attempts to capture such connections were not as expected throughout the research process. The one-phase interview I undertook was not informative enough to cover the complexity of the stories about the socially conscious act (Adams and Holman Jones, 2008) in terms of understanding how people in this research context impact each other. A clear image of this is not apparent, especially in relation to some participants (e.g., Amina and Lynda) who claimed that enrolling at university was just a matter of "satisfying my parents" (Amina: participant). This idea, for example, was not explored in an in-depth way to explore their parents' reasonings and argument. This shows clearly the limitation of a one-phase interview. If there was a follow-up interview, however, I would have asked participants to have a discussion with their parents again and see what they would answer as their ultimate reason for guiding their children to take a university pathway instead of students' initial plan. I was actively engagement with this claim by addressing both worldviews and potential reasonings, however, it is still not possible to make any assertions. In such a case, my subjectivity was apparent in addressing different narrative meanings.

4.11.3.2. Researcher's role and bias

My position in this research is significantly apparent especially if we consider the nature of the auto/biographical approach. Markham (2005) argues, referring to the contemporary framework of sociological inquiry, that even the distinction between the researcher and researched is problematised, “the researcher’s role is acknowledged, and bias is accepted as a fundamental fact of interpretations (...)” (Markham, 2005 p. 816). This research stemmed from my experience of transition to university and my objective is to understand this period, which was critical, considering the inability to find a transitional space between the public and private. Therefore, before my role involves researching others, my experience is the genesis and is at the heart of the process. Postmodern social researchers, for example, “attempt to expose the role of the researcher as field-worker and minimise his role as author” (Fontana and Frey, 2005, p. 714). Crapanzano, (1980), in return, when he interviewed participants in Morocco, he learned not only about his participants but also about himself. He said:

As Tuhami’s interlocutor, I became an active participant in his life history, even though I rarely appear directly in his recitations. Not only did my presence, and my questions, prepare him for the text he was to produce, but they produced what I read as a change of consciousness in me too. We are both jostled from our assumptions about the nature of the everyday world and ourselves and groped for common reference points within this limbo of interchange” (Crapanzano, 1980, p. 11).

Likewise in this research, I attempted to produce meaningful, accessible, and evocative research grounded in personal experience. The aim was to understand the dynamics in participants' stories and how aspects of these can be related to mine via interaction, reflection and interpretation. Sharing our experiences, however, was important since this gave us a space where, for example, I could see myself in some of the narratives and they could relate their experiences to mine too. To recall, Hakim, Samir, and Lynda, for example, had a passion for different interests: Karate, military service, and vocational apprenticeship, respectively. I could see a huge regret in their eyes when they recalled their helplessness in achieving what they

hoped for. This, for example, took me back to remembering my strong wish to become a professional athlete, muddled with ideas like what if attending university *was* the right thing and, at the same time, my mother's quote "seek learning...at least learn to write". The clash between the inner and outer world was significant and until I related aspects of participants' stories to mine, I could realise the stake of the situation they/we had to go through.

Delving into personal experiences afforded me the chance to grasp aspects of the lived experiences of my participants, empathise with them, and draw parallels between their stories and mine. This not only facilitated the unveiling of underlying meanings and dynamics shaping our narratives but also allowed for the presentation of these personal experiences through interpretative and accessible text, often incorporating cultural engagement in many instances (Ellis et al., 2011).

4.11.3.3. Impact on the research design

This qualitative research had different stages –beginning from the project and ethical approval applications to final submission- wherein each had its unique process and challenges. However, due to circumstances (e.g., COVID-19, having little experience in the fieldwork) influenced the initial research design. Although the piloting study was informative and provided me with confidence and ideas to consider in the fieldwork, different dynamics such as one-phase interview, context, time, and participants' short elaborations contributed to not realising the ultimate objective of auto/biographical research, hence my bias gained prominence at the interpretation stage.

The reader may ask the question regarding the possibility, for example, of undertaking follow-up interviews amid covid lockdown to seek further evidence and rich narratives. First, the COVID-19 pandemic was an uncertain time for everyone, and this had adverse effects on many people's mental and physical health (Gabielli and Irtelli, 2021). Therefore, it could be unethical on my part to invite participants to share further information about themselves, in

times, someone might have lost a loved one. Second, considering the importance of personal contact in qualitative interviews, the semi-structured interview is said to have better outcomes and effects when conducted face-to-face mode, instead of telephone (Vogl, 2013). Other academics suggest that qualitative interviews are undertaken exclusively face-to-face and remote modes like telephone are not well fit for qualitative interviews (Lamnek, 2010; Gilham, 2005).

However, what stood out in the process of this study was the extent to which participants' feelings, such as happiness, worries, emotional dysregulation, and the search for meaning, became apparent in their narratives. Additionally, the study highlighted the strong belief and connection participants had to their aspirations, exemplified by participants like Yacine, Yasmina, and Rezki, and the impact of regret regarding anticipated/planned experiences, as seen with participants like Samir, Amina, and Hakim, which did not continue as expected. Given the limitation that some data needed further exploration, I was aware of how my positionality in terms, for example, of my background and my approach to reading the data might have influenced the interpretation of narratives. Considering this, I endeavoured to place my reflexivity around the essence of *discursive deconstruction* as an approach to reading and understanding text (Finlay, 2002).

In many instances, discursive deconstruction supported my interpretations by juxtaposing elements (no final interpretations are available) (Woolgar, 1988) in the narratives with *contingency* and *inconclusiveness* (Fraser, 2015). This might be not the ultimate strategy throughout the interpretation process, however, when I realise that elements in the narratives lack evidence from participants or other parties. Parents' and participants' worldviews about university is an example which shows how is difficult to reach conclusions without the presence of both parties. Considering experiences as personal and unique, unanticipated findings have emerged from the process of comprehension and interpretation. These findings hold

significance in this research as they emanate from the deeply personal lives of participants and simultaneously represent pivotal, perhaps decisive moments in their lives and relationships with their parents. Consequently, these aspects are sensitive, and as a researcher, I must exercise caution in presenting such unexpected findings to the reader. Further reflections on how to approach these unexpected findings in future research are provided below.

4.11.3.4. Unexpected findings and implications for future research

The process of conducting interviews and comprehending narratives yielded some unforeseen discoveries in this study. This is referred to as negative cases or unexpected findings, which denotes the divergence in respondents' experiences or viewpoints from the main body of evidence (Forsner et al, 2020; Hsiung, 2010). However, two particularly noteworthy cases with significant depth emerged. Firstly, some participants showed no inclination to attend university after completing school, a sentiment expressed by four out of ten participants. The second one is related to parents' active involvement in students' next step after completing school. While the latter contributed to redirecting participants' experiences after initially not planning to enrol at university, it created contextual circumstances for some participants. Although interviews, one of this research limitations, were not thoroughly undertaken, a one-phase semi-structured interview yielded, to some extent, valuable information related to participants' lives beyond the university context. Nevertheless, it lacked certain components that could have been beneficial during the interpretative stage. Such circumstances added complexity to participants' transitions, especially for those who had not initially anticipated such transitions.

However, I believe these two themes or cases merit further exploration in the form of a research article. This endeavour could involve posing additional questions regarding gender differences, delving into the extent to which this situation is present among both males and females, and exploring the reasons that led them to consider alternative pathways after completing school. Additionally, an investigation into parents' opinions and attitudes regarding

the necessity of university for their children would be valuable. Such an enquiry could provide a clearer understanding of the underlying dynamics in this situation, ensuring more consistency and reducing the potential influence of my background, bias, and active engagement with various narrative meanings on data interpretation, as observed in this study.

Returning to the limitation of conducting a one-stage interview, greater insight could be achieved by gathering further information through a follow-up interview to address these questions. Building strong relationships with participants would be essential to foster trust and openness in order to facilitate this additional exploration.

4.11.3.5. Relationships with participants and the emergence of a transitional space rooted in conversation etiquette

Establishing meaningful relationships with participants in this study was crucial for gaining insights into the subject. Contemporary researchers grapple with the challenge of developing "situational and trans-situational ethics that apply to all forms of the research act and its human-to-human relationships" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018, p. 54). Employing an auto/biographical research approach during fieldwork, characterized by exchange, the researcher participating, and a non-judgmental attitude (Josselson, 2007), enabled me to cultivate an ethical framework emphasizing trust, collaboration, positive relationships, and the appreciation of human experiences (Collins, 1990). The subject of signature was a challenge I had with some participants as they did not sign off the document beforehand. I explained the motives behind their consent and that their contribution would be anonymous and mainly would not affect their university studies.

Moreover, undertaking qualitative interviews, particularly in narrative research, is considering how to be useful and helpful to participants (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Given the multilingual context of this research, there was no restriction on the language participants felt comfortable using. Most of the discourse was in Kabyle, code-switching was prevalent in

many participants' speeches. Opting not to dictate which communication code participants should employ was a deliberate strategy to facilitate their experience and contributed positively to building relationships.

Although a one-phase interview influenced the quality of narrative meaning and consistency, the experience allowed us to delve into and share our experiences of transition. This helped us to develop reciprocity and strengthen relationships. It was also an opportunity to create a win-win approach towards exploring the epistemological subject (self) as an active knower of objects (reality) through reflection and voicing presence in the non-self (physical world) in pursuit of meaning (Çüçen, 2016, p. 38 and 41).

Here, Winnicott's (1951; 1971) concept of transitional space is relevant considering researcher-participant interaction regarding the dynamics of communication and engagement, which contributed to the exploration of our transitional experiences. Initially, Winnicott explained the concept of transitional space to picture the intermediate area of experience wherein both inner reality and external shared reality coexist in a potential space in which to play (Winnicott, 1991). Then he further suggests that transitional space is prevalent in adults' everyday social lives. He says:

If, however, the adult can manage to enjoy the personal intermediate area without making claims, then we can acknowledge our own corresponding intermediate area, and are pleased to find a degree of overlapping, that is to say common experience between members of a group in art or religion or philosophy (Winnicott, 1991, p. 14).

Despite facing a communicative barrier with participants, I view our conversations as an intermediary realm facilitating the renegotiation and development of our shared understanding of realities linked to our experiences and the actions we took in response to these realities, which were central to our experiences. Additionally, creating a friendly and non-threatening environment for our discussions fostered the emergence of a transitional space. In this space, we delved not only into aspects related to our experiences of transitions but also seized the

opportunity to discuss the university system, encompassing teaching and learning processes, challenges, their impact on the student experience, and potential areas for implementation or improvement.

The benefit of researcher/participant relationships in this study is the possibility to explore our experiences as processes (having dynamic nature, subjective, and fluid) and space via interaction by creating an emotional space where participants and I could interact with our inner world (reflections, feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and interpretations) rooted in intentional consciousness (Husserl, 1970) towards the external environment. Therefore, the presence of different *cognitive systems* (participants and I) brought our inner world into a *mental/emotional space*, characterised by sharing and interaction, to engage with the outer world (Fodor, 1983; Winnicott, 1971). This mental space allowed the creation of a meaningful narrative through which we attempted to make sense of what we lived as a transition to higher education by connecting aspects of our stories to various events and elements in our personal lives.

Exploring our experiences within an interactive space allowed us to be the mirror of each other in terms of developing an understanding of our perceptions and interpretations and navigating our internal world. In Winnicott's words:

When I look, I am seen, so I exist.
I can now afford to look and see.
I now look creatively and what I apperceive I also perceive.
In fact I take care not to see what is not there to be seen (unless I am tired) (1991, p. 114)

This quote provides hints about the importance of the interconnectedness of self-awareness, perception, and creative engagement with the external world. *Significant others* are also crucial to embrace our unique selves within various groups. These relationships and spaces play a crucial role in fostering feelings of self-respect and self-esteem throughout our lifelong journey of learning, which involves not only understanding ourselves but also embracing the distinctiveness present in others (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 95).

Ultimately, establishing an interactive and friendly space for exploring the deeply personal aspects of life parallels what Winnicott describes as the mother's mirror role in child development (Winnicott, 1991, p. 111). Hence, the environment in human development is crucial for acquiring new insights and letting go of others. In this context, my relationships with participants enabled us to comprehend the causes, frustrations, and expectation mismatches that characterized our experiences. From my perspective, the endeavour to express empathy towards participants played a pivotal role in assisting them in transcending negative moments and contemplating how to foster flexibility. Engaging in narrative research involves considering how to be helpful to others (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). This includes developing a conversational etiquette that demonstrates consideration towards others, ensuring they feel valued and heard, and expressing genuine acceptance and interest in your conversation partner. In doing so, it may offer participants some relief amid institutional challenges and their transitional experiences into higher education. To echo the sentiments and perceptions of some participants:

Both teaching and management methods are not clear enough (...) management, mainly at the institutional level in general, is chaotic, in my opinion (Yacine).

Currently, however, my view has slightly changed.... I felt like studying or not, attend lectures or not, and being present at university or not is the same (Fatiha)

The quotes show the extent to which both participants did not find a good enough secure environment while experiencing the transition to university. However, considering how the essence of Winnicott's (1971) concept of transitional space can provide a turn towards a better student experience is worthwhile exploring in the HE context.

4.11.4. Winnicott's transitional space and higher education

Winnicott's concept of transitional space can be applied to the context of teaching and learning in higher education. This is by emphasising the importance of a supportive and creative

environment which welcomes various students' backgrounds (West et al., 2013, Winnicott, 1991). For example, Winnicott (1991) considers sources of security (e.g., a sense of family, p. 142) as an important aspect for a child in exploring transitional spaces and continuity. This is to render the university experience as a space for renegotiation between selves and others, and immersion within the realm of language, culture, and societal norms (symbolic other), which influence the formation of an individual's identity formation, comparison and identification with others, and understanding self and others through social interactions (Tajfel and Turner, 2004; Lacan, 2001; Blumer, 1992; Geertz, 1973).

In HE, supportive teaching, as a secure base for example, is necessary through which teachers can aim and participate in the process of *enrichment* of their students (Winnicott, 1991). In HE, considering the teacher-student relationship can help educators to be not only effective but also serve as a secure base, providing a supportive environment for students to explore new ideas and engage in intellectual growth via continuity of people and place (Bergin and Bergin, 2009).

Second, student engagement and exploration are central to transitional space as these encourage students to link education and experiment. Dewey says:

I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference; namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience (1938, p. 25).

In the university context, this can be achieved by encouraging students to think critically, create and engage with problem-solving hence making "connections between contents and context, to interpret their experiences and gain any sense of unity and meaning (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 169). In this way, students' transformative learning can be achieved by fostering creativity through implementing innovative teaching methods, encouraging different perspectives, and promoting a culture of intellectual exploration (Sawyer, 2011). By doing so,

students not only develop the ability to critically understand their academic environment but also learn to connect it to various aspects of life, ensuring the endorsement and sustainability of their intellectual growth.

Furthermore, thinking about ways how transitional space can make HE vivid rather than formulaic is also by attending to notions of trust and rapport and balancing independence and support. Throughout his study of human development, Erikson takes trust as a crucial step in infants' development. He says:

Trust derived from earliest infantile experience does not seem to depend on absolute quantities of food or demonstration of love, but rather the quality of the maternal relationship. Mothers create a sense of trust in their children (Erikson, 2014, p. 224).

Erikson's quote finds relevance in the context of students' experiences at university, emphasising the importance of trust in education. Regardless of the number of materials or content provided by teachers, establishing trust between educators and students is crucial. This trust creates an environment where students feel secure to embrace intellectual challenges and openly share their thoughts (Coristine et al., 2022). This process extends beyond the typical cycle of students taking exams, receiving grades, and progressing to the next phase. It goes further to ensure that students do not exit the education system merely equipped with exam-based knowledge but also possess the ability to connect what they have learned to the broader context of life and contemporary issues (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 169).

In addition, one of the principles for good practice in undergraduate education is implementing an institutional culture which encourage contact between students and faculty, reciprocity/cooperation among students, active learning, communication and respect (Chickering and Gamson, 1991). Bringing these together into a university context is a method through which institutions can create transitional spaces between students and faculties which balance between independence and support. This can also provide opportunities to enhance our

capacity to interact with each other, including the ‘weeds’ within ourselves (Formenti and West, 2018, p. 49).

Ultimately, transitional space can be aligned with the concept of dialogic teaching and learning. In this context, teachers may embrace a dialogic instructional approach, treating dialogue as a functional construct rather than a structural one. This approach aims to nurture oracy within the classroom, enhancing students' ability to articulate ideas, develop understanding, and engage with others (Boyd and Markarian, 2015, p. 272). According to Formenti and West (2018), while dialogue is deemed desirable, it often encounters challenges due to various dynamics or defences that act as barriers to collective understanding (p. 49). However, dialogue possesses the potential not only to shed light on cultural, linguistic, and gender differences and similarities but also to facilitate a deeper and more interconnected shared understanding (pp. 8 and 14).

These are potential areas we may need to consider in relation to creating transitional spaces in HE. These aspects have a strong connection with Winnicott's (1971) idea of transitional space and Formenti and West's (2018) notion of transformation regarding the relationship between self and others within contexts which are likely to involve differences, as well as similarities among people. The objective is to make the university experience encouraging and not dull. This is also to preserve the university's original functions (empowering students intellectually and personally) by avoiding any path which leads to the commodification of HE, hence becoming a place of transactions involving students as active consumers with significant financial burdens (Bushi, 2018; Tomlinson, 2018; Richardson et al, 2017).

Considering these ideas within the realm of researcher (me)/participant relationship in the fieldwork, I can say that our engagement was a process of mirroring each other via positive

engagement, creation of non-judgemental environment, prompting participants to actively think about their experiences through sharing and trust. All these aspects bring to the fourth what Winnicott (1991) refers to as the possibility of seeing the self in the other, as in the child/mother relationship in which the mother's face and good mothering becomes a mirror for the child to develop (p. 111), hence being able to explore the shared reality within a trustful environment.

4.11.5. Issues of narrative studies and conciliations

By considering the potential risks of narrative research, as a researcher, I aim to establish awareness about the danger of narcissism and its potential to abuse narratives (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 181). This takes us to associate the idea of minding a gap (Bainbridge and West, 2012) in relation to people's experiences and the way we attempt to represent them, avoiding, for example, predictions and/or taking judgemental positions (Fraser, 2015). After all, human experiences are like two mould halves that never come together (Todres, 2007), implying a narrative of continuity and change (Reid and West, 2015), embedded within ongoing socio-historical constructions (Squire et al., 2014, p. 31).

Although undertaking narrative research provides the opportunity to understand the world via experiences and various perspectives, the approach has its drawbacks. This includes, for example, issues of representation, meanings of the text and ethical guidelines (West and Reid, 2015; Fraser, 2015, Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Below are reflections on potential risks narrative research may have.

To begin, one of the concerns of narrative research lies in the process of how we live an experience and the way our inner worlds (e.g., thoughts, beliefs and desires) can influence the way we interpret and retell stories. After all, narratives are socially co-constructed products. It is, therefore, not only limited to the teller's efforts but subject to audience and researchers' interpretations and reflections (Squire et al., 2014, p. 29). From the dynamic unconscious perspective, West and Reid (2015) - with reference to Freud's unconscious forces (Freud and

Rieff, 2008) - argue that these forces have the potential to mislead the originality of stories (p. 6). This can result in a deceptive or misinterpretation of an experience, for example, in telling (e.g., participants) and retelling (e.g., researcher) stories, considering the interference of a range of repressions we hold. To address the issue of representation of stories, Fraser (2015), in her research emphasises the importance of selecting an epistemic stance which can help to avoid prediction and remain faithful to the actual situation. For example, Fraser's (2015) "writing as inquiry" worldview is based on contingency and inconclusiveness (p. 30).

In relation to this study, the wider social context contributes significantly to shaping people's narratives. The emphasis might therefore be directed to discussing the wider social context and possibly little attention given to individualities (Squire et al., 2014). In this way, narrative researchers may end up discussing thoroughly, aspects related to the wider context and this may result in undermining the individuality of personal stories. Indeed, this is evidenced in this study (discussion section: Lynda's and Amina's cases) where I attempted to explain the theme of familial influences on participants' motivation. At this point, the discussion went further to unpack social, cultural, economic and even religious aspects to explain this instance. Therefore, building on that, resulted in engagement with the wider socio-cultural context rather than, for example, on the emotionality of participants. Below, I carry on presenting further aspects of potential auto/biographical narrative drawbacks, providing illustrations in relation to this study.

Ethically speaking, asking participants to sign off the consent form implicitly delineates some part of the research, in relation to the general underlying aspect of NIn (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 170). Requesting a signature, in this sense, appears to carry a kind of power because participants are invited to share some aspects of their lives and then end up negotiating particular guidelines before starting the interview. From my experience of the fieldwork, two of my participants had not signed off the consent form until the day we planned to undertake

the interviews. I understood that they were interested in taking part, however, when it came to providing their signatures, there was a kind of hesitancy and discomfort although the consent form was translated and explained beforehand. Providing one's signature to a stranger made them feel uncomfortable, so I needed to state again that this form needed to be signed off otherwise the interview could not take place. This moment was not helpful for the research process as I had to re-establish relationships and trust with participants and assure confidentiality. Providing signature was a requisite to fulfil ethical requirements of this research, therefore, participants had to sign off the form before we could start the interview process.

Moreover, since NIn is predominantly a co-constructive process with participants, the scope of the inquiry is likely to change over time because of potential new emerging variables. The best example I can refer to in relation to this inquiry is the fact that the main objective is finding out how students cope with the transition at university. As engagement with participants was progressing, I realised that some participants had not planned to attend HE after school, but their university experiences were just a stressful interim option. This was unpredictable but made our conversation cover a variety of aspects compared to what I previously expected to discuss. Lynda's statement is a good example to understand such a situation:

What would you like to tell me about your experience of transition into HE?

Lynda: ... Well, I wanted to get my BAC exam and then my plan was not HE. I had no intentions towards pursuing studies at university. However, my family influenced my decision and convinced me to enrol at university after my graduation. In fact, ... I don't believe that studying at university in this context is something positive for me...it's better to undertake training within the private sector, and at least I can ensure and maximise success in the future.....

This example was a fieldwork experience which supports the claim that narrative research has much more to do with negotiations than a mere pre-defined research process. At this stage, the participant's statement was unpredictable and influenced decisions on how to keep the interview flowing, because important elements were already communicated and worked against

the primary research objectives. However, the belief in the existence of multiple realities within the social context worked for the benefit of the process as the uniqueness of what was experienced with participants had added significant value to the inquiry. That said, individuals' experiences, perceptions and values shaped the quality of this research and can be considered as outweighing what was already known about the subject.

In relation to ethics, my reflection on this study brings me to question the ethical principles which refer to assigning pseudonyms to participants. Although this is for the sake of anonymity and preserving participants' identities (BERA, 2018, pp. 21-31), for me this form of representation was sometimes challenging during the interpretation process. A challenge in terms of mentally associating the actual names and/or stories of the real character and their assigned pseudonyms when writing about their stories. In this, pseudonyms undermined the echo of the original participants' voices in my mind and appeared to me to have impacted the individuality of the narratives. To illustrate the way pseudonyms can be problematic on an ethical level, Edwards (2020) views assigning pseudonyms as a "practice of disguise" (p. 384), which made me ask the question who is who? on several occasions before going back to my notebook.

In addition, if we consider stories as sources of meanings and socially co-constructed, disguising participants' real names can affect even the cultural (e.g., intergeneration name) and ethnonational (e.g., names related to armed resistance fighters) background significance of participants (Allan and Wiles, 2016, p. 153). That is, names (e.g., Mohammed) in some cultures have their merits in relation to their background significance. This rendered the task of selecting pseudonyms challenging because participants did not advise about any pseudonyms which can reflect their identities. According to Robson and McCartan (2015), pseudonyms act as insulators interrupting the link between data and individuals' details (p. 219). My approach in doing this was simply ensuring that pseudonyms are compatible with the participants' gender.

I am not contesting the idea of not using pseudonyms in qualitative research and I am for confidentiality and anonymity research guidelines. These are only some reflections on the implications I consider having impacted my engagement with participants' stories using pseudonyms.

Finally, the idea that texts can have multiple readings posits significant implications in relation to distinguishing between stories (West and Reid, 2015). This can be referred to as the extent to which each story is unique. After all, a story is likely to communicate a set of events which shape the authenticity of a given experience. However, if each reader brings in his/her way of interpretation regarding their experiences (Larson, 2009), how can we identify, for example, the perspective of the person to whom the story belongs? Interestingly, Denzin (1989) asks a similar question about the illusion aspect of a story, arguing that if an individual sees coherence and the researcher does not, then “who is correct?” (p.62). Holstein and Gubrium (2000) answer this question referring to the idea that individuals compose stories but not entirely structured and organised on their own. Rather, the incorporation of particular items (e.g., the researcher’s interpretations and readings) into these accounts give them meaning (p. 107).

From a reader-response perspective, a text can have multiple interpretations as the result of readers’ engagement and understanding (Kunjanman and Abdul Aziz, 2021). This, however, can render interpretations too subjective and may undermine the actual meaning of a story. Having said that, does that mean a story can have endless meanings in relation to our readings? Well, text is still written material which allows the wider gaze (reader) to react to its content and reactions are diverse.

Mitigating these problems is to adopt a position through which I considered the way individuals give coherence to their experiences in a form of texts. In this, my interpretations are

predominantly for the sake of capturing some of the complexities of their stories in relation to the wider context. My ultimate objective, to quote Denzin (1989), is to understand and uncover “(...) the sources of this coherence, the narratives that lie behind them, and the larger ideologies that structure them (...)” (p. 62). In this way, Holstein and Gubrium add that “As texts of experience, personal stories are not complete before their telling, but assembled in relation to interpretive needs” (2000, p. 106). To understand further students’ experiences in the Algerian context, I set out below the techniques I consider to be effective for uncovering substantial themes related to participants’ stories.

4.12. The process of comprehension of participants’ stories of transition

This stage will consist of two phases of understanding participants’ stories of transition: “analysis of narratives” and “narrative analysis” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5). To achieve the former mode of comprehension, I will implement Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-stage thematic analysis [TA]. Although TA is deemed to be better classified within the theory of constructivism (Joffe, 2011), it involves a “coding” process which necessitates organising data into small but meaningful constituents.

However, undertaking qualitative research requires congruency of assumptions (theory, epistemology and ontology) across the text. Terminology is also an aspect which should be given attention, considering the divergence between paradigms. For this reason, the term ‘code’ will be replaced by the phrase ‘organising concepts’ to reflect the nature of this study. I consider the term to belong to the realm of computer sciences in which a text is coded in a form of instructions to generate a programming system. Organising concepts, however, aligns with the idea of meanings in texts and the way people view the world, giving rise to different interpretations.

I consider this phase [TA] as a necessary step for this study to generate substantial understanding. Denzin (1989) argues that the overall aim, in relation to biographical research,

is to capture, probe and be able to understand experiences which can be problematic (Denzin, 1989, p. 69). Implementing TA is not with the intention to fragment narratives but to map the data and be able not only to capture specific instances within stories but to define a scope for discussion. In other words, TA is a tool which will help to set out themes/materials on which the discussion and interpretations of this research will focus. Bruner (1985) refers to this mode as a paradigmatic cognition through which researchers can order experiences to construct reality (p. 11) by classifying a particular occurrence within a concept or category (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Eventually, I will attempt to move from deductive to inductive reasoning, particularly in relation to cultural and social aspects of participants' stories. Inductive reasoning, in this regard, leads to considering NA as the second phase of comprehension. The role of NA is not addressing the question of what the story does as in discourse analysis. Rather it can provide the possibility, for example, to understand and learn about stories and the reality of the persons who are involved in this research context.

According to Stokes (2003), NA can help to capture the underlying ideologies which reside in stories and the wider cultures that shape narratives (p.67). According to Bruner (1990), people are likely to engage in a retrospective process through which they relate events to larger structures than referring to them as mere singularities. The rationale also for NA is to reconstruct narratives and put their thematic meanings into a context. This will help to preserve, for instance, not only participants' meanings and significance of their stories but also help to keep narratives intact as a block shaped by psychosocial forces (Bainbridge and West, 2012). Corroborating between the two tools (TA and NA) seems to be feasible to balance the stages of the meaning-making of participants' stories of transition. Below, I explain the rationale for implementing both TA and NA concerning methodological purposes and personal drives and how reconstituting stories is possible using two comprehensive stages.

4.12.1. Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke define TA as “a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (2006, p. 79). The ultimate reason for using TA is twofold. On a methodological level, Braun and Clarke (2012) view that TA is an effective tool to employ when researchers aim to understand a group of experiences, attitudes or behaviours across data. Indeed, this idea aligns with what I am attempting to find out about students’ experiences of transition using purposive sampling. I selected purposive sampling to limit the scope and define any common relationships among students’ stories as well as the way they differ. It has been argued that TA is an appropriate tool for the classification of themes, having a broad understanding of the subject and establishing relationships between concepts (Alhojailan, 2012; Namey et al., 2008; Marks and Yardly, 2004).

From a researcher’s stance, I consider TA as an accessible method, since I am still in the process of immersion within qualitative data. Therefore, selecting an easy-to-follow method is an important aspect to understand and interpret participants’ stories as consistently as possible. In addition, what I wanted to achieve is to uncover the broad aspects, which situate students’ stories of transition. Then, using NA, I will endeavour to obtain insights into how and why different instances are presented in relation to the wider context. The following section presents the genesis of NA with reference to some background and the rationale for its use.

4.12.2. Narrative Analysis

Narrative analysis (NA) is a broad topic in terms of what approach researchers need to choose from among the existing models. For this study, I will use Polkinghorne’s (1995) paradigmatic narrative analysis [PNA] – narrative analysis in particular - to approach participants’ stories and interpret different aspects of their experiences. Polkinghorne, drawing on Bruner’s (1985) types of cognition: paradigmatic and narrative, offers a narrative configuration in qualitative analysis. He distinguishes between two types of narrative inquiry:

analysis of narrative and *narrative analysis*, considering the assembly of a series of historical events (emplotment) (1995, p. 5).

These two types are analogous to Bruner's paradigmatic and narrative cognition. However, the type I will focus on is narrative analysis [NA]. This is because analysis of narratives has already been employed using TA through which I categorised organising concepts into themes and concepts (paradigmatic cognition). However, NA, according to Polkinghorne (1995), is a stage where "researchers collect descriptions of events and happenings and synthesise or configure them by means of a plot into a story (...)" (p. 12). While the former type operates from stories to themes, NA operates from the generated themes to stories, giving a cyclical movement – from story-to-story - of the process.

The reason why I adopted Polkinghorne's NA approach is that it aligns with the method, i.e., TA, I will implement to map participants' stories. Narrative analysis in this sense is the continuity of the previous paradigmatic analysis in which I will examine narratives for common themes and ideas. Its importance lies in seeking a second level of analysis that "identifies the relationships that hold between and among the established categories" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 10). Therefore, NA is a tool which can help to organise story elements into a coherent developmental account. This is in relation, for example, to temporality (e.g., diachronic sequential relationships among events), context, cultural values, social narrative, participants' motivation, actions and choices. Attending to these elements, according to Polkinghorne, is a way of producing a story – being the ultimate goal of NA - having meaningfulness and chronology (1995, p. 12). In doing so, these provide the possibility of communicating what differentiates each story from another and offer a flexible framework in which the fragmented elements of narratives are brought again together in a coherent, interpretative and explanatory format (Du Preez, 1991).

I also acted pragmatically by selecting Polkinghorne's NA. His approach appears to be an open framework and applicable to understanding stories, taking place in various contexts. This is because it does not limit researchers, for example, to find out about specific elements within stories, knowing that stories are generally different but have common aspects. Within this study context, for example, if we consider, Labov's (1967) structural elements of stories - abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, result/resolution and coda - to be the approach to understanding stories of transition, it can be problematic at some point during the process. This is because those elements can be partially present within some stories and apparent in others (Parcell and Baker, 2017). To illustrate, the idea of appraisal in this research is understood as a significant asset for developing active coping actions, however, not all participants have initiated such a task which resulted in enduring hardship and avoidant behaviour. Therefore, attempting to frame stories within this model may result in some inconsistencies such as attempting to find an absent element within a given story. This can result also in presenting and interpreting stories unfaithfully.

4.13. Conclusion

In this chapter, I accounted for the methodological underpinnings which I viewed as suitable for undertaking the fieldwork. The aim was to outline a specific structure, which would allow me to understand the meaning of individuals' narratives and the implications of the wider context in shaping life histories. This was designed to maximise my understanding of what was referred to as the Gestalt of lives (Merrill and West, 2009; Dewey, 1938) by illuminating the distinct aspects of participants' values, motivations and desires and their interplay with the external objective world.

The chapter provided an understanding of the importance of the narrative approach in researching biographies and subjectivity. Auto/biographical narrative inquiry is the method which I considered most valuable for collecting and interpreting stories, considering the

intersubjective aspect between participants and me. This approach has roots in the feminist tradition (West and Reid, 2015) and sociocultural theories such as the social constructionist perspective (Fivush, 2009). The latter emphasises the way meaning is established through individuals' interaction, implying different views and experiences. Reference to my story of transition is with the aim of co-constructing an understanding of the phenomenon based on a mutual exchange of experiences and interpretations.

Primarily, I have used Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) fieldwork journey as a reference point for understanding the narrative approach and its application. This provided me with the necessary elements to implement such an approach and to understand key aspects of NIn. This informed my method in the fieldwork, considering the different aspects (e.g., relationships, temporal, social and spatial dimensions) which shape the nature of inquiring into life histories.

Finally, thematic analysis and narrative analysis are the selected tools for the process of comprehension and interpretation of narratives. This consists of moving from story-to-story, by generating meaningful themes and then capitalising on these to retell and interpret personal accounts. By the former, I aim to capture specific instances within participants' narratives and by the latter, I will attempt to understand the generated themes in relation to both the subjective and objective forces. The next chapter sets out the process of my comprehension of the narratives, showing how organising concepts and final themes were generated by drawing on Braun and Clarke's (2006) stages of thematic analysis.

Chapter 5: Mapping the process of narrative comprehension

Xass fyay ar-vara	No matter whether I went far
E-vyiy kan ad-imyura	I just wanted to grow
Xass nudaŷ-ed k timura	No matter whether I travelled around the globe
E-vyiy kan ad-issina.	I just wanted to explore.

(Zayen, 2012)

(Translation)

My main motivation is to realise one of my dreams which is having overseas experiences and exploring the richness of the world through travelling (Farida).

5.1. Introduction

Approaching individuals' experiences is vividly characterised with a range of meanings, which enable the generation of a clear image of research phenomena. The authenticity of individuals' stories, as particular cases, offer rich opportunity for understanding the external world through the lens of the social actors, as they are constantly engaged with social changes and influences. Ultimately, an important aspect of qualitative research is giving voice to research participants and letting them speak for themselves (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Lincoln et al., 2011, p. 123). Primarily, biographies reflect and emerge the social world, such as values, interpersonal relations and economic changes, which allow individuals to make meaning for themselves and their own historical actions (Burkitt, 2008, p. 225).

To understand these dynamics, I draw on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages of TA in understanding participants' stories of transition. It has been argued that TA is a flexible tool for organising data (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017, Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is rather considered as a hybrid approach which provides the opportunity to understand data in different forms, i.e., inductively or deductively (Xu and Zammit, 2020). However, TA offers significantly useful insights into conducting many other forms of analysis, congruent with the constructionist paradigm (Braun and Clarke 2006, pp. 80-81).

The objective in this chapter is to generate a meaningful structure which can summarise the overall student experience of the transition process. Capturing particular instances within

narratives and then generate meaningful and inclusive themes on which my interpretations will capitalise, considering participants' voices. Ultimately, implementing Braun and Clarke's (2006) TA provides a step-by-step process for approaching data through different reasonings. These stages consist of:

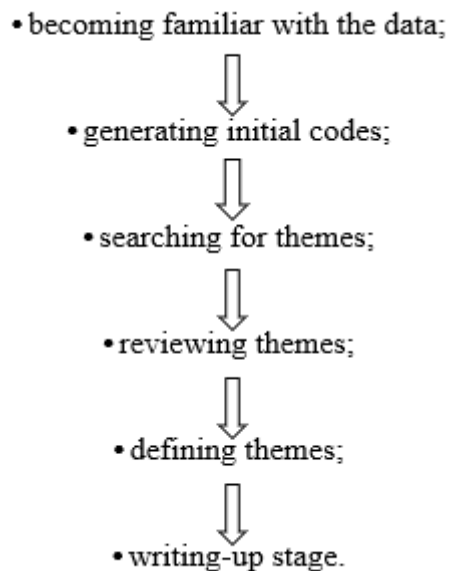


Figure 7: Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic Analysis stages

Although the phases appear to be a straightforward process, they are not necessarily linear in their application because some phases overlap during the process of comprehension, particularly in the beginning. In addition, these phases are not distinctive to TA as they can be similar or share some commonalities with other analytical techniques (Braun and Clarke, 2006), such as interpretative phenomenological analysis [IPA] in terms of generating concepts and themes. Additionally, TA involves both backward and forward movement in assigning codes and formulating meaningful structures. Therefore, the reading stage can either be informed by the relevant literature on the subject or based upon crucial aspects exclusively derived from the data (p. 16). This stage is where researchers can take stock of the flexible aspects that TA can offer in understanding qualitative data.

Prior to engaging with the process of TA, the chapter starts with introducing insights into the process of data transcription and translation. This is to provide a general idea about the procedure I followed in understanding and interpreting narratives. This is also with the aim of establishing transparency in doing research in terms of acknowledging the different processes in this study.

5.2. Data transcription and translation

Considering the case of this research which involves cross-border fieldwork, it implicitly consists of the use of a variety of languages in relation to the qualitative interviews. Transcriptions were translated by me (researcher) from the source language [SL] Kabyle into the target language [TL] English, considering the context in which an utterance was produced (Baihaqi, 2018). In the translated versions, meaning was emphasised over the proper process of translation. This was achieved by reproducing the closest equivalent of the participants' words and intended meaning from (Hadithya, 2014). Additionally, the chronological order of events is considered to have important merit in understanding the students' experiences and not undermining the essence of the participants' personal narratives.

Data collection and transcription were initiated simultaneously. This method was consistent in two ways. First, I was taking stock of the time interval between each interview to listen and transcribe the recordings. As a result, I attempted to identify potential weaknesses and gaps to consider and improve for the next interviews. For instance, developing consistency in unfolding situations further by asking relevant questions in the middle of conversations. Second, because the interviews were held using, predominantly the local language (Kabyle), participants borrowed words and phrases from Arabic and French. It was, therefore, important to translate the content of each interview into English to allow a process of comprehension and give the reader a chance to interact with various perspectives.

Since these three languages were intelligible and accessible, considering my linguistic background, a translator or interpreter were not hired. Ethically speaking, researchers should only disclose confidential information to relevant authorities in case participants' reveal information containing acts of abuse or terror interviews cannot be shared with third parties and if this had happened, confidentiality could have been breached (BERA, 2018, pp. 25-26). It should be noted that the way people express themselves in one language and may not sound the same in another because of issues related to what can be lost in the translation processes (Bainbridge and West, 2011, p. 11; West et al., 2007). This is due to the difference in cultural and linguistic values, which characterise each language.

For accurate representation and comprehension (structure and meaning) of data, scholars suggest that collaborative expertise and translation procedures are needed when interview data are collected in a language that differs from the primary language of the researcher(s) (Guest and MacQueen, 2008, pp. 114-115). Nevertheless, Clark et al., (2017) consider the qualitative researcher as having the potential to set reflexive methods to decide on the best way to transcribe the linguistic and metacommunicative nuances that appear important. Although referring to accredited translators stands as a reliable strategy for getting accurate and proper translation, the ethical guidelines of this inquiry do not allow sharing data with parties other than the research academic team. In this, protecting participants' identity is a primary aspect.

As a researcher, sharing the same cultural and linguistic background with participants is considered as having benefit on the process as I was able to communicate with participants in a mode, they felt comfortable in. Throughout the interviewing process, accommodating the different linguistic aspect was a way of being helpful for research participants. Therefore, intelligible communication was a fundamental element, especially in negotiating vague aspects of participants' stories. In addition, the interviews were not only translated in relation to their

content, but also situated within their social context and in relation to the participants' perspectives.

The implemented translation procedures were predominantly word-for-word, faithful and communicative translations. These three strategies can help dealing with matters of word equivalence, preserving contextual meaning from the SL to the TL and providing for the reader an intelligible contextual meaning in relation to both information (content) and language (Newmark, 1988). Therefore, performing a variety of roles, such as being the researcher, translator, is considered to result in a significant advantage (Bashiruddin, 2013). This can result in establishing an active engagement with participants' meanings.

According to some scholars, translating data can have an impact on the meaning and reliability/trustworthiness of qualitative research (Van Nes et al., 2010). However, although this task appears to challenge different aspects of qualitative research, its added value, in relation to this inquiry, is that it can offer an active engagement with the participants' discourse and meaning within two distinct languages, which implies further interpretation and involvement with the narratives. To illustrate, Ho et al. (2019) have implemented a translation approach in study and concluded that this approach increases the researcher's extended engagement with data. Furthermore, it facilitates understanding meaning and strengthens the transparency of qualitative data interpretation (p. 1). Subsequently, researchers can play both roles of interpreter and translator without undermining or losing substantial meaning.

Translating fieldwork interviews into English, in this research, was quite a challenging process at several points, particularly when word-for-word translation was not appropriate. Occasionally, some participants had the tendency to use different combinations of codes (Kabyle+ French+ Arabic= code switching) while speaking to express their ideas, which implies different structures and word choice within a single utterance. As an alternative,

meaning-based translation (Guest and MacQueen, 2008) was applied with the aim of summarising the conceptual idea of what participants attempted to say. Ultimately, this was a reliable option to present an intelligible meaning and structure as close as possible to the original data.

The process of reflecting and seeking to understand participants' stories was undertaken after each interview. The period after completing each interview was an important transition for me in capturing the overall interview experience. Post-interview reflections had an advantage in highlighting the main thoughts and ideas that participants covered in their speech. I also attempted to give a particular structure for the narratives with reference to important events and their impact or significance in relation to participants' university experiences. This enabled the reconstruction of the constitutive elements of lived experiences (Seidman, 2019, p. 18).

Maintaining connection with the process of interviewing was crucial because this provided me with the opportunity of not only understanding each participant's story, but also the ability to make associations and connections across stories and classify narratives as convergent and divergent. In doing so, this enabled me to form initial structures and thoughts of what the narratives might show throughout the comprehension stage. Additionally, engaging with data transcription, I was able to establish preliminary organising concepts and patterns. For example, the concepts of time and homesickness are two themes which are considered as important codes as they are apparent in many narratives and provide information about particular events. Subsequently, the comprehension process takes place once the researcher starts to find out meaningful themes in the data regardless of whether data collection and transcription have ended or not (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 15). Therefore, the process of undertaking fieldwork was not only related to data collection, but also a whole process involving negotiating relationships, interviewing, reflecting on narratives and structuring

stories according to significant events. Ultimately, in order to understand thoroughly participants' narratives, TA is the selected comprehensive approach for establishing meaning of the participants' stories of transition into HE.

5.3. Becoming familiar with the data

Familiarisation with data starts when researchers themselves transcribe verbal data (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Saldana, 2011). The advantage of this stage appears in the fact that researchers possess some knowledge and ideas about the data, since they are the ones who design and undertake the process of data collection (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Indeed, the whole experience, beginning from negotiating relationships, interviewing participants and transcribing interviews was helpful, particularly in understanding the participants' stories in relation to a variety of contextual factors. This provided me with the opportunity to have a close perspective in terms of expectations of the data prior to understanding and interpretation.

Reading the data several times with the aim of immersing the researcher with the content is a crucial aspect of the initial stage of TA. Reading actively through the data made the task of the identification of patterns much easier. In my case, some of my prior thoughts about the data were confirmed throughout the reading stage and, therefore, I was able to assign concepts more confidently. To illustrate, while I was undertaking interviews, most participants communicated ideas related to time and the impact of physical injuries and family on personal aspirations. However, at that stage I was not able to put these ideas in meaningful frames as I had not covered such concepts in the literature review, but I was quite sure that they had an added value because they represented something significant for some participants. In essence, data-driven concepts were an option that sustained deep engagement with latent aspects related to participants' stories of transition.

At the beginning, however, this was quite challenging because in fact it did not consist merely of a reading throughout the data but, rather meaning making requires understanding the way experiences are structured and shaped by particular events. Therefore, it was necessary first to understand the implications of internal (motivations and emotions) and external (institutional, social, cultural, political) factors on the participants' stories of transition. Ultimately, understanding how these aspects shaped experiences was an important element for placing each participant's narrative in its frame. Considering all these elements, sustained my engagement and offered a basis to become closely familiar with the discourse we exchanged in the fieldwork (Saldana, 2016).

Attempting to interpret some situations from the participants' voice was quite intricate as I had a responsibility to preserve the original meaning of participants' perspectives. Talking, for instance, about apprehension (anxiety) prior to the university experience might be considered to have a dual meaning. Participants who had this feeling had not communicated clearly why they had such impressions. Although anxiety has been argued to be a natural response to stressful stimuli and attention, (Bainbridge and West, 2012, p. 10), I was questioning whether it was related to the fact that those participants were aware of the implications transition might have in the local context, or this was due to not being able to understand the reasons behind it.

My reflection on my experience, anxiety was predominantly related to uncertainty and the inability to predict the transition experience. This was exacerbated by the lack of institutional interventions over the awaiting period of starting my first-year. This was not apparent to me at that time, but retrospectively I understood some of the causes of my anxiety after reflecting upon my university experience.

Understanding latent meanings emerged through reflections in relation to personal memories and how institutional, socio-cultural, and political landscapes influence peoples' experiences. Moreover, this helped me to interact with narratives, attempting to make clearer connections between participants' university life and their relational dynamics with the social world. The aim then, was to construct a clear portrait of the narratives through aggregating the different aspects that characterised participants' experiences. This was insightful for the subsequent step, which involved generating an initial list of organising concepts. The reading process was accompanied by writing notes summarising a set of ideas, which were reviewed, refined and developed in the subsequent stages (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

As an additional sub step, I created narrative summaries for each participant's experience. These summarised the overall essence of each story and this was useful in establishing connections between narratives and extending engagement with stories. It is also a process of self-immersion in narratives, moving from the individual to the collective level of meaning. This action sustained reflection about matters of voice as important aspects to preserve in relation to the uniqueness of participants' stories.

Although TA has a particular set of rules for understanding qualitative data, Braun and Clarke consider that "good qualitative analysis is primarily a product of an 'analytic sensibility', not a product of 'following the rules'" (2013, p. 201). Interacting again with each story helped to revive and reconstruct situations and more significantly considering participants as human beings rather than a source of data was key. The latter statement directs attention to how nostalgic moments emerge while retelling stories. Recalling the memories from the fieldwork triggered evocative feelings in relation to the positive engagement with people and the way human interpersonal relationships evolve and become stronger through interaction and sharing. In essence, the reciprocity I had with participants was an empowering element as we helped each other in understanding better the situation from various perspectives.

Drawing on researcher's previous experience, knowledge and the research background can help constructing new perceptions and understandings of phenomena (Erlingsson and Brysiewicz, 2013). Sharing the same background with participants and being raised in the same sociocultural environment were useful resources. This placed me in a strong position to understand the complexity of specific events that participants were trying to communicate, for example, with unelaborated speech. This may suggest a high level of subjectivity in deciding what participants wanted to express. However, this aspect also offered the possibility of establishing latent themes on different occasions, through the back-and-forth movements across narratives.

Additionally, whilst I was involved in the fieldwork, meaning was co-constructed through negotiations of ideas and views and through making links with events to come up with constructed and meaningful narratives. Moreover, during the process of data transcription and translation, I attempted to be faithful to participants' words and meanings and my experience was generally used to uncover some of the latent meanings that participants had not explicitly elaborated on. These two initial phases have also offered preliminary insights into assigning potential concepts at an early stage. Generating concepts and ideas while reading narratives is crucial because it sustained understanding and comprehension. At the reading stage, however, a researcher should not expect to process generating concepts simultaneously, rather occasionally concepts are written because some meaning is captured and can be transformed into a potential theme (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

Life experiences cannot happen in isolation without the interference and influence of other external factors. The interaction between circumstances changes the lived experience over time. Ultimately, individuals can tell different stories of the same experience even if they share the same sociocultural background depending on the way events unfold and shape lives. Accordingly, using both theory-driven (deductive) and data-driven (inductive) reasonings

provided a comprehensive view and sustained the contextualisation of concepts in relation to their context (Xu and Zammit, 2020). Initial concepts were created and attached to the texts and sections in order to keep track and allow reviewing in the future. Concepts that summarise and describe particular content are called descriptive concepts and those that were taken from the participants' own perspectives are referred to as inductive concepts as they capture participants' voice (Xu and Zammit, 2020; Saldana, 2016). The process of generating organising concepts remained under development throughout the narrative comprehension stages. Examples of very broad concepts and patterns that were identified while reading the data are:

- joy and satisfaction (from one's achievements).
- different mentalities and the demographic scale at university.
- language of instruction
- teacher centred approach.
- knowledge acquisition.
- anxiety
- time.
- status enhancement.
- planning towards having an overseas experience.
- poor student experience.
- institutional inconsistencies (no advisory team, lack of facilities).
- family factors.
- previous expectations did not take place.

These ideas are just observational notes which were written in the process of immersion in the narratives. They are neither precise nor systematically organised. These stood only as memory aids for developing the comprehensive engagement with data (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Additionally, since these are meaningful and informative notes, I reviewed them in a detailed manner during the coding process because some of them were salient to the research and implied latent meanings in relation to the context and, particularly participants' future aspirations.

5.4. Producing preliminary organising concepts

Generating concepts is a phase in which data is organised into small meaningful units (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Life histories can have a fragmentary aspect resulting from the unfolding challenges and struggles (West, 1995, p. 154). Therefore, classifying stories into smaller constituents may further contribute to the disaggregation of participants' narratives, considering the researcher's subjective aspect. The aim, however, was not to fragment texts to reflect mere aims of a comprehensive tool, rather, the aim was to extract the different meanings participants shared by understanding various *instances* of their stories. This enabled me to move from the individual to the collective level of meaning in the discussion. Sadler (2022), referring to contemporary communication via social media, proposes that fragmentary information are meaningful materials, which can be understood as part of significant wholes, involving causal and temporal relationships. He further states:

In thematic narrative, the relationships upon which they are built are brought directly into view and there is a conscious process of storytelling in which narrators choose what to include and exclude, the order in which to relate different events and so on (...) Thematic storytelling, then, should be understood as explicitly pointing out joints that have already been implicitly recognised in such a way as to allow others to see them with the storyteller (Sadler, 2022, pp. 19-20).

I did not use any computer software to classify the data; instead, I printed the content on paper and then coded with a pen and occasionally used colours to mark new and distinct concepts. Also, I used Microsoft features such as text highlight colour and comment section for assigning ideas and writing a brief description of the overall meaning of a particular concept. Although this is viewed as requiring significant efforts and time (Creswell, 2018), Bringer et al. (2006, p. 262) consider that approaching data physically (drawing diagrams by hands and printing memos) facilitates a more rational engagement with the data than electronic processing.

While the first phase involved extensive reading of the data and producing an initial list of ideas, the second stage consisted of the identification of concepts from the data. These

communicated different aspects, having either explicit or implicit meanings, which can be interpreted in relation to both participants' agencies and context (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998). The second phase was a path guiding the extent to which themes have a data-driven and/or theory-driven aspect. In this phase, equal attention was given to each participant's answer and comment, attempting to identify recurrent patterns across the entire narratives.

As previously stated, although narratives are specific cases and bounded by contextual aspects and events, it may appear that narratives were disaggregated and deconstructed into small discrete units. However, this technique was an important step for organising stories and for the identification of the main themes which form the general understanding of the phenomenon, thus enabling interpretation and discussion. The identification of concepts and themes in the narratives was like stepping back a short distance in order to make a significant leap forward. this phase of the comprehension process was a space for me where I endeavoured to capture substantial meanings and ideas, considering each story of transition.

Creswell and Creswell (2018) discuss some drawbacks around the process of generating concepts, stating that context is likely to be blurred as this depends on whether or not the researcher aims to develop ideas on the basis of what is only collected and transcribed. The flexibility of the TA approach and my own experience of the phenomenon in the same context provided me with the possibility to engage with and question data when more clarification was needed. In Derrida's (1997) *of Grammatology* philosophy, as a deconstructive criticism with the aim of understanding the relationship between text and meaning, he discusses authors' works such as Saussure's linguistics and semiotics. Derrida views the meaningful aspect language as only the result of the contrast-effects and arbitrariness between signs, i.e., signifier(s) and signified(s) (Derrida, 1997). In this essence, he says:

[...] The very idea of institution-hence of the arbitrariness of the sign-is unthinkable before the possibility of writing and outside of its horizon. Quite simply, that is, outside of the horizon itself, outside the world as space of

inspection, as the opening to the emission and to the spatial distribution of signs, to the regulated play of their differences, even if they are “phonic” (Derrida, 1997, p. 109).

From this quote, we understand that a written text is a signifying system, constituted of an interrelated set of signs (signifiers and signified), which are different but connected to each other. Meaning, in this sense, is delayed or disseminated across the text because it is not based on how individual units (words and sentences) communicate information (Hambrol, 2016). Rather, meaning can be derived only if the constituents of texts fit into the larger structure of the text and context.

Another aspect which I considered was being aware of not manipulating the comprehension by considering narratives in relation to both positive aspects and contradictions (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Tensions and contradictions in this study can be exemplified by the fact that most participants in their stories emphasised issues of integration during the earlier stages of their transition. According to them, this was related to institutional inconsistencies in hosting new students and difficulties in understanding the new system, which led to experiencing concerns related to motivation. However, one of the participants had not experienced issues related to integration, rather they, spoke in a general term about the overall pedagogical and institutional concerns and how these impacted students’ progress. This can be illustrated as follows:

Normally, they should assign ahh...in every department an advisory team who will be in charge of orienting new students because as I said, some students find significant difficulties in understanding substantial aspects related to undertaking studies in HE. students have little knowledge about the functions and the running of the university system (Yacine).

Contradictions in this respect can be explained as not being able to locate and understand the participant’s own position. The participant’s own perspective has an implicit dimension and to is some extent neutral. It appeared to be blurred within the collective experiences of other

students. Subsequently, this created some inconsistencies related to locating the participant's narrative uniqueness as well as personal significance in understanding their experiences.

Both selective and complete forms of organising concepts were implemented. The former consisted of selecting particular elements which are exclusively relevant to the research questions and in the latter, the identification of concepts was processed considering the whole comment/answer (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Selective organising concepts can be viewed as having a semantic level, while complete organising concepts is more of a deductive task requiring synthesis of whole sections into a meaningful unit(s). Examples of these two types of organising concepts can be shown as follows:

Excerpt 1	Selective organising concepts
-Higher Education should characterise the scientific research and present a new stage which goes beyond the high school level. In my view, this didn't appear in the real life, and in fact the expectations I had were just imaginary which I gave high consideration before my transition into the university.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The magnitude and weight of HE (a typical understanding of HE). -Expectation mismatches, -Reality presents something else, illusory, -Changing their attitudes
Excerpt 2	Complete organising concepts
-Well, ...yeah. My feeling about progressing into university can be described as a great achievement, this made me feel proud. It represents my hard work and efforts through which I achieved something fruitful. This made me feel a great happiness. It's something that I did myself for me and I am happy about it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Perseverance and working towards success provide a sense of self-satisfaction

Table 2: Examples of selective and complete organising concepts

Appendix One (p. 360) presents all the organising concepts which were generated from students' stories. Some of the concepts may not communicate explicit meaning on their own, unless associated with their context or incorporated within an informative theme. This will be

considered in the following stages where thorough reviewing of these concepts will help to generate consistent and meaningful patterns. Occasionally, words and phrases are written in *Italics* to refer to participants' own speech. The list of concepts is not in a specific order.

5.5. Searching for themes

The third stage of comprehension consisted of identifying themes from the list of concepts. The themes are worthy of attention because they present a certain quality within narratives (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). At this level, more engagement with the organising concepts was required to organise them into meaningful categories so that assigning themes to each category could be applicable. A theme, therefore, has a central organising concept [COC], which summarises the key meaning of interrelated concepts, representing salient relationships within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 224).

To illustrate, one of the themes I developed at the early stage is 'future aspirations and things fall apart,' which does not communicate a definite meaning on its own. However, its primary significance can be explained by the fact that some participants' experiences, particularly in relation to personal goals, turned out differently than expected and planned due to institutional and social factors. Subsequently, the COC of this theme refers to both the interplay between internal and external forces in shaping participants' decision-making. This includes, for example, parental perspectives, the negative impact of social and administrative unfairness (e.g., nepotism and bureaucracy) and physical injuries. These ideas have different meanings and contexts; however, it was more convenient to aggregate them under one theme as they contribute to impacting specific aspects within participants' narratives.

The process of generating themes was based on classifying organising concepts in relation to their shared meaning and function. In doing so, I used colours to identify each category of concepts that might have the possibility to be converted into a broader theme. This helped to

produce an early thematic map after generating preliminary themes. Some organising concepts formed sub-themes; however, Charmaz (2006) suggests that if a concept is complex, containing different aspects and corresponding parts, it can be upgraded to form a theme on its own. The latter was not considered in this phase but was not excluded from taking place in the process.

Short responses and elaboration from some participants have made the task challenging in identifying themes because sometimes there is not enough text to support that pattern. However, I attempted to consider short utterances and relate them to other participants' discourses, seeking qualities, such as *coherence* and *relatedness* (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Concepts within themes align with context and events. Therefore, some ideas can be found in different categories as they express different functions in relation to participants' stories.

For example, being distanced from family relations and environment for a period was understood in two ways. First, this idea may communicate one of the difficult psychological aspects participants, particularly campus-based, struggled with during transition as they moved from the familiar to unfamiliar. Second, it may refer to how some participants started evaluating the new setting in relation to their feelings. Consequently, this concept is understood as one of the constraints which affected many students as well as participants' awareness and understanding of the implications that transition could have on both short and long-term horizons. The table below shows preliminary themes, each with a specific colour, associated with a set of organising concepts. At this stage, preliminary themes and their categories are not yet definitive, but subject for review in the next stage:

1.Students' general attitudes after school completion	2.Why higher education?	3.Reality vs earlier Perceptions and Imagination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Progressing to HE is one of the primary objectives (dream realisation) -Flexibility to choose among a variety of courses -In-depth understanding of complex matters -HE as an important stage in education -Knowledge acquisition -Transition into HE is similar to other life transitions -Happiness -Optimism about a successful university experience -Self-satisfaction after completion -Feeling anxious about unpredictable events -Uncertainty and doubt about the foreseeable change -Unprepared for university life -Superficial ideas about what HE looks like -Planning ahead to undertake the chosen course and having an anticipated transition: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Cultivation education/ Developing one's manners, i.e., (acquiring more knowledge and getting acceptable marks before entering HE). -Having a fixed mental structure about what HE looks like: 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Acquiring and sustaining knowledge -Getting substantial guidance and support -Persistence and course completion -Developing a sense of independence and -Developing management skills -Seeking personal growth and maturity -Getting a good job -Satisfactory career options -Dream realisation elsewhere -Changing the setting because of socio-political situation -Family interference and personal aspirations were undermined -Seeking new experiences independently -Enrolment at university was a mere alternative: previous plans went wrong which caused disappointment and disengagement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Expectation incongruence (most of the expectations were not manifesting). -Events took other directions than was previously imagined to happen -Different mindsets: heterogeneity of attitudes -New roles and assumptions to incorporate -Unconvinced by the situation (being lost in transition) -Experiencing loneliness and anxiety -Homesickness: lack of family attention, affection and social care and support -Apprehension (anxiety) -Uncertainty: not sure what to do -Lack of background information about transition and newly implemented courses -Little information was communicated to students about the university system (not being well informed) -Remorseful feeling: A feeling of regret of enrolling at university -Poor management skills: Inability to navigate daily activities independently -Recurrent industrial actions -Drug consumption within the university accommodation

<p>foreseeing situations from a fixed personal view: Having extra time for activities outside the university life (training courses) Having less pressure than they used to at school Receiving more input from lecturers.</p>		<p>-Confusion and stress during exams</p> <p>-Significant differences in terms of methodology, lecture delivery, curriculum, and assessment.</p> <p>-Poor engagement with the university life</p>
4. Personal aspirations and things fall apart: factors impacting transition and foreseeable objectives	5. The sequels of expectation mismatches on students' emotional, social and academic well-being and goals.	6. Significance and consequences of experiencing transition
<p>-Family influence undermined personal goals: -The importance of undertaking university studies in the local context (reason)</p> <p>-The effect of social and administrative unfairness: -Nepotism and bureaucracy</p> <p>-The impact of injuries on professional success: -losing their way and failing to make dreams come true (professional career).</p> <p>-Insufficient means of transportation: -Time consuming and the inability to do extra work at home</p> <p>-Fatigue and low energy: due to daily commuting to university</p> <p>-Insufficient information about the setting because orientation has not been provided</p> <p>-Not having been offered suitable resources and advice for in-depth exploration and engagement</p>	<p>-Bearing constant stress became more difficult</p> <p>-Mental confusion and high level of negativity. The inability to evaluate and understand the situation</p> <p>-Not believing in the chosen path (experiencing aspirational bankruptcy)</p> <p>-Unconvinced by the actual situation</p> <p>-Unable to establish the meaning of the situation</p> <p>-Not being mindful of the potential value of their time at university</p> <p>-Being lost in the new environment</p> <p>-Difficulties in adjusting the mindset in relation to new assumptions</p> <p>-difficulties in accommodating different mentalities</p> <p>-Poor assimilation: the inability to understand the relationship between institutional procedures and curriculum objectives</p>	<p>-Self-reliance: becoming the doer through discovering the inner capabilities (developing an internal locus of control/intrinsic motivation)</p> <p>-Implementing new learning techniques</p> <p>-Developing self-reliant behaviour to extend knowledge beyond the university boundaries</p> <p>-the ability to understand the complexity of (his) situation</p> <p>-Being in charge of the daily necessities without external help</p> <p>-Developing qualities like responsibility and patience</p> <p>-Academic self-reliance and active engagement</p> <p>-Projecting/reflecting and anticipating future situations and the way to mitigate them with minimal losses.</p> <p>-Placing oneself in the assumed position</p> <p>-Satisfactory engagement and positive academic results</p>

	<p>-Thoughts about quitting the university and change all the setting.</p>	<p>-Transitions are challenging</p> <p>-Gaining a sense of responsibility towards completing the university course led to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -strengthening motivations towards achieving (her) dream <p>-Acquiring a sense of responsibility</p> <p>-Identifying and reflecting on potential scenarios and situations before they take place</p> <p>-Developing effective problem-solving skills</p> <p>-New meanings and new outlooks</p> <p>-Mindset revision</p> <p>-Time: through repeating the academic year: feeling <i>ashamed</i> and <i>guilty</i></p> <p>-The necessity to manage adversities and sustain progress</p> <p>-The necessity of investing efforts (with the aim of knowledge acquisition and in terms of developing more psychological maturity.</p> <p>-Overseeing (her) success and progress</p> <p>-Confidence and readiness for managing future transitions</p>
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Table 3: Students' situational dynamics in respect of their transition

What's going on? Assimilation via contextual appraisal: meaning starts looming despite hardship
<p>-Comparison between HS and HE</p> <p>-Poor assimilation of the institutional system</p>

- Self-questioning without any answers
- Much consideration of the negative side of things
- Loss of interest and focus
- HE is not suitable for (my personal) goals
- Unprepared for the new pedagogical and social landscapes
- Incongruency with the new roles
- Distance from familial environment (lack of affection and caring)
- Organisational measures were not congruent with students' needs
- Insufficient and lack of study resources (IT rooms, libraries)
- A shift in the language of instruction: from Arabic in HS into French in HE
- Transition into HE is similar to other life transitions:
Experiencing multiple transitions in the past due to sport competition
- Significant difference at the level of educational systems: LMD system is not clear enough for new students
- Exam planning was unclear followed by lack of advice and information
- Vagueness of the educational approach especially during lectures
- Transition as an unpredictable experience
- Much information to question
- A lot of paperwork which is time consuming and boring
- Being exposed only to basic and general matters:
-studies appeared to have only superficial objectives
- Transition into HE is only physical
- Inconsistencies and reluctance on the part of both students and lecturers
- Students are not sufficiently involved in the teaching and learning process
- Exam planning was unclear
- Lack of advice and information

Strategies and practices in handling transition

- Time
- Moving from countryside into town to live with relatives
- Consulting learning materials independently

- Social support
- Friendship
- Feedback from family and friends
- Undertaking a part time training course
- Getting used to stress
- Interacting with university students and staff
- Seeking virtual support (watching motivational videos)
- Thriving towards student identity formation
- Engaging in self learning and teaching
- Develop a new approach to establish compatibility with their new academic lifestyle
- Regular attendance of lectures
- Keeping up to date with course progress
- Methodological modules as a helpful way for understanding the educational system
- Developing the quality of attentiveness during lectures
- Background knowledge about the university setting
- Anticipation
- Possessing an inherent mental faculty of adaptation
- Venting of emotions
- Self-persuasion
- Seeking support from family
- Adaptation through *time*
- Doing nothing
- Developing new habits
- Practicing sport
- Being involved in sociocultural activities
- Not seeking any external support
- Time as a factor to establish more engagement
- Enduring the situation until the end
- Information seeking
- Having faith in God (*God's will*)
- Support seeking
- Familiarisation with the context
- Living with the situation until it came to an end
- Drawing on and taking advantage of lecturers' feedback
- Evaluating (appraising) the situation over time
- Developing academic habits
- Active interaction with friends
- Engaging in sport activities
- Visiting family and seeking support

Table 4: The process of meaning making and coping with transition

In this stage, temporary themes have been generated in order to summarise the overall significance of a given set of organising concepts. Eight preliminary themes and categories were identified in this stage. Themes were based on context, meaning and relationship among events. In the next phase, more engagement and consideration will be focused on the categories themselves, ultimately on the themes as well. The purpose in processing as such is to know whether further associations can be established between the preliminary themes. Moreover, the

possibility of identifying complex thematic structures, such as overarching themes, and sub themes was worth considering.

The initial themes generated so far have only a non-hierarchical (lateral) relationship, i.e., overarching themes. Whereas non-hierarchical relationships consist of independent patterns that communicate particular information, hierarchical relationships refer to potential associations and connections between themes. This means, amalgamating a set of elements under one leading pattern, for example, a set of sub-themes under one inclusive theme and then a group of themes under one overarching theme (Braun and Clarke, 2013). The latter option was considered throughout the following stage in which some clusters are fused, and themes are combined to communicate and capture a more complex meaning. The third stage below presents the process of reviewing initial themes and their meanings.

5.6. Reviewing and defining themes

This section of the process of comprehension combines two phases, reviewing the initial themes and defining the final patterns. It also demonstrates the procedure I followed in developing further the preliminary themes to communicate concise meanings in relation to participants' stories. I also reflected on whether preliminary patterns are worthwhile and relevant to be preserved in their initial format or reconsidering a potential alteration of their structures and associations with other preliminary themes. Prior to this, however, you will find below that the final themes are presented with their categories because most clusters were first reviewed and classified further into sub-categories, which communicate particular meanings. I consider, for instance, the group of concepts under the first preliminary theme (**Students' general attitudes after school graduation**) as having a more meaningful aspect that could be classified into mini clusters within the same set of organising concepts. These sub-categories share meanings which were summarised via secondary themes:

Before Reviewing	After Reviewing
Preliminary theme 1: Students' general attitudes after school completion <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Transition into HE is similar to other life transitions -Flexibility to choose among a variety of courses -HE as an important stage in education -Knowledge acquisition -Happiness -In-depth understanding of complex matters -Optimism about a successful university experience -Progressing to HE is one of the priorities (dream realisation) -Self-satisfaction after graduating from school -Feeling anxious about unpredictable events -Having a fixed mental structure about what HE might look like: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anticipating situations from a personal view: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having extra time for activities outside the university life (training course) Having less pressure than used to be at school Receiving more input from lecturers. -Uncertainty and doubt about the foreseeable change -Unprepared for the university life -Superficial ideas about what HE looks like -Planning to undertake the chosen course and having an anticipated transition -Acquiring more knowledge and getting acceptable marks before entering HE. 	Students' feelings and perceptions prior to the university experiences A-Positive Attitudes and expectations about HE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -HE: Dream realisation -Flexibility to choose among a variety of courses -In-depth understanding of complex matters -Knowledge acquisition -An important stage in education -A bridge towards future aspirations -Transition into HE is similar to other life transitions. B-Emotional State <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Happiness -Optimism -Self-satisfaction -Apprehension -Uncertainty -Unpreparedness -Being Uninformed. C-Anticipating the transition c-1-Anticipatory actions prior to HE -Cultivation education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Planning to undertake a desired course and having an anticipated transition through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Acquiring more knowledge -Getting acceptable marks before transition. c-2-Some thoughts but not sure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Superficial ideas about what HE stands for -Having a fixed mental structure about what HE might look like. c-3-Anticipating the situation in HE and Seeing the self from a fixed mindset: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Having a fixed mental structure about what HE might look like such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Having extra time for activities outside the university life (training course) -Having less pressure than used to be at school -Receiving more input from lecturers.

Table 5: An illustration of how preliminary themes and categories were reviewed and reclassified.

In the first column on the left, concepts share one overarching aspect, which is describing students' overall situation before transition. Subsequently, concepts are randomly written regardless of any association they might have between them. In the second column, I moved from the general to the specific, i.e., organising each category according to the extent to which organising concepts share similar meanings and, therefore considering them to form sub-categories within the same cluster. From the example on the right-hand column, we can see that the first category is classified into three small categories (a, b, c). The latter provide more information about the emotional and cognitive condition of students before experiencing their transition.

The table above is only an illustration, and the newly revised themes and categories are presented without referring to any of the preliminary themes and concepts as shown in the left column. This is in order to avoid as much redundancy as possible and to render the final themes clear and apparent. Additionally, a description and explanation of the final themes is provided with the aim of understanding the meaning of each final theme.

5.7. Final themes and reclassification of clusters

In this section, the reviewed patterns are presented, each with a distinct colour, followed by an explanation of the essence they communicate. It also provides an explanation about any thematic combination in forming overarching patterns. During the reviewing process, I attempted to formulate consistent and informative ideas, which can help elaborate clear and meaningful final themes as illustrated below.

Theme 1: Students' circumstances and motivations over the pre-transition period

Sub-theme 1: Students' feelings and perceptions prior to the university experience

Sub-categories

a-Positive attitudes and expectations about HE

- b-Emotional state
- c-Preparing for the university experience.

Sub-theme 2: Motivations for anticipating the university experience

Sub-categories

- a-Academic motivations
- b-Personal motivations:
 - b-a -Skill development
 - b-b-Seeking growth
- c-Marketing motives
 - c-a- prospects pursuits

The first pattern captures the students' circumstances before starting their journeys in HE.

The theme presents a variety of aspects, which provide an understanding of the students' condition after their HS completion. These aspects include emotional states (happiness and optimism), psychological states (positive attitudes and expectations), behavioural states (actions taken to maximise the chances of a successful transition) and motivational/aspirational thoughts towards having a successful university experience. These elements were emphasised by the participants' stories and formed the basis for our conversations in many instances.

Initially, sub-themes 1 and 2 were written as preliminary leading themes (students' general attitudes after school completion and why higher education? respectively). However, after reviewing the preliminary themes, I decided to combine these two preliminary themes under an overarching theme (students' circumstances and personal motives over the pre-transition period), thereby summarising both situations into one inclusive statement. This also led me to review the initial structures of the two preliminary patterns to become sub-themes with the titles: students' feelings and perceptions prior to the university experience and motivations for anticipating the university experience. The reason for combining these sub-themes under one overarching pattern is predominantly related to the fact that the two constituents took place before students experienced transition. This can be traced back to when students were either

still studying in their final year, or over the summer period prior to registration. Therefore, aspects such as time, motivations and feelings were thought to be complementary over this period.

Theme 2: Starting the transition experience and things fall apart

Sub-theme 1: Factors impacting personal aspirations and future goals

Sub-categories

a- HE as the remaining option to take due to external influences

- Personal aspirations vs parental wishes
- Unsuccessful temptation in undertaking professional pathways:
 - Social/administrative misconduct
 - Physical injuries

Sub-theme 2: The clash between reality and previous expectations.

Sub-categories

- a-Value incongruence and expectation mismatches
- b-Incompatibility with the social setting
- c-Emotional instability
- d-Contextual concerns:
 - d-a-Challenges and unpreparedness for university life
 - d-b-Accounting and comparing aspects of both HE and HS amid transition
 - d-c-Physical hardship due to:
 - lack of transportation means,
 - commuting daily long distance from home to university.

Sub-theme 3: The sequels of expectation mismatches on students' objectives, emotional, social and academic well-being

Sub-categories

a-Negative Impact

- a-a-Emotional impact:
 - The effect of negative emotions on cognitive reasoning

a-b-Enduring a high level of liminality

b-Poor institutional engagement

b-a- An inability to navigate the system

b-b-Social impact

This theme provides insights and understandings of the participants' situations while experiencing transition. It covers the outset of transition in relation to participants' stories. The title 'starting the transition experience and things fall apart' suggests the beginning of the transition journey into HE and then followed by unpredictable events and situations, which rendered the students' university experience unstable and uncomfortable at some extent. The latter phrase "things fall apart", taken from the works of William Bulter Yeats's poem (1920) *The Second Coming* and then Chinua Achebe's novel (1958) *Things Fall Apart* (Appendix Two, p. 366). This phrase is used in this work particularly to discuss experiences which did not turn out as expected by participants after completing HS because of a variety of external influences.

This theme refers to the way in which personal aspirations were undermined because of the presence of external forces. As a result, unhelpful aspects, including, for example, values incompatibility, emotional instability, familial and social inconsistencies impacted negatively participants' experiences. Students endured all these factors in their transition because what they expected and planned had turned upside down while having the experience. The theme has three sub-themes, which were initially considered as independent patterns. These sub-themes communicate events and situations which were following each other and unfolding at the beginning of transition; they communicate interrelated ideas and circumstances which should not be separated. In doing so, this can be viewed as a way of showing how complex participants' experiences of transition were, at the outset in a logical order of events. Additionally, this adds layers of meaning through which the reader can keep track of how events connect to each other.

Theme 3: What is going on? Appraisal of personal/contextual situation

-Categories

a-Personal wellbeing was at stake

-Being in a perplexing condition

- Poor assimilation of the institutional system
- Self-questioning without answers
- Incongruency with the new system
- Issues with self-esteem
- Loss of interest and focus
- Unpreparedness for the new pedagogical and social landscapes.

-Emotional appraisal

- Negativity bias: considering the negative side of things
- Distance from the familial environment (lack of affection and caring)
- Not being mindful of the potential value of their time at university

b-Institutional concerns

- Induction was not in place
- Orientation was not given and insufficient information about the setting

-Pedagogical and curriculum appraisal

- A shift in the language of instruction: (from Arabic in HS into French in HE)
- Organisational measures were not congruent with students' needs
- Insufficient resources: lack of study means (libraries, computers and IT rooms) affecting research
- Different educational system: LMD system is not clear enough.
- Method of teaching: vagueness of the educational approach especially during lectures.

-Absence of in-depth exploration: Being exposed only to basic and general matters

Inconsistencies and reluctance from the parts of both students and lecturers.

- Students are not sufficiently involved in the teaching and learning process.

-Academic assessment: Exam planning was unclear and a significant lack of advice and information beforehand.

-Departmental concerns: Poor administrative service

- Much information to enquire about
- A lot of paperwork (time consuming and boredom)

c-Transition from participants' perspectives

- Transition into HE is only physical
- Transition as an unpredictable experience
- Transition into HE is similar to other life transitions

Experiencing multiple transitions in the past due to sports competitions.

This theme demonstrates participants' initial thoughts, appraisals and impressions about the new educational setting. It highlights their attempts in terms of meaning-making amid challenging times of their transition. This includes evaluation of the personal condition and institutional discrepancies. Participants' appraisal was progressive, moving from the personal to the pedagogical/institutional. This also involves constructing an overall understanding of what the systemic transition into HE would mean for them in relation to their goals and other life aspects.

Predominantly, institutional and pedagogical inconsistencies overwhelmed participants' well-being and university engagement. This came just after participants' feelings of confusion and their inability to establish congruency with the situation. These layers of challenges impacted the quality of the transition experience because having issues with self-esteem and a can-do attitude might have caused participants to be unable to manage the situation confidently. Spending a few weeks at university was enough for participants to identify pedagogical and administrative gaps that did not meet the requirements for ensuring an ultimate experience for the new university students. For most participants, receiving the appropriate information and support for a successful transition was far from true.

Although these participants' observations are exclusively rooted in their subjective personal experiences, such thoughts are informative and provide an image of what experiencing the transition into HE looks like within the Algerian educational context. Moreover, engagement with participants' perceptions clearly showed the range of challenges (institutional in particular), which were unsupportive for a straightforward, successful student transition.

Theme 4: Students' coping behaviour in accordance with the type of transition experienced

Sub-theme 1: Adaptation amid non-event transitions

a-Maladaptive behaviour

- Time:** a factor of establishing more engagement.
- Having faith in God, but no further actions taken
- Doing nothing: helpless
- Not seeking external support: the inability to take stock of environmental resources, support from other social members.

b-Problem and emotion forms of coping:

b-a- Problem forms of coping

- Undertaking a part time training course
- **PSS: academic self-reliance**
 - Engaging in an autolearning process
 - Mindset: constructing a new approach to establish compatibility with the new academic life.
 - Developing academic and healthy habits

-Assimilative behaviour: appraisal of the situation over time.

-Familiarisation with the context.

b-b-Emotional form of coping

-Emotional regulation:

-Avoiding loneliness: active interaction with friends (Friendship as a gap filler in the absence of family)

-Tacking stock of media resources: seeking virtual support through watching motivational videos.

-Visiting family: seeking support and affection.

-Maintaining personal wellbeing:

-physical wellbeing: Sport activities

-Social wellbeing: engaging with environmental resources, such as sociocultural activities (conservation of resources).

Sub-theme 2: Thriving towards identity formation amid an anticipated transition

a-Active engagement behaviour

a-a-Emotional level:

- Support seeking through taking stock of the social context.
- Venting of emotions: a way of emptying stressful thoughts
- Self-persuasion: convincing the self to accept the reality and the necessity to mitigate it successfully.

a-b-Developing academic commitments and Problem-solving skills

- Consulting learning materials independently
- Regular attendance of lectures
- Keeping up to date with the course progress

a-c-Taking stock of environmental resources

- The need of extrinsic motivation:
 - Interaction with peers for advice and seeking information = developing intrinsic motivation and self-confidence over time.
- Drawing on available opportunities:
 - Moving into town to live with relatives
 - Cultural capital resources: background knowledge about the university setting through either personal visits or information from family members.
- Social support:
 - Information seeking via interaction with university students and staff:
 - Feedback and support from family and friends
 - Friendship.
- Academic engagement:
 - Drawing on lecturers' feedback to identify weaknesses and strengths.

b-Adjustment behaviour

- Locus of control: inherent mental faculty of adaptation
- Anticipating potential scenarios and situations
- Developing Academic habits: attentiveness during lectures and attending lectures regularly.

This theme accounts for the different routes participants used to reduce the impact of transition or successfully manage this challenging period. It summarises how students were mitigating transition depending on the type of transition in place, predominantly non-event and anticipated transitions. Two sub-themes were assigned to these two types to create a systematic understanding of coping behaviours in relation to the two constituents.

Two sub-themes, occasionally overlap regarding the actions students considered in managing transition, considering the avoidant aspect of students' behaviours. The former sub-theme, **adaptation amid a non-event transition**, aligns more with the process of adaptation through which students were, to some extent, attempting to accept and fuse with the situation

even though the latter was unhelpful and incompatible with their needs. This includes a range of behaviours, such as problem and emotional forms of coping and maladaptive behaviour. In the second type, however, participants have experienced an anticipated transition, which had an effect on students' motivation to persist in the new educational setting despite the hardship. Consequently, this resulted in the emergence of other types of actions, positive academic commitments and drawing on environmental resources, which helped students to establish more engagement with the nature of their transition.

Overall, distinguishing between the types of transition students were having was important in understanding participants' coping behaviours. That said, understanding the extent to which coping behaviours diverge or converge in different instances of transition is important. Considering this in the comprehension process helped me capture the complexity of students' transition experiences, each with its particularities, i.e., in relation to an individual's uniqueness.

Theme 5: Transition into HE involves a process of loss, learning, and acquisition

Sub-categories

a-Gains

a-a- Skill development

- Interpersonal skills
- Developing problem solving skills
- Developing an internal locus of control
- Developing a self-reliance perspective
- Self-observation and reflection
- Resetting motivations.

a-b-Growth

- Maturity
- Responsibility
 - Academic responsibility
- Independency
 - Outside the university life (accommodation).

b-Losses

- Time
- Aspirational bankruptcy

c-Acquired qualities

- Self-observation
- A sense of reflection: to position the self in unfolding situations.

Initially, this theme was entitled “significance and consequences of experiencing transition” to indicate how participants evaluated their overall experiences. However, considering the pattern further, I was able to detect more nuances which communicated further implicit meanings related, for instance, to the way some participants undertook a self-observation and reflection approach. For instance, if we consider the word “acquiring” in the latter theme, we can understand that self-observation and reflection resulting from having contact with different circumstances, which stimulate individuals to have an unsatisfactory feeling about a potential outcome. Consequently, reflecting and observing their conditions, with

the aim of better understanding and positioning themselves in the unfolding circumstances, became acquired qualities that stemmed from the transition experience via an evaluative and assimilative approach.

This theme encompasses three main sub-categories, summarising participants' assessments of their own experiences. Gains include a range of positive aspects that participants developed and acquired despite the hardship they endured during the transition. These skills are predominantly internal or psychological, which helps students mitigate challenging circumstances and learn new ways of approaching situations in the future. Growth is another sub-category that provides insights into the characteristics participants viewed as internal growth. Developing such aspects results from participants' interactions with the environment to find meaning in overwhelming and unpredictable situations. Although this was not an easy process for most students, we can say that from the process of understanding narratives, students' engagement with the new setting had to some extent, paid off positively. This was, for instance, due to having the opportunity to develop their skills of overseeing daily tasks independently.

Losses, however, are only applicable to a few participants, and these were the result of contextual influences on students' motivations towards achieving objectives. In this, aspects around time and aspirations were negatively affected, especially when some students had not considered enrolling at university after school completion. Setting other goals was not evident because students were attached to their initial personal objectives. Ultimately, this became a significant loss in transition because it implied concerns about regenerating or coming up with alternative options (goals) amid non-event transitions.

5.8. Thematic map

Having themed participants' stories, it is possible now to draw a thematic map, summarising the overall essence of the narratives. Generating a map allows the creation of a complex association between themes. It provides a general view of the process of meaning making process based on the researcher-participant established relationships in the fieldwork and my engagement and interpretations. This also allows me to aggregate and visualise the established patterns within a unified property.

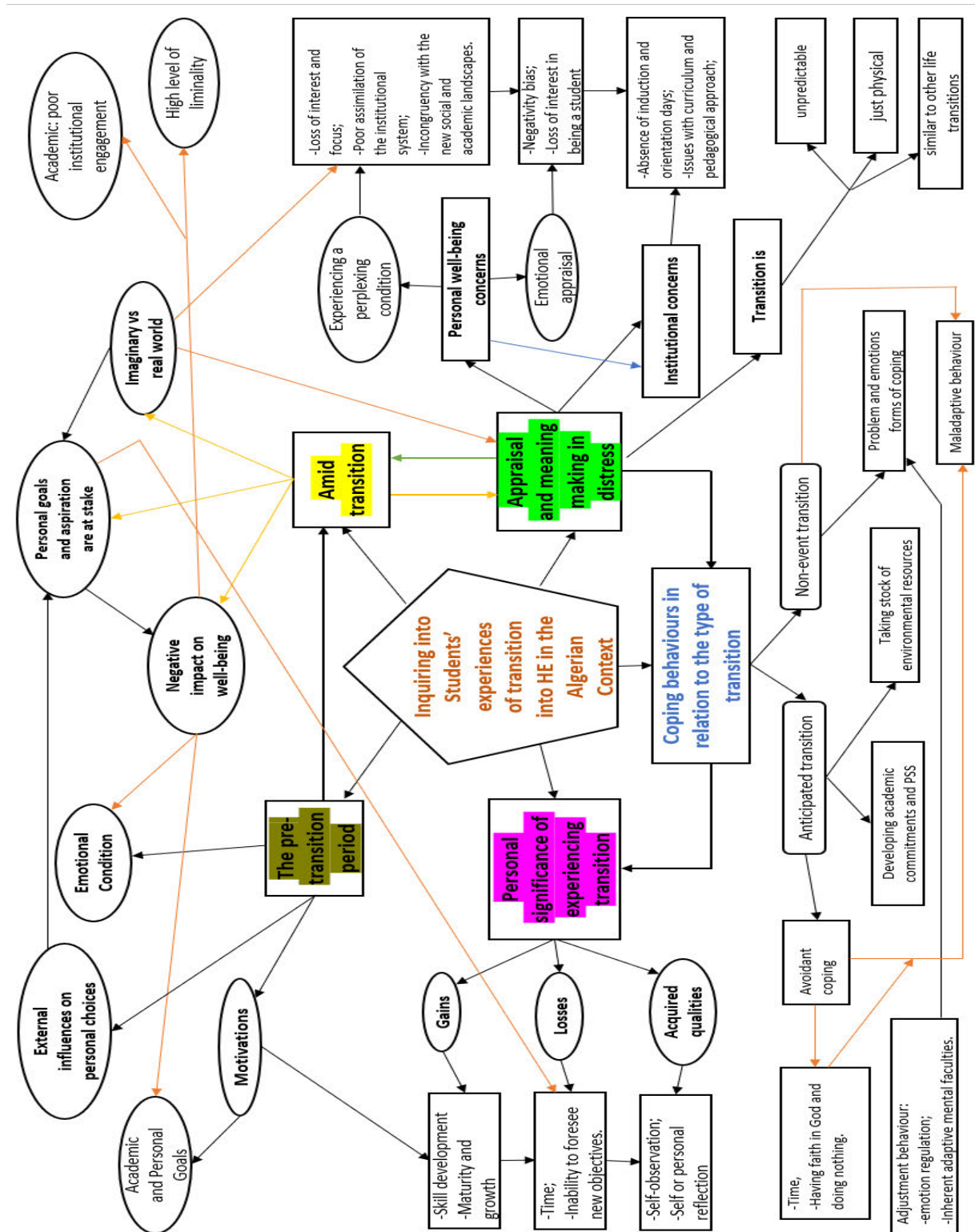


Figure 8: Thematic map summarising students' narratives of transition into HE in the Algerian context.

The thematic map shows that the process of experiencing the transition into HE in the Algerian context appears to have a progressive dimension. The centre of the map includes a

range of events which unfold over definite periods. These offer a general understanding of the nature and the way students were experiencing their transition within different entry points; each had specific characteristics and impact on each participant. Although the map shows the interrelated phases having a quintuple facade, this does not mean that all participants' experiences had a linear occurrence. Instead, I attempted to offer a logical connection between the patterns even though most of the participants' transitions had a back-and-forth movement before participants could establish meaning and student identity.

5.9. Conclusion

This chapter has provided detailed insights into the process of narrative comprehension of participants' stories of transition. It highlighted the six-stage method I drew on to generate concepts and themes that are of benefit and importance in the process of constructing meaning via a social interactive approach. The possibility of generating consistent assumptions about the subject became wider because of the presence of a variety of opinions and personal uniqueness through experiencing the same phenomenon. This led further to considering the way participants' stories of transition should be viewed as one narrative, previously referred to as *Gestalt*. Considering the latter, it emphasises association over disaggregation of the meaning of individuals' stories. It is therefore making suitable connections between narratives in order to come with an in-depth understanding of the subject. It is also primordial to value individuals' attitudes and perspectives to articulate and capture the complexity of the phenomenon. Other aspects, such as participants' feelings, emotions and contextual influences must be given attention to establish insightful interpretations of the stories.

Additionally, I have provided information about the process of data transcription and, especially translation in this chapter. It may seem to fit more in the methodological chapter, however, the fact that data translation was one of the crucial aspects in the understanding

process, it was more consistent in my view to include it as a part of the comprehension. That said, the process of data translation helped me not only to establish a prolonged engagement with participants' narratives but also to have the possibility to predict potential meanings of data before initiating the coding/concepts process. In this regard, the process of data transcription and translation can be viewed as a multi-layered phase, in which I had the opportunity to generate meaningful ideas (codes/concepts) while transcribing data and also thinking about suitable structures in the TL, which would suit the meaning of the data in the SL.

A major part of this chapter can be considered as the extension and application of the TA method. Predominantly, the application of the stages of TA was not a straightforward process, rather it consisted of a back-and-forth movement, particularly in terms of reviewing codes, clusters and themes. Initially, after reading and rereading the transcripts, a list of codes was generated representing the overall result of the coding process. This formed the basis in searching for themes in the following stage. Eight initial patterns were identified, each assigned to its specific category of codes, which formed clusters. However, meaning and association between preliminary themes was applicable in the reviewing stage. Themes which shared aspects, such as events which occurred in similar timeframes, were merged and categories were reclassified according to specific meanings they communicated. The result generated overarching themes, subthemes, clusters and mini clusters. This provided a complex combination of themes based on students' views and my understanding. As a result, the following five final themes were generated:

- **Students' circumstances and motivations over the pre-transition period,**
- **Starting the transition experience and things fall apart,**
- **What is going on? Appraisal of personal/contextual situation,**
- **Students' coping behaviour in accordance with the type of transition experienced,**

- **Transition into HE involves a process of loss, learning and acquisition.**

Having generated leading themes, it was possible to produce a thematic map in which summarised the whole process of meaning-making of participants' stories. The map clearly communicates the stages students experienced in their transitions and how meaning, identity and integration were formed via mitigating challenges and negotiation of meaning in a context which does not seem to offer efficaciously implemented student support strategies. Therefore, students had to draw most often on their own cognitive, environmental and behavioural faculties.

The next chapter will present the findings in relation to participants' voices, considering specific instances which I view as essential to present. In other words, placing the research in context to better understand the outcomes of the comprehension process from students' perspectives. I take the final themes as the leading pattern for the structure of the chapter.

Chapter 6: Findings

Awin yellan d-lfahem	Oh, wise man!
Sfahm iy-id amek akka	Please, explain to me how come?
D-acu d sebba iniyem	What's wrong with the dried fig
Mi tezdey degs tweeka	a worm dwells in it
S u-fella y-ecbeḥ y-eṛqem	Attractive from the outside
D-axxel mi t-ldi-y yerka	Alas, rotten inside
(Azem, 2015)	(translation).

My injury put my position at stake within the club team as replacements were needed urgently for competitions... What exacerbated my situation was that ... many of those replacements [athletes] ... were selected ... through nepotistic and bureaucratic routes (Hakim: research participant).

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the outcomes of the process of meaning making of participants' transition stories. This phase provides the opportunity to retell and reconstruct the narratives in relation to participants' perspectives. The objective, therefore, involves neither losing sight of the significant weight of participants' agency nor the valuable aspects related to interpretive outcomes. Considering these aspects helps to construct rigorous understanding of the subject in relation to those who experienced it.

Considering the types of transition students had experienced was paramount for understanding narratives from the outset. To identify the type of transition is to acknowledge one of the aspects/events of a story plot, contributing to shaping the nature of stories. Proceeding this way provided a clear structure of the findings, a structure through which participants' stories converge and diverge within a shared setting. It also benefited in contextualising the stories and understanding their development. This enables the reader to understand aspects, including context, plot, conflicts and resolution of stories, in an accessible way.

Often, one aspect of a participant's story is used to explain a particular situation. Narratives, in this regard, overlap according to relevance. Therefore, narratives may appear

disconnected in terms of presenting sequences of participants' stories. However, this approach helped organise stories into meaningful constituents to achieve fitness for purpose. This also created flexibility in moving from one participant's story to another to understand different instances via various views and circumstances.

The importance of researcher-participant voices is always at the heart of the auto/biographical approach since this provides a space for individuals' thoughts to interact. Such an approach links the intersubjective worlds by constructing social realities regarding context and its associated spaces. My personal experience is occasionally referred to when necessary to interpret implicit ideas, which were not applicable to reinforce because of insufficient elaboration from some participants. This chapter contains five main sections. Each part presents one of the five themes I generated in the previous chapter as follows:

6.2. Theme 1: Students' personal circumstances and motivations over the pre-transition period

6.2.1. Emotional state

"I wished to reach the university level" was Fatiha's feeling and impatience towards attending HE. This can be even more exciting for others when it becomes "my dream I wished to accomplish in life" (Farida). Both participants had positive feelings about engaging in a university experience. This, in many cases, resulted in a positive emotional state characterised by self-satisfaction, optimism and happiness. In this regard, Yasmina made efforts to get "satisfactory marks aiming to equip me with good knowledge before...university." On the other hand, others considered a university experience as a "process to draw on for a better future...to reach your objectives" (Madjid).

From the participants' perspectives, HE was a significant move and positively impacted how some of them view their future. From my perspective, this moment was emotive and made me more confident, spurring my can-do attitude. It was a period in which I started to think ahead

about the extent to which HE could benefit me in achieving my goals. That is why students like Yasmina were aware of the necessity of developing academic skills which can aid her in having a successful university experience.

6.2.2. Positive attitudes, motivations and expectations about HE

6.2.2.1. Intellectual and personal development

Thinking about how a university experience can contribute to one's success was beneficial for participants' psychological well-being. These helped some participants build up their intrinsic motivation towards engaging with a university experience. Rezki, in this case, said:

My purpose for enrolling at university is for acquiring more knowledge, ... in order to work ... after my graduation.....and to know how to be responsible and be able to manage myself much better while dealing with obstacles because these are inevitable over the course of life....The way life is rapidly changing requires many skills to develop amid situations. HE seems to be the right place to engage in this...as this can provide more engagement either intellectually or on a broader level (Rezki).

In addition to the possibility of learning substantial knowledge and developing responsible and mature behaviour, Rezki's Quote also refers to how a university experience can be a source of orientation and self-construction. It is a strategy towards achieving desirable outcomes through investing in one's intellectual potential at university. In addition, we can understand that HE is considered a place where students can be equipped with the necessary skills and guidance in securing foreseeable prospects:

Having a university experience is a good option through which I can receive guidance, which can help me to draw and construct my own future because ... yes, now we study to acquire more knowledge and of course in the future any person would invest this knowledge to get a satisfactory job.... It is a process to draw a better future which allows you to reach your targeted objectives. Anyway, everyone has a dream in life, you know (Madjid).

Madjid's quote highlights the extent to which HE mediates between personal aspirations and learning new ways of self-management and overseeing one's conduct, including developing

autonomous behaviour and persistence. This flags the idea of growth in terms of developing competencies and strategies.

6.2.2.2. Seeking internal growth

Seeking internal growth, according to Yacine, was contingent on the extent to which the university experience is constructive for him:

The aim was to invest as much effort as possible in my studies; this way, I could acquire new knowledge that I had not had access to before. This also will enhance my psychological maturity... My progress after enrolling at university is positively shaping as I constantly learn new things. It is progressively developing despite resource scarcity and everything you already know. This changed my views because I now feel my mind is more open to other understandings (other disciplines and domains) that I did not know before (Yacine).

In line with the narrative, HE is, therefore, a place where individuals can achieve their potential, i.e., academically, socially and psychologically, promoting personal growth in various guises.

6.2.2.3. Having the possibility to choose from a variety of options

The idea that HE offers a variety of academic options compared to HS was a crucial element that motivated students to enrol at university. Such richness, as indicated below, can accommodate students' plans in realising their personal goals:

Attending university is more open, providing a variety of courses you may wish to undertake, compared to HS, which is more confined and has limited subjects. HE is also much more flexible regarding the different routes you may take to achieve your objectives. It is an opportunity to understand complex things in-depth (Madjid).

From this, most of his foreseeable success was in accordance with his decision to attend university. Moreover, knowledge acquisition was a stimulus for motivation towards fulfilling the intended goals.

6.2.2.4. Aiming for an overseas experience

The aim to travel abroad unfolded how some participants had a narrow or very specific objective, which motivated them to pursue studies at university or view HE positively. In this, HE has been viewed as a bridge towards achieving a particular desired outcome:

My main motivation is to realise one of my dreams which is having overseas experiences and exploring the richness of the world through travelling. For me, university is an important step to undertake to reach this objective. Yeah, basically, at this stage, I am studying to acquire the necessary background and get the required degree to travel and experience other things overseas (Farida).

Additionally, Lynda made it clear that her aim was not initially HE, and she would do her best to reach her objectives despite the challenges. One of her alternative plans was to attempt to travel overseas to realise her aspirations in other contexts:

H: What did transition into HE mean for you while you were studying at school?

-Lynda: ... Initially, I wanted to get my Baccalaureate (BAC) exam and then my plan was not HE. I did not want to pursue studies at university, but my family wanted me to study more, and this was not convenient for me. Now, I feel like I was obliged to undertake studies after finishing school.

H: I had the same feeling while experiencing this period, especially when I realised that I was talented at sports exercises at school. However, no one directed me to take other paths after school completion. My first weeks at university were meaningless. Even my family would not support me in taking other options beyond HE.

Lynda's dissatisfaction reflects inconsistencies within institutional management in Algeria. Predominantly, this caused Lynda a feeling of dissatisfaction, uncertainty and not being mindful of the time spent at university. She further elaborated:

H: So, what made you think to stop studying then?

Lynda: In fact, university in Algeria, you know...I don't believe that studying at a university in Algeria is something positive for me...it's better to undertake training within the private sector, and at least you can ensure and maximise success in the future.... Given the situation now, the only option I have is to

study. However, I will figure out how this can be beneficial... For example, how to travel abroad to find the opportunities I have not found here.

Expressing intentions to travel abroad only had a few specific reasons, such as exploring the richness of the world or establishing contact with different cultural backgrounds. Instead, Lynda's quote implicitly refers to changing the context towards goal pursuit, implying dissatisfaction with the local setting.

6.2.3. Anticipating the transition

6.2.3.1. Viewing HE in relation to personal preferences

H: Would you please tell me your thoughts and overall transition experience at the university?

Farida: Well, when I was studying at school, I considered HE one of the dreams I wished to accomplish in my life. I thought a university would be a place where I would not have much pressure as in school. Like that, I thought to have more time to do other things, such as training jointly with studying.... I don't know.... I would have time compared to school, where we have to attend classes from 8 am till 4 pm. I thought the programme at university was not too busy and lecturers had all the information related to the course. But (laughter) I found the contrary once I started here, though. I realised that we, as students, must also take our part in understanding the subjects. I found studying challenging as I must do more research to understand better.

The quote indicates that Farida foresaw university life from a fixed personal view. This is because her initial ideas clashed with reality once she engaged in the subsequent experience. This was unpredictable and led to her experiencing surprising negative emotions. The idealisation of the university context prior to the transition could have been more helpful for her.

Other participants viewed the road to HE as blurred and unclear, resulting in anticipating the experience with anxiety. Below is an illustration of how institutional inconsistencies, in terms of lack of orientation, resulted in student apprehension:

Before starting my course at university, I anticipated with great apprehension some of the modalities characterising university life. For example, we needed more information about the nature of assessment at university and the measures they used to evaluate students. This was unclear.... my experience of transition... to begin the transition into HE in this context... is only physical. There is no orientation...no orientation at all for new students... Teaching methods in delivering lectures and exam planning are still vague, and it is not easy to understand how all these are processed. There is no orientation or information about the system, and little is known about the techniques used in shaping the methodology of the university. Simply, they had not provided us with orientation... (Yacine).

Orientation was a crucial aspect which Yacine had to emphasise, indicating the gap which separates new students and university life. Both participants communicated the negative aftermath (perplexing condition and losing their bearings) of not being well prepared and informed about what is coming next after completing school.

6.2.3.2. Preparing for the university experience

6.2.3.2.1. Thriving towards an anticipated university experience

H: Could you tell me about a significant moment at school before you transition to university?

Yasmina: well, my experience at school was quite interesting and stable as I had many friends and friendly teachers, but the last year was intensive and, to a certain extent, stressful because the final exam (BAC) was approaching...My plan was... I wanted to complete school with satisfactory marks to equip myself with good knowledge before progressing to university. This made me feel stressed and very susceptible to pressure. However, believing in my objectives motivated me to go ahead, having great aspirations towards success and positive expectations about, for instance, choosing the course I wish to be an expert in once at university. Now, although there are difficulties, I am happy that all my efforts have paid off.

The process of strengthening academic skills was apparent in some of the narratives. This can be understood, for example, through the actions, Yasmina had to consider either before her school completion or during the waiting period after passing the BAC exam. For Yasmina, such a plan helped ensure an anticipated transition into university. Having a specific objective insight strengthened her quality of self-efficacy.

6.3. Theme 2: Starting the transition experience and things fall apart

6.3.1. Factors impacting the university experience, personal aspirations and objectives

Samir “wondered why students were not given enough preparation and advice” before starting university. For him, the university experience “did not appear real”, as he expected. Uncertainty about the new experience led Samir to have a sceptic idea after HS. He further said:

... Honestly, I was sceptical about this, but the fact we were celebrating our success and enjoying the moment made me and some of my friends neglect what a university experience might consist of. Now, things are occurring quickly, and I still cannot deal with all that, especially after what happened (military experience) before enrolling at the university (Samir).

At this stage, anxiety did not significantly affect the participants’ well-being. Positive feelings were the overwhelming aspects during the pre-transition period and contact with the new setting was still not yet established. In this regard, Fatiha stated:

My thoughts about undertaking a course at university were characterised by positivity. I believed for a while that university is an environment where I could find various opportunities...Currently, however, my view has slightly changed. I would say that everything here at the university has changed.

Therefore, not being immersed and prepared for the new educational setting was inconvenient for both participants. This appears in their conceptualisation of the HE context, which did not match the actual situation. Moreover, considering Amina’s, Lynda’s, Samir’s, and Hakim’s cases below illuminates how other contextual features, including familial, social and administrative behaviours/practices, impacted students’ aspirations, goals and decisions to take different trajectories.

6.3.1.1. Amina’s and Lynda’s cases: prioritising parental perceptions over personal choices

Parental involvement in students’ plans impacted the linearity of their goals. Initially, both participants preferred to undertake apprenticeships which could yield better prospects:

Honestly, if I consider my ultimate dream is to undertake culinary courses and then be able to open my own business company to become specialised in the art of cooking. These are my real motivations.

Therefore, studying at university is just to satisfy my parents, who wanted me to consider undertaking studies at university. For them, HE is a key to my future...

H: Well, what you just said reminds me of when I was about to start university. I began to think that undertaking a university course immediately after school was not a good option. Rather it would have been more convenient if my school had advised my parents to sign me up with a sports club in my local area so that I could start a sports career. This, unfortunately, did not happen. Additionally, all my family, particularly my mother, were excited to see me starting HE, so this was a kind of indirect pressure towards the necessity to attend and achieve satisfactory results at university. As you can see, you and I appear to have the same story but in a different shape.

At the beginning of her story, Amina acknowledged that she was enduring academic fluctuations as it happened and that she “is still feeling guilty and ashamed because [she is] a repeating student.” However, her experience’s underlying events started to emerge during the time she retrospectively recalled previous situations in relation to external forces.

Similarly, Lynda considered her enrolment at university as an obligation to satisfy her parents’ wishes:

(...) I felt like I was obliged to undertake studies after school completion. My family wanted me to enrol on a university course, which I did not want. My parents’ strong beliefs in HE led me to take their perceptions into account and put off my initial goals aside. However, this is only an interim. Since I have not..., well, in fact, I am now carrying my studies so that it can open new horizons for me, such as travelling abroad. Since I have not succeeded in achieving my goals in my country, I will try elsewhere and probably and hopefully find the opportunity I have not been given here.

The idea of having an overseas experience persists in Lynda’s speech, particularly when she added:

(...) I had no will to pursue studies at university. In fact, a university in Algeria, you know...I don’t believe that studying at a university in Algeria is something positive for me...it’s better to undertake training within the private sector, and at least I can ensure and maximise success in the future...

The interpretations here are twofold. First, Lynda was not convinced that studying at university could provide her with positive outcomes in the Algerian context. However, she may reconsider university within another cultural setting as far as the latter aligns with her needs. The second

meaning, which seems close to Lynda's real intentions, is that her ultimate goal after completing school was attempting to start an early professional career by undertaking vocational education within the private sector rather than attending HE.

6.3.1.2. Hakim's and Samir's cases: The struggle with administrative corruption and physical injuries

Both social-administrative unfairness and injuries were enough to end the participants' plans at an early stage. Hakim's experience provides an understanding of such situations.

6.3.1.2.1. Hakim's case

I had not had sufficient support and follow-up throughout my injury. This put me off and made me anxious, and.... also, my injury put my position at stake within the club team as a replacement was needed urgently for that competition. Having no guarantee to continue with my sport career after my recovery was frustrating, and this was my major concern.

Although Hakim's strong belief and motivation towards a successful career in sports were reaching their peak, things started to take another direction the time he had a leg injury during a competition. Other challenges within his sports club shortly followed such unexpected circumstances. Specifically, he experienced concerns mainly at the administrative level, including bureaucracy and nepotism, negatively impacting his persistence:

... What exacerbated my situation was that those selected as replacements were not competent enough and had not enough experience in competitions. Also, many of them have been selected not through their competencies but through nepotistic and bureaucratic routes.

This affected his well-being amid the injury, hence having been forced indirectly to disengage with sports team associations. His last option, therefore, was enrolling on a university course without any foreseeable objectives. Experiencing the transition into HE appeared to be another challenge for Hakim as it took place just after what recently happened to him, and he still has not fully recovered from that anxiety. The transition to university appeared to occur at the wrong moment in Hakim's life. Even during the transition to university, Hakim has been enduring

sequels related to his previous experience. This made him experience disappointment and he became emotionally unsettled:

Honestly, the previous experience affected my self-confidence and made me frequently account for the wrong side of every situation at university. This became even worse when I realised that I would spend most of my time away from home for a long time doing everything on my own.

6.3.1.2.2. Samir's case

Joining the military was the primary goal which Samir wanted to achieve. According to him, “this was [the] only plan after finishing school, and it would be difficult for [him] to find another option if the application were rejected”. Initially, “I enrolled at university, and afterwards, I suspended my studies in the early weeks because my application has been successful”. Samir was enthusiastic, as his plan was concretising and following a linear occurrence:

I applied to become a member of the military forces as being young would give me more chances to join that position. I was optimistic about the result and happy when my application was successful.... It was great because I was doing the task I wanted despite some demanding activities inside the military institution.

Although Samir's plans and efforts started to pay off, the experience in the military centre was not easy. Subsequently, he resumed his university course since it became the only ultimate option to replace his unsuccessful military experience:

Hope towards success was looming at that time. However, things started to get worse for me at the time I felt pain at the level of my back. We were engaged in intensive training over two months... It was physically and mentally taxing. Adhering to strict routines was unquestionable. The ongoing physical activities caused me to twist my back, and I have been diagnosed with a serious injury. To recover, I needed significant time...for this reason, I cancelled my contract. My only option was re-enrolment at university.

The transition to university was a multi-layered challenge because, this time, Samir was no longer a traditional student who had just progressed from school and immediately enrolled on HE. Instead, he was a person who had an unsuccessful professional experience, trying to

find out new goals at university with low motivation. He referred to his experience in the latter as “unfortunate” due to several factors:

(...) HE should characterise the scientific research aspect within teaching-learning processes, presenting a new stage beyond school...this did not appear true in my experience (...). Also, industrial actions take place regularly. These cause me a loss of focus and interest (...).

Samir’s thoughts and observations indicate how transitioning to university within the Algerian context can diverge from what participants expected to find and experience.

6.3.2. The clash between reality and previous expectations

6.3.2.1. Value incongruence, emotional instability and contextual concerns

H: After your short experience in the military centre, what were your thoughts about HE?

Samir: What I thought about HE is not the same and did not meet my expectations. For me, moving to HE can be described as a catastrophic experience (...).

Carrying on Samir’s story can provide more nuances about his state and events, particularly within the university accommodation:

As I said, the injury affected me badly physically and mentally. I couldn’t keep pace with the programme. As a result, I cancelled my contract, which cost me both time and the job I wanted to do and my first-year at the university. When I returned to my studies, I had neither motivation nor enthusiasm; that’s why I said this experience was unfortunate and catastrophic for me. In addition, I observed some unacceptable behaviours inside the student accommodation, which I did not like at all and should not be within a university environment. Having seen this made me uncomfortable.

H: Could you please explain or give examples of those inappropriate behaviours?

Samir: I have seen students acting as drug dealers inside the accommodation. As a result, many students are taking toxins and probably becoming addicted to them. The university has to act against this immediately before it becomes uncontrollable. That was not really what I thought about being here.

Coming back from an unsuccessful professional experience was likely to have been traumatic for the participant. This was further exacerbated by observing inappropriate behaviours within the university’s social life, which were against institutional ethical conduct. With academic life, Madjid struggled to understand the nature of the university academic system:

H: Could you talk me through the challenges you encountered during your transition?

Madjid: yeah, sure, the first time I came here ... As I said, when I studied at school, we used to study the same programmes with the same modules, but at university, in my opinion, there are many choices, ... most of the courses we undertake here are different from those at school. This was a challenge for me because I had no background knowledge about these subjects prior to HE. Also, some of the courses were implemented recently within our programme (...). But God willing, I am sure I will cope with all those changes very soon.

In this respect, Madjid underwent a state of confusion because he needed help understanding in which way the two systems differ. For him, it “was not easy to have a smooth engagement (...). It was always difficult for me” to engage with the new context.

The timetable at the university was inconvenient for Amina. This had many implications for her life outside the university:

H: I just want to go back to when you said your expectations about HE did not turn out as you thought. Were there any other situations you considered to have been a significant challenge while experiencing transition during the first semester?

Amina: ..., I felt tired and stressed, especially in my case, living away, and I had to commute daily to the university. Sometimes, there was a shortage of transport, which made me spend too much time outside, especially when I finished late, around 4.30-5 pm. It is the traffic peak when all people are rushing to get back home. Once at home, I feel exhausted and have low energy. Therefore, no time left to revise my lessons or do extra work.

6.3.3. The consequences of expectation mismatches on students' well-being and progress

6.3.3.1. The emotional impact

Fatiha elaborated further on how her motivation was impacted by what she considered as an absence of care from her family and university:

Fatiha: (...) I believed for a while that HE is an environment where I could find various opportunities, of course, with the institution's help. This was an important aspect I considered before my transition.... In fact, this is what I was expecting when I was in HS.

H: How about now, as a university student, do you still have the same expectations?

Fatiha: ...well, at the first stage, I did not want to put an end to my studies and aimed to progress to HE to achieve what I hoped in the past. Currently, however, my view has slightly changed. I would say that everything here at the university has changed, like the educational system. I feel like no one is

asking about you. No one cares about you. I felt like studying or not, attending lectures or not, and being present at university or not was the same. For me, this was unhelpful and quite intensive, considering my actual situation being an on-campus student. I mean, during the day, I had to make efforts to understand the different aspects of the university context. By the end of the day, I have also to bear the different vibes inside the student accommodation.

Negotiating the new social setting was difficult, considering new peer connections were still absent. The multitude of mentalities was significantly incongruent with the participant's values. These factors hastened the emergence of negative emotions, which affected Fatiha's positive view and reasoning, particularly problem-solving.

6.3.3.2. Poor institutional engagement

Yasmina's and Lynda's situations can illustrate better the dynamics which characterised their university experiences. Although they had different types of transition (anticipated and non-event transition, respectively), both had concerns about the level of engagement with their courses and pedagogical system:

H: You have said that what you have already expected was not what you found. What impact did this have on you?

Yasmina: ..., it is not the same at all... I can't say exactly. I am in between. I feel a bit lost in this environment.

H: Could you please clarify further, probably with an example?

Yasmina: ...this might be related to the fact that education at university is different from HS. There are different methods of teaching and how lecturers deliver information, a significant number of students in the main lecture room, ... many things I cannot remember immediately. All of these were new to me, and I have not become used to these. Generally, for me studying at university is complicated.

H: To be honest, my first weeks at university were almost similar to what you have just said. I was struggling to find the right direction and place to attend lectures because I was unfamiliar with these. Indeed, it was weird, too, for me to see the new structure of the main lecturing space. You know, we used only to study in small and flat spaces with limited numbers of students. After I found where the lecture would take place, it was later that I realised that it was among my responsibilities to take notes of what lecturers were explaining.

On the other hand, Lynda viewed the academic situation at university as having significant inconsistencies, which made her unable to develop intrinsic motivation:

H: As your initial plan after completing school did not take place, but instead enrolling at university, how did you manage this experience until the present time?

Lynda: ..., well, ... I would say it is like students are not involved enough within the teaching and the learning process. I think students are not given enough tools to do their research. Also, there is a considerable lack of study materials, and research means inside the university... We do not have many library spaces, and IT rooms to research.... (laughter!). Honestly, I feel like I am losing my future because I still do not know about it, in addition to being fed up with the situation. It causes constant stress.

H: What you have just said presents the roots of this research. It was challenging, and in my first year, I was almost lost. I was desperate to get support as there was no student service to ask for help. Learning materials like books generally had only one or two copies, and it took a lot of work to get them at the first stage. After recalling all these, the institution should make substantial changes, including its policy and revise further student needs thoroughly.

Both Lynda and Yasmina's situations are significantly matching my previous experience. All three of us had issues navigating the academic, social and institutional structures, which were, to a certain extent, challenging to step into and make meaning of.

6.4. Theme 3: What is going on? Appraisal of personal/contextual situation

6.4.1. Personal wellbeing was at stake

It is like you invest money in a business and then suddenly experience bankruptcy. The fact that I am undertaking my first year for the second time makes me feel unenthusiastic and uncomfortable. For me, the cost is time and motivation (Amina).

Amina had frustrations about her situation being a repeating student. On the other hand, Hakim expressed negativity bias resulting from his previous experience:

After what I have experienced in the past, I can say now that my confidence was low, and I always consider the negative side of things than the positive ones before even they occur. This rendered my experience unsettling (Hakim).

Having not realised his ultimate dream of becoming a successful athlete in karate, this had negative repercussions on Hakim's self-confidence and attitude in viewing the extent to which he could be successful at university.

Other participants had sceptical thoughts about the potential value of undertaking a university experience. Initially, Lynda viewed her experience as likely “I am losing my future”. She further added:

Lynda: (...) I still have no idea how my current situation will inform my future. I am still having difficulties understanding the implications of transition and the situation for both short- and long-term horizons.

H: Now, you have spent almost six months at university; well, you told me that university was not your initial choice, but given the actual situation, what impact do you think the transition had on you as a university student?

Lynda: If I consider the actual situation, it does not accommodate my needs. In fact, the thing I am struggling with is stress. It is overwhelming, and I am fed up with it.

Both participants seem to not value the time spent at university. This is due to the inability to link the actual situation with personal motivation. In the latter, the absence of a good reason why Lynda would pursue studies at university suggests the difficulty of seeing the positive side of the experience.

6.4.2. Institutional / pedagogical concerns and the meaning of transition

6.4.2.1. Induction and getting students started

H: Could you talk me through your first weeks at university?

Yacine: (...), the beginning was a bit difficult, especially for someone who has no idea about the setting. Any student can find him/herself lost at some point in such a context. Because there are no orientation programmes to help students better understand the university setting, it is ... it is unlikely for them to make meaning on their own.

H: Indeed, on my arrival at university, I found myself alone because all my school friends followed other pathways and subjects. I was a bit naïve; during my first year, I came daily to university as I thought the academic year would start in early September as in HS. However, the irony was that we did not start until mid-October. I waited a long time to hear about the exact date to finally start my studies.

Yacine: Normally, they should assign ... in every department a qualified adviser in charge of orienting new university students. Students find it difficult to understand substantial aspects related to HE. They have little knowledge about how the university system is running. I would say that pedagogy is in disorder. Someone should be placed to act as a student adviser to solve such problems and at least explain to students substantial information related to studying in the university

context. I feel like the student is ignored and has not given as much care as it is supposed to be. This kind of issue must be a priority.

According to Yacine, activities such as induction were scarce, and students, therefore, found it hard to make meaning amid their new experiences. This was Yacine's primary concern despite his knowledge about what university life may look like:

H: Considering all these factors, how would you describe your transition in that case?

Yacine: In my case, ... I would say that I did not encounter significant difficulties in my transition because I already had an idea about how this context functions.

H: Could you please explain this a bit more in relation to your knowledge about HE?

Yacine: Occasionally, I came here with my father when he was the head of the department of English. Also, when we were young, he used to talk about events and his daily experiences at work. This allowed me to know at an earlier stage what HE means. So, I have not had significant difficulties... it is not difficulties, ... Well I anticipated such an experience with some apprehension as I knew little about how work and studying at university differ from school. For example, the approach to teaching is not the same.

Yacine's evaluation of the setting not only covered the starting point of transition but extended to encompass additional elements related to the university management policy and the pedagogical situation in general.

6.4.2.2. Pedagogical and curriculum appraisal

6.4.2.2.a. Language of instruction

For Rezki, the language of instruction relating to his course was unanticipated:

(...) since we had the habit of studying in Arabic at school and now most of the courses are delivered in French....it is quite hard to get used to the new structures and language rules, and sometimes difficult to understand and remember. Attending lectures using only French is occasionally hard to understand as some students may not know that language well. It is a bit challenging in the beginning.

Studying a single language at university requires students to make more effort to improve their language proficiency, even if they have particular linguistic preferences. This brings an

additional necessity to become familiar with module terminologies to access the course information.

6.4.2.2.b. LMD educational system and student assessment

H: You said when exam schedules were communicated, you felt confused and stressed. Could you please explain this further?

Madjid: yeah, the fact that we have only two semesters which function with credits poses challenges for me. Progress is contingent on the results of both semesters, considering the core modules within specialities. Both semesters are connected to each other. It means if you get a low mark in the first semester it will affect the annual results because nothing can guarantee you will perform well in the second. The annual mark is a key to progress into the next stage. Last year, I asked questions every time to enquire about this subject. Well, I think most new students have not yet understood the LMD education system and its association with assessment. The beginning was always challenging.

Madjid had significant concerns about the vagueness of the LMD (Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate) system and how, for example, credits and core modules can affect progress. Some participants had difficulty understanding these principles and how their progress would be evaluated.

Additionally, questioning the teaching and learning methods was also one of Lynda's observations. To recall her quote again:

Students need to be more involved in the teaching-learning processes. I think students are not given enough means to do their research. Also, there is a significant lack of resources like books, IT rooms, and study spaces (...). This will not help us with in-depth exploration and improve our academic knowledge/performance (Lynda).

Yacine, in his turn, considered the curriculum content as having certain superficial aspects because it did not provide in-depth and critical elements to explore through research:

H: You have spoken before about the need and the benefit of orientation programmes for new students. As you are now a full-time student in French studies, is there anything else you think affects you and other students that needs improvement in the future?

Yacine: First, studies are essential for my professional career and mainly to develop my competencies. This would help me carry out my studies abroad because, as far as I knew, some international contexts dedicate significant efforts to developing education. In my opinion, here we are limited in terms of activities. Also, the process of studying and doing research is not in-depth... they are too general.

H: What do you mean by ‘general’?

Yacine: (...) we do not study thoroughly, and there is a dearth of initiating research. Most of us study just to succeed in exams. My initial thoughts were that transitioning to HE is a process of acquiring new things, going through new experiences and socialising with others. Therefore, we... become open to different mentalities... We learn through these experiences, contrary to HS, which was totally different.

6.4.2.2.c. Departmental concerns

Whereas pedagogical and curriculum concerns were participants’ observations and appraisals at the macro level of the institution, departmental concerns can be categorised as an appraisal of the new context at its micro level:

H: You have been enrolled on your chosen course. Did you have linear progress after your enrolment?

Rezki: ... Not really. I like the course (Tamazight Language) I have chosen... after that, I started to learn how things work at the university. In the first stage, it was a bit difficult. Then I started to establish relations with other students. Yeah... it was step-by-step. However, I have seen that my department had many issues, particularly in relation to student services at the level of administration services. I was constantly thinking about the best way to overcome these problems I encountered when I started university. For example, we had to submit much paperwork as a requirement to process students’ appeals and queries and get us started. This is time-consuming and, most of the time, boring.

According to Rezki, these concerns rendered the student administrative service deficient in terms of consistency and functionality in dealing with students’ needs.

6.4.2.3. The meaning of transition to HE: Yacine’s and Hakim’s perspectives

According to Yacine, “... transition into HE in this context... is only physical ...”, considering the absence of orientation activities before and during the transition. Hakim, however, viewed transition as having similar features to what he had already experienced in practising martial arts:

Changing places over the year was one of my routines, and this is something which I was used to doing. I travelled across the country and sometimes abroad when I had competitions. This offered me many opportunities to experience different transitions in which I have engaged with many people, protocols and other situations. For this reason, the transition to university has common aspects to those I experienced with sports activity, even if it is not my primary choice (Hakim).

Whether the transition is ‘physical’ or having ‘common aspects’ with previous experiences is challenging because each transition should be understood in relation to its context and maybe require actual coping behaviour. The following sections present the methods and strategies participants followed to minimise the impact of the different challenges or overcome hardship.

6.5. Theme 4: Students’ coping behaviour in accordance with the type of transition experienced

6.5.1. Adaptation amid non-event transitions

.... As I said before for me, studying at university was not a mandatory option in my life. This helped me to be mentally flexible to the new context, as I had no significant pressure. I mean, even if I start to appreciate my course in accountancy, I started to think how it may help me in the future when I start [maybe] a culinary business or just becoming an accountant (Amina).

Considering how to become a ‘fish’ in the water’ at university amid a non-event transition appears to have future implications regarding Amina’s initial objectives. Understanding one’s situation via meaning making can help mitigate unpredictable events. However, Hakim:

After the end of each week, instead of staying over in student accommodation, I go back home and spend the weekend with my family

6.5.1.1. Time and do-nothing: enduring the situation until the end

H: Now you have resumed university life, what actions did you use or are you currently taking to establish more engagement with studies and/or the university context in general?

Samir: In the beginning, I did not do anything to help me forget all the messy things in my mind. I was overwhelmed by all that had happened before. I was unlucky. Later, I started to develop some positive habits (...).

Referring to the early stages of the transition experience, Amina has further stated that she:

(...) did not rely on specific techniques to engage with studies and university. Instead, I believed having more engagement with the new space over time would be valuable (...).

The notion of time has to do more with the natural process of familiarisation, attempting to fit in situations that may not be congruent with people’s desires.

6.5.1.2. Having faith in God: a double-sided reasoning

The expression ‘God’s will’ is understood in two ways within participants’ narratives. This is in relation to passive coping behaviour (avoidance) and daily speech, considering daily discourse, cultural and religious interpretations:

H: Once you enrolled on your chosen course, did you meet any significant challenges? If so, could you please explain how did you manage that?

Rezki: Yeah... indeed, the first time I came here was quite difficult. As I said, there are many big differences in how we were taught at school and here at university. One of these differences is the type and quality of the annual programme. Regarding university modules, I had no idea about the objectives we had to fulfil or the method we needed to follow in the teaching process.... With all these factors, certainly, the beginning was not easy, particularly in establishing engagement with the new context (...), but I will overcome, God’s will, all these challenges soon.

Additionally, to recall Amina’s response to her situation amid a non-event experience, she stated:

Well, I said that my enrolment at university was only to satisfy my parents, who wanted me to consider university studies. (...). Now, I can say that I do have patience for accountancy. This helped me to accept and pursue studies in HE, hoping to become an accountant God’s will.

6.5.1.3. Not seeking support and doing nothing

For Samir, speaking to the relevant person for support was scarce. This idea, therefore, triggered a passive behaviour in Samir’s actions.

H: Having that injury which ended your professional career was unpredictable, and once at university, things became more complicated for you. Have you asked any help from others for advice and guidance?

Samir: To be honest, I did not... because I thought everyone, particularly my friends, was having the same situation as me. If you tell someone about what you experienced, s/he would tell you more complicated things than I do. This is stressful for me. Finding someone who could understand and help me was not easy. Speaking about the institution... we were not informed whom to ask for help if needed. I am still getting used to the setting, as I am a bit behind compared to others.

Samir experienced two transitions within a short time, and this was emotionally overwhelming. This persisted even after his return to university, particularly in the absence of counselling

services. Below, I show how participants have managed hardship by resorting to different modes of behaviour.

6.5.2. The university experience was at stake and actions were needed

6.5.2.2. Academic self-reliance

Yasmina: well, I try always to be up to date with my studies. For me... enquiring about information was and still is necessary. This helped me to adapt better to the new environment. Everything has challenging moments, and the transition into university also has its own taste and bitterness.... You know, being a university student is likely to be in an academic mission, having different dimensions, so we have to make efforts to aim for success. This is the beginning, and as long we progress, the situation may get more complex, so we need to be ready for other academic challenges and others.

Yasmina had in mind that transition does not consist only of instant situations but of events that evolve. In this, understanding the meaning of becoming a university student urged Yasmina to strive towards progress as situations unfold.

6.5.2.3. Adaptation through seeking emotional and social support followed by developing healthy physical habits

In this research, emotional and social support are essential for adaptation and coping for both campus-based and off-campus students:

H: You have spoken about the significant changes you encountered at university, and you believe these are difficult to navigate compared to what you were used to at school. What did you do to make the situation less stressful?

Fatiha: Yes, ... especially the educational system and what made it more difficult is that I live away from home. Generally, I call my family to feel I am close to them. Well, during the first days... yeah, right! I did not feel comfortable, and I was under the weather. During that period, I still had no close friends to talk with, and students here have different lifestyles and mentalities. I called my family and started blaming them because my parents did not ask much about my situation here at the university (...).

In contrast, some participants considered that active interaction with friends acted to a certain extent as a gap filler in the absence of their families. It was also a consistent strategy to avoid loneliness and to engage in ingroup relationships:

Amina: I was all the time with my friends. Every day, we tried to be close as much as possible. The first days were intense because all my classmates with whom I studied at school had chosen other specialities or had moved to other cities. Also, my flatmates have played the role of a university family and replaced that feeling of the natural family environment. Not literally replaced my family, but... you see what I mean. They filled the gap, and this made me feel better.

Transition into HE does not consist only of navigating the structures of a new context or educational system but involves negotiations of new interpersonal relationships.

6.5.2.4. Using social media resources to develop meaning further

Lynda's aspirations were more potent than her actual situation at university, which she viewed as a road towards "losing my future". She drew on social media resources, particularly the YouTube platform and learned tips and strategies from peoples' experiences:

H: Before, you felt like you are losing your future by undertaking studies at university. However, now, the university is your only option. If we consider all these, how did you manage all this? Have you asked for any help or advice from other parties?

Lynda: I have not spoken to a particular person, but... Sometimes I watch motivational videos on YouTube. This helps me to get some tips to follow and find potential solutions for the challenges I encounter. It was helpful because people told their own stories about situations and how they overcame them. Some of their advice worked, and some did not, but I succeeded in creating my methods. For example, right now, I am undertaking a training course as a part-time apprentice. This helped me to manage my time conveniently. Instead of spending the whole time at university, I take advantage of my spare time to do other activities beyond academic life.

The combination of Lynda's reflexivity in developing time management skills jointly with others' feedback enabled her to engage in both her university and training courses.

6.5.2.5. Maintaining personal well-being through sports and sociocultural activities

H: Once you realised the different challenges at university and in student accommodation, I understand that all these affected your well-being and motivations, particularly in relation to your previous experience. Could you please elaborate further on the actions you considered to overcome or minimise the impact of such challenges?

Samir: (...). I exercise regularly, and then I decided to join a cultural association not far from where I live. To be honest, being a member of this society helped me to gain confidence in myself because my role is partly ensuring the good running of the organisation, for example, during our participation in traditional and other cultural events in and out of my region.

It is also a good option for me as this keeps me busy; therefore, I dispose of the daily routine at university.

Being involved in various activities in and out of Samir's region was beneficial for developing positive engagement and exposure to change. In doing so, engaging in such an experience resulted in personal significance and a sense of responsibility.

6.5.3. The necessity of active engagement and anticipated transitions

6.5.3.1. Emotion Regulation

Fatiha's case can be a pertinent example of how her emotions were manifested amid loneliness and distress. To briefly recall:

(...). During that period, I still had no close friends to talk with, and students here have different lifestyles and mentalities. I called my family and started blaming them because my parents did not ask much about my situation here at the university. I call my family regularly to feel like I am close to them.

Venting emotions in this regard was a way of emptying the pressure Fatiha had and, at the same time, shortening the distance which separated her and her family.

6.5.3.2. Taking stock of environmental resources

Farida's narrative provides a comprehensive account of how she negotiated some aspects to satisfy her needs. This was via acquaintance and peer relationships.

6.5.3.2.a. Habitus and cultural / social capital

H: You talked about not being able to keep on with your studies because of concerns related to commuting from and to the university daily, which caused you significant fatigue. How did you manage that?

Farida: Well, I decided to move and live with my sister in town. She lives near my university, and this made the distance much closer. This also allowed me to study regularly with my classmates and friends in the library during the day, especially when we had a one- or two-hour gap between two classes. We go to the library and do some work (...).

Whereas Farida drew on her social capital, Yacine capitalised on his habitus and cultural capital to understand the context. Reminiscing his quote:

Occasionally, I came here with my father when he was the head of the department of English. Also, when we were young, he used to talk about events and his daily experiences in lecturing. This allowed me to know at an earlier stage what HE means. So, I have not had significant difficulties (...).

Other cultural/social capitals include Rezki's contact with other students who had already experienced the transition to university:

Well, in my case, I knew some people who had already progressed into HE before me. For example, my brother has already graduated from university, and he used to tell me about the university environment... I found it helpful as I had some idea about what university may sound like... but the reality is different for everyone.

6.5.3.2.b. The need for extrinsic motivation

Moving to town to live nearby the university did not solve all of Farida's concerns. She had further to negotiate ways to establish engagement with studies:

(...) It is hard to study at home on my own. I always needed someone to orient, advise, and explain things. As I said earlier, I did not make any progress because I did not have enough time over the first weeks. That's why I prefer to study in the library.... I have not applied for accommodation, and I know that being a resident at the university would be worse than now (Farida).

She further developed other techniques, for example, in organising content and note-taking as follows in the section below.

6.5.3.2.c. Developing academic skills

H: Could you please give some examples that you think are signs that you are coping with the new context.

I would say that... in the past, I used to use more colours when I wrote about my lessons, now, as my objectives are to understand and reach the information, I started to take notes more quickly without caring about the aspect... also, I think I am becoming more responsible towards my studies (Farida).

6.5.4. Adjustment behaviour

Although Yacine was among the few participants who were not significantly affected by transition thanks to his habitus and cultural capital, he further claimed that he possessed an inherent mental faculty which enabled him to adjust effectively:

H: You said that your ability to manage situations relies on your mental faculties. Could you please explain what you mean by mental faculties and how you drew on these to solve situations?

Yacine: ..., as I said, I believe I have an inherent mental faculty that helps me go through difficult situations. This is not the first time I have drawn on that... Even before my transition to university, I have been through hardship, and the first thing I do is reflect on the situation and attempt to find out the best step for me to minimise frustrations. I prefer first to make sense of what is happening and then relate this to my abilities to respond to circumstances as effectively as possible.

The other side of the adjustment behaviour in Yasmina's narrative involves projecting potential scenarios which may happen in the future through observation of her environment:

H: You addressed before that you were cautious to enrol on your favourite course at university. You referred to that as a kind of anticipation towards having a positive transition, and failure in doing so might have caused you significant problems. As a university student, what strategies do you employ to mitigate constraints?

Yasmina: When I was at school, being mindful of enrolling on a course of my choice played a crucial role in my success in the BAC exam. I find... for me; it is still a helpful technique because it allows me to oversee situations and act accordingly.

H: Could you please illustrate with an example if you have any?

Yasmina: ... I would say that... I know a few students who are currently retaking their first year, and in my opinion, they do not seem motivated and some lost interest. So far, this is my primary concern, and it will not be easy... I mean, I cannot imagine myself studying the same thing next year. This cannot happen, and I have to consider this carefully.

Attempting not to encounter unpleasant situations in the future was an essential element for Yasmina, and this motivated her to intercepting failure.

6.6. Theme 5: Transition into HE involves a process of loss, learning and acquisition

The final theme provides an understanding of the outcomes of the transition into HE from the participants' perspectives.

6.6.1. Loss

Loss is related to personal aspirations and not establishing a prompt engagement with the whole situation via meaning making. Rezki and Lynda stated as follows:

Rezki: Currently, I cannot say whether my university experience is positive or negative. I would evaluate my experience as being between the negative and the positive (laughing).... well, I am still in the beginning and have not yet experienced much.

In contrast, the beginning of the transition was taxing Lynda's emotions: "my future is in danger" and "I feel like I am losing my future". Although this thinking was echoing, as it represented a personal loss in the student's objectives, Lynda could find the educative significance of her non-event transition as learning.

6.6.2. Learning

Lynda: Given all that I had to undergo; I think I have become more responsible for my studies. I did not rely on lecturers' input; rather, I started to expand my knowledge perimeter by doing more research. I started to get a sense of responsibility.

On the other hand, Fatiha's experience taught her aspects of becoming resilient:

You learn how to be patient and responsible. In the past, I was not responsible for myself because I did not assume what I did... it was my parents' job. Now, it is different; I am more involved in solving my concerns.

6.6.3. Acquiring new assets/capital

The idea of acquiring new assets involves what participants believed they gained from their transition experiences. In other words, a journey towards a person is becoming:

H: For you as a university student, what overall impact has a university experience had on you?

Yacine: Although there are many unhelpful situations within the institution, I aim to invest as much efforts as possible in my studies. This would allow me to acquire new knowledge I did not have access to before. Also, this, in my belief, will help me to become more mature psychologically.

Whereas Yacine's evaluation of his experience has more to do with self-observation and internal growth, Yasmina's thoughts were more in line with reflection and self-positioning:

H: Regarding your personal experience at university, how would you evaluate it in relation to your repertoire in life?

Yasmina: Yes, of course, not much, really, but I felt that I became aware of how to anticipate things or think afield of how to achieve my ideas more successfully in the future. For example, I started to ponder about what I needed to do after my graduation to set new objectives to achieve in the future.

6.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented findings relating to participants' transition stories. I drew mainly on students' voices, referring to various elements of their experiences. This included their circumstances at the beginning of their transitions, the approaches they developed to manage hardship and the educative significance the experience added to their personal development.

Based on the fieldwork materials, the transition into HE, for most participants, was a non-linear occurrence. Instead, it involved a back-and-forth movement until students started to make meaning. The integration process was challenging, particularly with inadequate institutional support for new students. This was further complicated by the range of institutional inconsistencies participants had identified.

The narratives referred to how the subjective and objective worlds came into interplay to shape participants' experiences. Whether experiences were anticipated or non-event, internal and external factors were in place, contributing to the emergence of challenges and unsettled emotions.

The chapter highlighted participants' involvement in mitigating change and hardship, drawing on various resources. Cultural/social capitals were apparent within the narratives, and both played an essential role in sustaining participants' retention at the university. These assets were not necessarily tangible (e.g., money or status); instead, they had to do with what a person had previously learned and the ability to capitalise on that in the experience. Making this helpful capital also had to do with identifying (appraisal) what is taxing individuals' progress and attempting to connect the situation with available resources to weather change.

However, capital is open to acquisition even if a person has a particular background. This allows a process involving a person becoming via interrelated transitions (previous and

upcoming ones). The idea of experience, particularly in relation to life transitions, is constructive. Transition to university, for some participants, was more illuminating despite the challenges. It was meaningful in evaluating the educative significance of what they experienced at university.

The following chapter will discuss key points of the findings in relation to the literature set out earlier in the study through the lens of the theoretical framework. In this way, the research questions will be addressed.

Chapter 7: Discussion

Mkul agdud yehdaj tilleli	Every people need freedom
Mkul tilleli tehdaj el-harma	[and] every freedom needs dignity
Mkul el-harma tehdaj tadukli	Dignity needs unity
Mkul tadukli tehdaj lefhama, lefheam	And unity needs understanding
(Idir, 1991)	(Translation)

Normally, they should assign ... in every department a qualified adviser in charge of orienting new university students. Students find it difficult to understand substantial aspects related to HE (Yacine: research participant).

7.1. Introduction

Throughout this chapter, my endeavour is to situate significant findings within the wider context of the field of reference, that is, the literature. This will allow for discussion and understanding the essence and implications of pertinent findings related to participants' biographies. Annesley (2010, p. 1674) states that the goal of the discussion is to explain the meaning of the results and what contribution research adds to the field of study. This chapter, therefore, offers the possibility to critically approach various aspects and issues that emerged from both participant-researcher negotiations of meaning to contribute to the field.

Moreover, discussing the findings is not only a matter of interpretation and reference to others' works but is also an opportunity to provide answers to the research questions. To recall, the research questions explore students' perceptions and motivations for attending university before and amid their transition. In addition, this chapter demonstrates the interrelated nature of the research questions; the impact of transition on students' psychological and social well-being, the coping mechanisms students used to manage the transition and the educative significance of the transition experience regarding the participants' person in becoming. Therefore, these questions are, by nature, rooted in the participants' transition trajectories. Longitudinal research was, to a certain extent, not possible due to time restraints. However,

investigating different aspects within a defined period was also beneficial and formed a meaningful narrative.

The structure of this discussion chapter follows the order of the research questions, which gradually evaluate how students progressed in their transition experiences. I will discuss one research question at a time in each section. In doing so, it will help to answer each question explicitly and establish an organised and clear narrative structure chronologically, showing any congruency or incompatibility with other studies from the literature set out in Chapter Two. Bringing these altogether, provides the opportunity to expand the perimeter of our understanding, not only of the nature of the subject within the Algerian context, but also the implications this research can offer for wider application.

This chapter consists of four main sections, which are interconnected, regarding the evolution of the participants' stories. In this way, the frames of reference and perspectives from the literature are woven throughout the four sections of the discussion. Additionally, Polkinghorne's (1995) narrative analysis assists with a consideration of the narratives in relation to the wider context of this research.

7.2. Research Question One

What expectations and perceptions do first-year university students have before and during the transition to university in Algeria?

This research question addresses the idea of students' attitudes regarding their feelings and thoughts about two distinct educational contexts: before the transition to HE and their experiences amid the transition. This is deemed to be the starting point of the process of transition. The objective of this question is to shed light on the abstract level of the participants' inner state in relation, for example, to expectations about transitioning to university and how moving to unfamiliar settings impacts students during the transition. It also seeks to understand how expectations and perceptions influence students' motivations for enrolling at university or

undertaking other options after HS. Additionally, it explores how transition experiences evolved over this period, attempting to uncover different influential factors, such as how social narratives influenced students' decision-making, hence shaping the quality of their transition experiences. The sections below highlight the participants' emotional state, including expectations and motivation before the university experience.

Prior to the transition, some participants (e.g., Farida, Fatiha, and Madjid) felt self-satisfaction after passing the national BAC exam and considered this a significant achievement. Some viewed it as realising one of their earliest dreams at school: HE was “(...) my dream I wished to accomplish in life” (Farida). Personal satisfaction and happiness were the prevailing aspects during this period since students had no contact yet with the new educational setting. This phase is compatible with the initial stage of the U-Curve Theory of Adjustment (Risquez et al., 2008). Menzies and Baron's 'pre-departure' stage also aligns with most of the participants' feelings, considering the time when they had still not established any engagement with the new setting. This resulted in a neutral mood, doing the daily routines (Menzies and Baron, 2014).

Investigating adult learners' transition, Risquez et al. (2008) described the period when students have still not started their course as a honeymoon period. During this period, students show fascination, excitement, positive attitudes, fear and some level of anxiety due to apprehension. Indeed, Yacine, for example, although he had an idea about what university life is like, “anticipated [the university experience] with great apprehension some of the modalities characterising university life”. Furthermore, he further showed positivity regarding the values and skills students can gain at university. In this regard, findings show the extent to which students may hold high expectations and aspirations towards attending university (Kankindo and Mawer, 2013).

7.2.1. The significance of HE and students' motivations

Findings revealed various perspectives related to the benefits of HE. This is in accordance with the short and long-term goals. Madjid, for example, considered HE a convenient place where individuals can “understand complex matters in an in-depth manner” as well as having the possibility “to invest knowledge to get a satisfactory job”. In this, Bourdieu’s (1986) claim about the possibility of converting university credentials into profit is apparent, considering Madjid’s perspective. Indeed, the literature suggests that considering university as source for maximising academic and career prospects is a common perception among students (Kankindo and Mawer, 2013; Lowe and Cook, 2003). Furthermore, Seemiller et al.’s (2021) research results demonstrate that one of the students interests in engaging with learning is enjoying knowledge acquisition (p. 1). However, at this stage, participants in this study did not question the degree of their preparation for the transition despite having personal motivation to attend university.

The reasons why students in this research decided to attend university can also be understood as self and market purposes (Al Fattal and Ayoubi, 2013). A few participants had a common belief about the extent to which HE would be beneficial for promoting their academic competencies and future: “(...) for me, enrolling at university is important because it may open new horizons” (Rezki). Horizons, in this sense, refer to instrumental reasons, including social status and the possibility in matching with the job market requirements (Saiti and Prokopiadou, 2008; Townsend, 2003). This can also be explained by Krause’s (2006) view of planning and determining whether a university is worth considering.

Indeed, most of the participants’ motivations for attending HE appear to be an investment plan to achieve future aspirations, mainly maximising the chances for job opportunities; knowledge and travelling abroad come in second place. This evidence aligns

with Noyens et al., (2017) conclusion that students' motivations (intellectual interest, future career, and engaging with a new social life) in attending university is primarily for the sake of developing the self and finding more opportunities to establish a meaningful position in life (p. 3). Yacine's case reflects this instance, as he believed that a university experience can contribute to "enhancing [his] psychological maturity". Interestingly, Carl Rogers's (1951) view of self-actualisation is relevant as this is a product of ongoing experiences, involving learning and development. Notwithstanding, Noyens et al.'s statement does not align with Tinto's (1987) view that students who have clear aims and are sure about their future goals are likely to have a successful transition. This was not evidenced in this study although most participants had positive perceptions and attitudes about university. However, their engagement with the new context is understood to have constant fluctuations, especially in the early stages of their transitions. Additionally, participants did not explicitly reflect the view that HE is a mere continuity of HS as in Hassel and Ridout's (2018) findings. Instead, a few participants equate university with purely academic pursuits, which was one aspect among others of the many students' motivations.

Dweck's (2017) UTMPD appears to have a strong connection with participants' views, regarding the benefit of a university experience. Participants' needs and tendencies aligned with academic development, skill acquisition and career advancement, which stimulated interest in pursuing further studies after school to fulfil personal objectives (Saiti and Prokopiadou, 2008; Townsend, 2003). At this stage, developing academic competencies, for example, was a shared need among students; their goals have divergent ends. Few participants like Yasmina and Yacine communicated ideas about personal development via HE. Others (Farida, Lynda, and Amina) explicitly favoured developing academic skills in language, satisfactory results and, ultimately, a university degree to oversee their subsequent experiences. For them, these

elements can be capitalised upon, for instance, to have overseas experiences at other universities and explore cultures.

This also matches the essence of a positive mindset in many participants, emanating from holding positive attitudes relating to the benefits of a university experience. This clearly illustrates Meier's (2010) understanding of a positive mindset being the ability to make sense of a situation by being pragmatic, working out what is right with a situation and what opportunities a person can gain. Indeed, evidence in this research suggests that participants viewed the assets HE may provide from different angles, which promoted their motivations towards fulfilling personal needs, hence foreseeable goals.

For clarification, although there are controversies about the extent to which mindset theory can be deemed reliable (Denworth, 2019), Yeager and Dweck (2012) have reviewed the essence of mindset and concluded that such elements could work on a defined scale via specific interventions. Furthermore, Dweck (2017) considered later motivations as a prominent aspect, regarding personality and development. Indeed, this study situates this idea within the broader explanation of attitudes, motivations, and adversity management. The way students' needs give rise to goals and the willingness to fulfil their objectives starts from constructing mental representations and tendencies (e.g., before the transition phase) to developing need-fulfilling goals. However, Dweck's revision of the theory appears to generate an understanding of the relationship between needs and motivations, which can help, for instance, counsellors during interventions to enhance growth and change. However, little attention is given to how challenges interfere with individuals' attempts to achieve objectives and whether their actions in negotiating hardship can trigger change, growth and development in the form of capital before interventions take place.

7.2.2. Constructing a new habitus, cultural and economic capital via higher education

In this study, student motivation emerges as academic (intellectual development and enrolment flexibility), personal development (growth), and prospects. The main objective of enrolling at a university is maximising the chances of success after graduation, therefore, converting skills or qualifications into a potential benefit (Bourdieu, 1986). This evidence partially connects with Brown and Scase's (1994) claim that students aim to gain academic qualifications to form social status and security since most job markets require graduate entry qualifications (student quote). However, participants did not express thoughts about how a university experience might have given them special status or privilege within society. Instead Yacine and Samir, for example, criticised the university in terms of its scarcity of "orientation" and not reflecting "the scientific research aspect within teaching-learning processes", respectively. This further contradicts Gyamera's (2018) findings about students' perceptions of HE in relation to social status within an African context. Instead, this instance aligns with West et al.'s (2013) findings that learners from a particular background can bring and generate new forms of capital within a stratified university. Regarding this study in the Algerian context, participants, who were not lucky enough to grow up in an environment wherein, for example, their parents were not highly educated still could construct a new capital via education, hence if successful, a new habitus and dispositions.

HE is deemed as a window to potential benefit which can also be explained through the influence of the neoliberalist standpoint on education. Neoliberalism is understood as an ideology that underlines the belief in sustained economic growth via free market competition, which is believed to promote individuals' development outside, for instance, of the state's interventions and economic decisions (Smith, 2019). The neoliberalist approach frames the essence of education in terms of investments through which students need to develop capital, which can be convertible to different values depending on students' objectives for the future

(Hastings, 2019). However, the current situation regarding university degrees is more in line with the consumerist model than the production of competencies. Consumerism in terms of urging students to get qualifications in new specialities is surfacing, and new degrees are required, causing grade inflation (Brown and Murphy, 2012, p. 218).

Therefore, such an ideology impacts education as a business within a competitive environment characterised by examinations and outcomes (UKEssays, 2018). The outcomes are assets associated with and frequently considered within many employments: “My purpose for enrolling at university is for acquiring more knowledge, ... in order to work ... after my graduation.” (Rezki). Brown and Murphy (2012) criticised this neo-liberal approach in viewing HE through a material aspect or as a setting for applying the consumerist model. Alternatively, they suggest directing attention to the importance of relational dynamics in HE, which considers student motivation and needs instead (p. 218). The objective, therefore, is to generate an approach through which individuals should be recognised as human beings who can make a difference within the social world via transformative learning (Formenti and West, 2018; Bainbridge and West, 2012).

Many participants were more interested in gaining university credentials, which would enable them to seek opportunities (jobs, travel) and growth in terms of maturity and person becoming. For example, travelling abroad, either proceeding with studies within internationally recognised universities or achieving personal objectives, which could not be achieved in the Algerian context. These aspects were linked to HE in forming a cultural capital, even if the university experience was not convenient for some participants. Lynda, in this regard, said:

(...) Given the situation now, the only option I have is to study. However, I will figure out how this can be beneficial... For example, how to travel abroad to find the opportunities I have not found here.

For Bourdieu, cultural capital connects with education, which people can instrumentalise for economic purposes. This is a form of capital individuals draw on to achieve

their desirable objectives. Bourdieu's theory seems to be compatible with the actual findings since many participants, including Lynda, Yacine and Rezki, expressed the need for university qualifications, either for knowledge acquisition, job opportunities or to travel abroad to seek new experiences. Either way, these attitudes are likely to result in how participants link their university backgrounds to key prospects, hence, having economic leverage to a certain extent. However, Bourdieu's work and this study diverge at two primary levels. First, this study considers, for instance, social and cultural capital as not a reproduction system but a personal endeavour. Second, since capital can be a personal construct through experience, this involves a process of meaning making and learning in life Noyens et al., (2017). Ultimately then, the overall objective is a matter of seeking a personal imprint or establishing a meaningful position in life, which helps construct one's capital despite the presence of incongruities.

7.2.3. Expectation mismatches, potential dropouts and contextual challenges

Studies have shown that students rarely anticipate what life is like in HE (Longden, 2006; Smith and Hopkins, 2005; Tranter, 2003; Peel, 2000; Sander et al., 2000). The reverse is true when it comes to anticipating what it is like being a university student, as this is difficult to predict, resulting in doubts and fears of the unknown. Farida, for example, had a specific mental structure regarding what her university experience would be. One of her misconceptions was what Killen (1994) referred to as having expectations to receive significant input from lecturers as in school. Moreover, Denovan and Macaskill (2013) argue that establishing mere anticipatory expectations and beliefs about university is inadequate because there is a high possibility of experiencing disappointment and significant stress. Although many participants considered HE a source of success, prospects and development, their expectations were, to a certain extent, superficial in relation to previous expectations and reality. The emergence of incongruencies between participants and the new context signals the beginning of Menzies and Baron's (2014) 'party's over' stage of student transition. in Bourdieu's (1990) words,

experiencing moments wherein students may feel a “fish out of water” (p. 108). This might be due to their inability to understand the range of implications that the new educational context might have on their experiences regarding both academic and social integration. In this respect, Wilcox et al.’s (2005) view that social integration is a factor which can impact student retention is worth considering regarding the context of this research.

Tinto (1975) and Braxton et al. (1995) believe that the more students’ pre-university expectations are compatible with the university experience, the quicker students achieve social and academic integration. Understanding compatible expectations from a self-management concept refer to overseeing one’s conduct and screening the choices one makes (Ghali et al., 2018, p. 48). That is, developing the ability to systematically manage one’s behaviour, effort, emotions, and environment to accomplish goals. Depending on challenging situations, self-management also refers to developing persistence through active engagement, problem-solving, decision-making, action planning and resource utilisation (Lorig and Holman, 2003).

Yasmina can be a pertinent example to refer to, as she was aware that developing academic skills prior to HE was a prerequisite action. This was primarily to have an anticipated transition, enrol on a subject of her choice and, at the same time, sustain her academic capital. However, this was not applicable for most participants since they had significant expectation mismatches, clashing with previous motivations and aspirations. Unfortunately, it is unlikely for individuals to achieve all their plans and aspirations even if these stem from personal motivations (Stocké, 2013). This is due to the dynamics which happen in the objective world, taxing individuals’ realities and triggering resilience issues amid challenging transitions (Bainbridge and West, 2011).

Campus-based and off-campus students experienced a range of expectation mismatches. This includes, for instance, the nature of curriculum and timetable, institutional management

which, to some extent, was “(...) chaotic” (Yacine), and issues of insecurity within students’ accommodation, exemplified through discussion of “toxin consumption” (Samir). Considering Tinto’s (1975) student departure model, dropout decisions from university becomes possible, considering the quality of interaction between students and the institution. Moreover, if dropout did not occur, integration would be delayed as a result of student-institution incongruencies (Braxton et al, 1995). Institutional interventions are also at the heart of the action in sustaining the separation phase of students and facilitating their social and psychological integration and meaning making in the form of *rites of passage* (Van Gennep and Kertzer, 2019).

Generally, a dropout from college or university happens in the initial stages of transition before the incorporation phase (Tinto, 2012). This is due to moments of stress, bewilderment, isolation and disorientation caused by disassociation from the membership of the previous community (Tinto, 1988). For example, Fatiha comments “(...) Currently, however, my view has slightly changed (...). By the end of the day, I have also to bear the different vibes inside the student accommodation”. While Tinto discusses dropout within a micro-community (college), evidence in this study suggests that some participants aimed to withdraw from the actual context to “try elsewhere and probably and hopefully find the opportunity I have not been given here” (Lynda). This resulted in a macro-community dropout. Such an instance converges with Tinto’s work regarding the student dropout process but in a different form.

7.2.3.1. Personal and social mismatches

Other expectation mismatches include viewing HE through a set of personal preferences and how social narrative influenced some participants’ decision-making. Before transition, Farida, for example, was processing a set of probabilities and constructing a mental structure regarding how she oversaw her university experience regarding academic and personal drives. These instances are congruent with the literature suggesting the extent to which students may

have elevated expectations after school but also match the fact that students' perceptions rarely converge with their subsequent experiences (Kankindo and Mawer, 2013). This convergence may also be caused by other factors, such as difficulty establishing affinities as a prompt.

Tajfel's (2004) dichotomy (ingroups/outgroups) is also worth exploring in relation to students' transition to university, as it provides not only insights into the integration process but also refers to social challenges individuals may experience in transitions. In this context, the extent to which students in transition can find and construct strong affinities, including sharing similar collective interests and perceptions, affects their ability to form ingroup associations. In contrast, being unable to identify or belong to any social group is likely to result in one being relegated to an outgroup. The latter is apparent in the findings since a few participants could not integrate immediately into other groups, especially if their old friends had been distributed across campuses and universities. Amina struggled to make friends because, according to her: "there is a wide range of people's mentalities which I had not come across before". For her, the move from familiar to unfamiliar was overwhelming. Bainbridge and West (2012) explain such a situation regarding how binary conditions, such as the known and unknown, comfort and discomfort, and new and old beliefs, can negatively affect peoples' feelings and egos (p. 8).

Indeed, this was a significant aspect of my transition experience in 2011/2012 when I felt alone for many weeks before I could gradually make new friends. It was a weird feeling to be in an outgroup situation where your thoughts, observations and perceptions were only communicated to myself. This resulted in a loss of interest and a decrease in motivation; however, my intention to drop out was minimal.

This may vary among students depending on personal priorities and whether they are campus-based or off-campus. To illustrate, many campus-based students in this study

(especially females) struggled to mitigate the separation phase, resulting in a strong ‘venting emotions’ in some cases (Baker and Berenbaum, 2007):

I called my family and started blaming them because my parents did not ask much about my situation here at the university (Fatiha).

Fatiha had to live away from her local community and family for the first time. This was already a concern, given the distance which would separate her from the family setting. She was not used to being away from her familial environment. Contextually speaking, young adults (both males and females) are unlikely to live away from their familial homes at an early age. This is suggestive of the presence of an emotional need and support among many students as evidenced in Fatiha’s story.

According to Fatiha, she did not receive sufficient support, especially from her parents. This had a negative effect on her personal confidence and made her anxious with a feeling of being neglected. These were signals of experiencing an emotional instability caused by the change in the social and institutional landscapes (Denovan and Mcaskill, 2013; Wrench et al., 2013). The aftermath of her experience can be understood as having potential dropout decision, since she started to regret the fact of being enrolled to pursue studies and questioning how university was not helpful enough for her. In this respect, it has been argued that the increase in student disinterest and drop-out figures from HE is due to several factors, such as a change in expectations about university life, motivation, and institutional incongruence (Matsolo et al., 2018; James, 2002; Tinto, 1988). Fatiha’s situation can represent one of the consequences new students may endure in their transition, resulting from the lack of contact and engagement with the new institution over the waiting period to start the academic year (Cheng, 2015; Burnett, 2007).

The separation phase appears to be difficult to mitigate, especially if adequate support is not in place. This rendered the integration process more complex, triggering expectation

mismatches, value incongruence, issues in persistence and motivations (Tinto, 2012), which posited the idea of dropout (e.g., “my future is in danger” (Lynda)) among some participants. This is inconclusive since fieldwork consisted only of a one stage semi-structured, hence it is not possible to know if any of the participants has dropped from university. However, where dropout was not apparent in the narratives, the referred factors contributed to delaying students’ integration and caused most participants to feel nostalgic for their earlier educational life at school. Using the phrase ‘compared to school’ (Madjid and Farida) may signify the extent to which school is the preferred setting for some participants in terms of organisation and student services. This also suggests spending a significant time in the *liminal* phase of transition, in which people no longer belong to the previous community and have not established membership in the new one (Van Gennep and Kertzer, 2019; Bridges, 2004).

Bridges’ (2004) ‘Endings’ stage, which refers to previous beliefs, rules and past community structures, indicates how people attempt to move beyond, due to experiencing something wrong or challenging in a new situation (p. 108). This, however, is contingent on the measures placed to sustain people in transition. In some narratives, the more the new situation is demanding, the more students face difficulties in dismantling and disengaging from previous roles and structures. Therefore, Bridges’ first stage of transition seems to be inconsistent or non-linear in contexts where effective support is not efficiently provided to contain students’ needs during transition.

7.2.4. The power of contextual values

Aiming for personal development regarding intellectual growth, opening to change and thinking about career prospects were characteristics that inspired students to undertake a university course: “(...) HE is also much more flexible regarding the different routes you may take to achieve your objectives. It is an opportunity to understand complex things in-depth”

(Madjid). Drawing on my perspective and experience in the Algerian context, having the opportunity to attend HE is viewed as a phase which should not be missed, and individuals are encouraged to consider gaining a university degree.

This is indicative of how some of the Algerian social structures (e.g., family, peers) may act as a stimulator towards the necessity and the importance of attending HE. This, therefore, can be, to a certain extent, a strong belief which young adults may encounter in their experiences first at the level of parents and second by viewing that the majority of students enrol at university after school. Indeed, this was apparent in this research, particularly if we consider both Lynda's and Amina's stories of transition. For example: Amina acknowledged the fact that "studying at university is just to satisfy my parents who wanted me to consider undertaking studies at university". From a sociological perspective, Durkheim's (1982) concept of *Social Facts* may explain how social norms and values, in forms of social rules and expectations (Herzog, 2018), direct and guide individuals' choices.

Lynda's case can provide a clear image of the presence of *social facts* in her experience. She stated:

I did not want to pursue studies at university, but my family wanted me to study more, and this was not convenient for me. Now, I feel like I was obliged to undertake studies after finishing school.

Reading this, can also be linked to Hanson's (1994, p. 159) idea of 'talent loss' – i.e., not taking stock or 'wastage' of human potential (Sikora and Saha, 2011, p. 8) – to explain how Lynda's potential had been underutilised to perform other tasks effectively beyond studying, resulting in having the inconvenient experience in the wrong setting.

Another potential interpretation of this situation is possible, drawing on the idea of the different readings a text may have (Reid and West, 2015). The young generation seems to be influenced by the social narrative and especially by the consumerist model sharing the belief of the importance of having a university degree as a gateway towards securing a better future: "(...).

Now we study to acquire more knowledge and of course in the future any person would invest this knowledge to draw a better future” (Madjid). Whereas some participants’ stories were influenced by their parents’ attitudes and views, other narratives (Madjid’s, Rezki’s and Yacine’s) show that not all parents had driven attitudes towards attending HE. This, however, is mostly applicable where participants had anticipated transitions.

In the former case, cultural, and religious values are at the heart of the action, since being respectful and mindful to parents’ opinions is something which should not be taken for granted, of course, as far as these opinions are not harmful. This situation, however, contrasts with self-determination theory [SDT], which states that individuals are innately inclined towards psychological growth and integration. However, this cannot concretise, unless supportive conditions (autonomy, competence and relatedness) are in place (Ryan and Deci 2020, p. 1).

The contrast resides in how the social environment should not take part in directing individuals’ motivations, but instead, should nurture them (Legault, 2016). This is deemed to affect the supportive conditions, resulting in a disharmony between intrinsic (human tendency towards learning) and extrinsic (external factors/control) motivations (Legault, 2016; Reena and Bonjour, 2010). Foucault’s notion of power is also relevant to argue that individuals’ motivation and thinking are prone to be influenced by different factors involving some forms of power that we scarcely intercept and understand (Kelly, 2013; Foucault and Sheridan, 1977). In this, the consumerist model is the second external factor, as a form of extrinsic motivation which impacts students’ internal motivation to have the tendency towards, for example, obtaining university credentials.

Going back to the former factor, parental involvement in students’ decisions should not be judged as having an oppressive or thoughtless dimension towards what their children want to do. It could be the case, but children’s, parents’ and readers’ views including mine,

altogether, may differ in the readings of such a situation. Some may view it as unethical, and others may understand it as a form of oppression. Indeed, parental involvement in student decision-making and other school activities are viewed as building partnerships with institutions by developing mutual responsibility to promote students' academic achievement (Đurišić and Bunijevac, 2017).

My interpretation, therefore, with reference to my own story, in addition to having an Algerian cultural background, can provide a potential answer of why parents are likely to be involved in their children's educational decisions, but this is not to argue in their favour.

For some parents, their roles are not confined only to providing the daily necessities and teaching children good values and conduct while they are still youngsters, but this may also extend to guiding and observing other life aspects, such as education even when children become adults. However, while this is often done with good intentions, it does not seem to be successful in all cases as evidence shows in this study: "The fact that I am studying first-year university for the second time makes me feel sad, unenthusiastic and uncomfortable. (...) I feel ashamed because I am a repeating student and had not progressed to the next level" (Amina). Ultimately, power relations can overwhelm the actual situation - in this case Amina's state and feeling being ashamed- in terms of parental positive thinking about what is beneficial for children and the outcomes of their thinking on students.

To illustrate, my mother is untutored, but her "school is life", quoting Aït Menguellet (1983). I remember when I was a child at school, she had the habit to remind me to revise my lessons and sometimes this was escalated to an order to execute my lessons when she felt I was reluctant in doing so. Indeed, it was a burden for me to hear that daily because I liked to spend time out rather than studying. I always asked the question why she would leave what she was doing and entreat me. Simply, the fact that she cannot read and write became a 'handicap' for

her and she did not want such a handicap to reflect in me or my siblings. Her favourite expression was “seek knowledge, seek knowledge, at least learn to write” (Mezani, 1960) is still echoing in mind. Therefore, all the manners which could incite me to progress in studies were legitimate for her. Therefore, I would interpret parental opinions as being more thoughtful than merely using their position as a source of power to direct their children’s lives.

However, the degree of the righteousness of their ideas may vary depending how parents communicate these thoughts to their children and the extent to which the latter assimilate the motives behind parental attitudes. In this, both parents and students may have different conceptualisations of the world, and these differences can bring a kind of discomfort, which may impact children’s well-being. Consequently, earning a university degree is equal to a skill which can aid people to perform further actions in accordance with their personal motivations and aspirations. For some parents, successful results in education equals having more chances of becoming not only an intellectual, but also having further options to choose among for future plans.

Moreover, the young adult’s economic dependency on their parents might also have triggered another form of power relationships. Although this aspect did not emerge from the narratives and findings, it is worth referring to, to understand the different factors, which contributed to influencing students’ decision-making. At this stage of life, most school students are still dependent on their parents’ economic capacities, therefore, it is likely students considered the way their personal objectives fit around their parents’ financial abilities. For instance, thinking to set up a small business at this early stage or undertake a special course within the private sector may not be possible if families cannot sponsor their children in doing so.

Additionally, diversity in terms of undertaking other options beyond HE appears to be scarce. Even if some people find a new opportunity, the level of certainty in succeeding in the new role is very low due to issues of bureaucracy and nepotism. Hakim's and Samir's cases can better illustrate this idea as their experiences portray levels of administrative hardship people can experience:

(...) My injury put my position at stake within the club team as replacements were needed urgently for competitions. (...) What exacerbated my situation was that those selected as replacements were not competent enough and had not enough experience in competitions. Also, many have been selected not through their competencies but through nepotistic and bureaucratic routes (Hakim).

Ultimately then, enrolling at university is always recommended by parents to allow children to gain more skills and qualities, such as a university degree, maturity and personal development. This final statement flags one of the macro level concerns within the Algerian HE context. The university courses are funded by the state, which makes them free-of-charge and the doors are open to everyone who has completed the national BAC exam. This provides every individual, who has gained entry qualifications, with the opportunity of having a university experience, thus being entitled to acquire a degree.

Notwithstanding, Algerian HE is experiencing high levels of pressure in terms of numbers of students who are joining university each year. Moreover, the numbers of students who enrol on a yearly basis has created a kind of saturation compared to the 1990s-2000s. This saturation caused not only shortage in infrastructure such as student accommodation and teaching facilities but has also impacted the institutions' student quality service, which in many ways does not accommodate the needs of all students. Among the important students' needs is providing Open Days over the summer periods and an induction programme, particularly for new students, before the beginning of each academic year. This is in order to sustain students' climatisation and inculcation process, from one institution to another (Gale and Parker, 2014, p. 16).

Furthermore, based on my observations and reflections after my transition, I realised the extent to which state institutions, such as the media, might also have played a role in enabling individuals to think about the subject through providing, for instance, statistical reports about the numbers of those enrolled at university and those who intend to undertake a course. Alternatively, in other contexts, universities may send representatives to schools for sensitising purposes about potential plans that students can consider through undertaking a university course, hence maximising attendance. All these elements might also have contributed to shaping students' decision-making after school.

This is a mere interpretation and an attempt to understand the manner through which collective thinking or public opinion can be directed to share common beliefs and behaviours. From a poststructuralist perspective, the idea that power can be disguised in different forms and then dispersed via the individuals themselves (Foucault and Sheridan, 1977), creating assumptions on which vast social categories draw on, is relevant in this case. Power, in this regard, is not necessarily harmful, but suggestive of how assumptions are influential, emanating from different sources of knowledge and organisational bodies.

Foucault's (1977) concept of power/knowledge can be relevant in this regard as it provides flexible insights that explain the way power can be used in many shapes (evasive) that we sometimes cannot identify. The examples of parental perceptions, social narrative and media are all forms of power through which different contextual and/or state structures are used to inculcate a given idea, predominantly in an indirect manner. In this case, power is for maximising participation in HE without offering other options which align with individuals' motivations. My interpretations and understandings are not with the aim of denouncing any forms of conspiracies but are just an attempt to explain how a given idea becomes an aspect within individuals' collective thinking, hence potentially transformed into a cultural value easy to transmit. In doing so, the Derridean deconstruction and the readings that text and ideas may

have been applicable, here, offer various interpretations. Foucault's (1979) work *Discipline and Punish* provides us with understanding about how power (with reference to penal institution and the power to punish) became a part of our lives.

This can extend to how power is ubiquitous within different aspects of life and can emanate from different sources. However, power is not necessarily negative for all and not benign for everyone; this depends on the objectives it is dispersed for. On the other hand, this is not a social conditioning per se as there is likely to always be a minority group which would question ideas that are spread in the social setting. At this level, the social construction of reality can balance the equation through constructing new insights and understandings based on individuals' interaction and negotiation of meanings.

Both campus-based and off-campus students expressed similar views about what they expected while they were at school and what they lived during transition. In most cases, expectation mismatches occurred that affected the quality of their experiences. Moreover, social and parental opinions complicated transition experiences via indirect power influences, particularly for those who had no intention to attend university. Participants distinguished between the context of HS and that of HE and a number of them, especially females, believed that HS is much better than the university context in terms of organisation and familiarity with the modules. These differences also include further aspects related to difficulty in establishing immediate affinities and finding personal comfort. Curriculum and university management were a major issue and a subject of criticism for many new students because these affected their understanding of the structure of the system. This resulted in delaying their academic integration, except for those who had a background rich in cultural capital, including, parents as academics (e.g., Yacine) and siblings as ex-students (e.g., Rezki).

With reference to the Biographical Structural-Interactional Transition Model (BSITM), it appears that both institutional and social factors within the Algerian context played a

significant part in deciding the trajectory of many participants' transition experiences. Therefore, it can be viewed as dismissing the different views students had about the world, knowing that these different realities were exclusively related to their personal motivations. This influence was apparent in most of the participants' view, thinking that attending HE would give a significant impetus towards successful prospects. This can be true for those who had anticipated transition. However, it is unlikely to be evident for individuals who wanted to take other options after completing school. Indeed, this can be supported by Amina's story in which she had to enrol at university because her parents advised her to do so. As a result, she failed to pass to the next year which resulted in not only losing time, but also feelings of disappointment, guilt, and experiencing lack of self-confidence.

As an answer for the initial question, participants in general had high expectations about the benefit of undertaking a course at university. Evidence, however, shows that these attitudes did not match the reality that students started to experience and how they constructed meaning. Such thinking remains hypothetical since this research context presents a divergent reality. Students who believed in the diversity of options a person can draw on after school appear to have a consistent view of the world, although some of their decisions and/or personal aspirations were influenced by internal and external factors.

7.3. Research Question Two

What influence does transition have on students' psychological and social well-being?

This question seeks to find out the ways in which transition affected students, for example, their mental health, academic integrity, and social belonging. This also includes how transition clashed with students' aspirations and attitudes while undertaking their first semester, hence having different experiences. Answering this question can help to build a picture of the

other aspects which need to be harnessed to maximise students' preparedness for the new educational setting.

In the previous section that addressed Research Question One, there was a reference to the separation (Van Gennep and Kertzer, 2019) or the endings (Bridges, 2004) stage, focusing on students' motivational, emotional, and aspirational states. In this section, the liminal phase or 'Neutral Zone' (Bridges, 2004) recurs since they are associated with the phase when people are amid transition and unable to foresee clear meanings. These provide a theoretical understanding of the development of events and how these influenced students' experiences.

Liminality was originally developed as concept to explain the process of transition within cultural communities (Van Gennep, 1960) and then used to explore organisational change and how to withstand turmoil (Bridges, 1980). The liminal state in the context of this research appears to be congruent with many students' narratives. This is because the characteristics of this phase, involving, for example, disappointment and shock (Bridges, 2004), signal the beginning of disengagement with the old habits and previous context. This seems to affect greatly the psychological aspects of a person because they come to realise that the old views were a product of their time but are now insufficient in the actual situation. However, disenchantment signals that a person is moving in the right direction in the transition (2004, pp. 120-121).

Moving beyond the familiar appears to be a significant psychological clash among these students' experiences, as it was unclear how to move from the old to the new. Risquez et al., (2008) refers to this as similar to experiencing a 'culture shock', which contrasts with the 'honeymoon' stage. This was also challenging, particularly in accommodating the new because of issues related to their understanding of the context and prolonged reflection. Tinto's explanation is helpful here, where the liminal/neutral zone is defined as a "highly anomic

situation in which they [students] are neither strongly bound to the past nor yet firmly tied to the future” (Tinto, 2012, p. 97). Most of my participants lacked a centralised focus at university, especially those who had non-event transitions. This latter implies a significant alteration in one’s life because the expected plan did not turn out as some students wished.

Being amid transition demonstrated the impact of social influences on students, mainly those with no intention of enrolling at university. One of the significant impacts on this category of students was having prolonged time in the liminal phase (Van Gennep and Kertzer, 2019), resulting in difficulties in establishing congruency within the new context. Lynda stated, “[...] I still do not have any clue about it”. Such a challenging situation became much more complex, considering students’ initial objectives and aspirations. Therefore, we can feel, from Lynda’s speech, the degree of her detachment from the new context. Experiencing alienation, as an aspect of Risquiz et al.’s ‘culture shock’ stage, impeded progress, knowing that Lynda belonged to the category of students who had specific aspirations to fulfil beyond university. The impact of transition, in this regard, was related to value congruence, which triggered negative emotions, such as anxiety and confusion, causing the university experience to fluctuate amid the Neutral Zone of transition (Bridges, 2004).

Speaking about negative emotions in students during transition can also be considered the result of poor preparation for the university experience at school. Furthermore, student transition was not sufficiently supported by the university, particularly in accommodating students’ needs via specific services, for instance, promoting student welfare and guiding students towards the best options they should consider for the short and long term. Therefore, the scarcity of such services contributed to the students’ inefficacious responses to hardship amid transition. Ultimately, the neutral zone phase became challenging and lengthy in time for most participants. All these factors placed students in a situation where they were psychologically unsettled. Unsettled in terms of being unconvinced about the situation,

uncertain of what to do and how to act and even having a remorseful feeling (e.g., Fatiha) as a result of enrolling at university.

At the social level, some students, especially campus-based, experienced loneliness and homesickness. Additionally, the heterogeneous lifestyles and peoples' attitudes, compared to what they had been used to at school, were unhelpful for some students because of divergence in how people behaved and viewed the world. Whereas Amina believed the existence of a range of mentalities did not help for establish ingroups association, Yacine viewed this as an empowering aspect to draw on:

transition into HE is a process of acquiring new things, going through new experiences, and we make new friends, therefore, we have...we get access to different mentalities...within the social setting.

Amina's case can be viewed as triggering contact barriers and reticence because of an incompatibility of attitudes and behaviours. At this level, Tajfel's (2004) concept of 'outgroup' has a strong association with what was happening inside student accommodation, as students were not able to identify themselves with each other to form small social categories because of concerns of value congruence and behavioural reciprocity. This further supports Holton's (2015) findings about students who share the same accommodation and how they end up in boundary-making or territory delineation inside a property. Although Holton's study was exclusively about student life inside a house share, it matches the current evidence because both results imply a scarcity of interaction, support and establishing long-term friendships within shared premises.

Enrolling at university was a factor which contributed to dispersing former affinities which were previously established at school. Participants were aware of this element and could not be in regular contact with their friends. At this stage, it was necessary to assimilate new structures, roles and assumptions that needed to align with the new educational context and its setting. However, it needed to be evident that participants processed change immediately,

particularly because of issues of preparedness and support both before and during their transitions. They did not have the necessary measures to support students, maximising the delay in making sense of the situation, hence being in a neutral zone for longer.

7.3.1. Transition to university and liquid modernity

The impact of transition on participants can also be explained in relation to the clash between individuals' motivations - being open to new horizons - and the power of social narratives, which are seemingly solid. Bauman's (2000) concept of 'liquid modernity', in this regard, can provide further understanding about how individuals and contemporary societies undergo constant change. Indeed, this is one of the key aspects of the BSITM model developed in Chapter Three, regarding how social change occurs in a spiral movement. However, from the perspective of liquid modernity, this involves constant change in all aspects of life. Notwithstanding, even if the subjective informs the objective world, the latter holds the norms, power, and guides the former within a specific timeline. To recall, four participants wanted to undertake other alternatives beyond university. In the first stage, this can be understood as a shift in thinking compared to the wider opinion after completing school. However, their plans did not work, rendering their experiences in flux and uncertain.

As consequence of not having had their initial intentions realised, things had a tendency to fall apart once they joined the university. However, the liquid thinking persisted, as some participants (e.g., Amina and Lynda) attempted to find out how their non-event transitions could help them to do better in life. For example, Amina aimed to start a culinary business but ended up studying accountancy. Her thinking was as follows:

As I said before for me, studying at university was not a mandatory option in my life (...). I mean, even if I start to appreciate my course in accountancy, I started to think how it may help me in the future when I start [maybe] a culinary business or just becoming an accountant.

Liquid modernity, in this sense, may not only refer to interrelated departures from the old social order to the new (Bauman, 2005, p. 303), but it can also be related to the smallest unit (individual) of society which bring ideas and sometimes influential assumptions through forms of liquid thinking. This gives rise to alternatives amid challenging transitions in which individuals may feel overwhelmed, particularly if they experience a lack in support. Based on participants' perspectives, it can be concluded that it was challenging to exist amid the liquid state matching their individuality regarding contextual factors. Therefore, considering Bauman's liquid modernity, a state of uncertainty on the parts of participants aligns with the concept of liquidity in society.

7.3.2. Transition to university may not be for everybody

Krause (2006) claims that students should think whether a university experience is worth considering. The nature of students' motivation and aspirations are factors indicating whether attending university is crucial to the individual. While some students sought a university experience seeking growth and skill development, others considered personal development in vocational routes within different fields and institutions. This study demonstrates that Samir and Hakim had attempted to start an early professional career, which does not necessarily require a university degree. However, concerns related to personal conditions (e.g., injuries) and external factors (e.g., nepotism) hastened the end of such plans.

The way people practice favouritism has a negative impact not only on the quality service but also on personal well-being and competencies. Hakim's professional experience was unsuccessful and coincided with his transition to university. This was accompanied by negative aftermaths, knowing that his sports club failed to guarantee his place until he could recover. Shortage of career alternatives after unsuccessful experiences also significantly impact students' welfare. Participants, who were unlucky in starting a professional career, were

involved in a double transition experience, at the emotional level in particular, within a short period. First, students, who had non-event transitions, were involved in anticipated experiences from school to undertaking professional careers, which was characterised by high enthusiasm, motivation and positive attitudes towards accomplishing personal objectives. The second transition started when students returned to university to compensate for the previous loss and at least not to lose a significant amount of time without taking further action after the initial experience.

In both situations, participants were supposed to meet institutional requirements and establish compatibility with the new setting. The situation was overwhelming for the students, considering the levels of anxiety they had after the former unsuccessful experience and the effect of the non-event transition, they had once they were at university. In this way, emotional impact and poor institutional engagement were the apparent side effects students endured, and students' continual awareness exacerbated these where their previous plans had failed. This resulted in them not being able to move forward at university, resulting in a deficit of motivations and negativity bias: "(...) I always consider the negative side of things than the positive ones before even they occur" (Hakim). This further impacted Hakim's resilience in finding, for example, new objectives which could be achieved through HE. This contrasts with Lynda's and Amina's cases despite having non-event transitions altogether.

This category of students, therefore, falls into the cluster of people who aim to start work, as they did not have any interest in pursuing further studies at college or university. This contradicts and/or challenges the seemed Algerian social narrative of the importance of having a university experience straightaway after completing school. This also aligns with the idea, developed in the BSITM model, of how social change occurs in relation to individuals' views of the world. For this category, however, effective support from relevant services was not in place, therefore their progression was at stake in the absence of guidance and advice. The fact

that students who attend university are likely to receive little support from institutions is already a significant concern of this study. Consequently, this put the previous category – with non-event transitions - at the end of the line, suggesting that sufficient attention is unlikely to be offered at least in the foreseeable future. This can, therefore, affect not only young peoples' lives including progression, but may negatively impact the country's diversity in terms of social interests and workforce growth.

A previously published report by the House of Lords (2016), although referring to the UK context, can corroborate with the actual evidence about students who prefer to work after completing school. In their report, they refer to a variety of points and one of these is those who prefer to start a career at an early stage. After reviewing the job market requirement, in terms, for instance, of employers' recruitment measures, the report shows that this category is not given sufficient attention to result in them making the required progress in their chosen field. This is because some skills, to a certain extent, cannot be developed at university, but rather through practice, which in this case involves gaining experience through working. Consequently, this may not be healthy for the country's economy, as this category of people form a source of the workforce, which needs to be invested in order to ensure long-term economic growth (2016, p. 5).

Throughout this section, I discussed the impact of transition on students' experiences, considering motivations and challenges. In doing so, I highlighted some areas relating to participants' wellbeing, including the social and psychological aspects. Accordingly, these impoverished experiences of transition led to students developing poor levels of resilience. Previously, we have seen the relationship of students' motivations; for example, in relation to constructing social and cultural capital via HE and the way power was ubiquitous within contextual values and administrative practices. These values and practices marked the beginning of the impact of transition on students' experiences outside the university context

and continued developed during transition. The impact was not only restricted to students who had non-event transitions, but also those who were involved in anticipated transitions as well but had some degree of difference in relation to the complexity of the transition experience. This related, for instance, to the kinds of motivations, objectives and attitudes students had, as well as the quality of environments in which they were placed. For example, whereas students who had anticipated transitions had issues, predominantly, with institutional management, educational systems, and study resources, those who had non-event transitions had to mitigate both institutional, social (values), and personal motivations.

The second Research Question, therefore, touches on participants' social and psychological aspects which were affected amid transition experiences, depending on the type of transition students underwent. Overall, establishing congruency with the new educational context was quite challenging for most participants regardless of whether they were campus-based or off-campus. This was related to the inevitable process of incorporating new roles and attitudes which matched the new context. However, this incorporation was not apparent if we consider the scarcity of preparedness at school and poor institutional support while experiencing transition. This made them psychologically unsettled because of issues related to meaning making. The impact, therefore, lies in poor engagement with the new setting and the inability to work on achieving objectives with the aim of maintaining a healthy progress amid transition. This significantly impacted those who had unsuccessful professional experiences as they had to endure not only the failure of the first experience but also the hardship in the latter transition. Ultimately, being in a liminal state for a prolonged period was inescapable since most participants lacked understanding of what was happening and felt uncertainty in relation to the kind of actions which they should initiated to weather challenges.

On the social level, the situation was overwhelming, especially for campus-based students. Establishing immediate affinities with other members was not evident and accessible

for all participants in the early stages of transition. This was caused by the presence of issues of congruency with others' attitudes and behaviours which some participants could not accommodate, particularly within the premises of student accommodation. This resulted in outgroups relationships (Tajfel and Turner, 2004). Consequently, this minimised the construction of a new social identity at the early stages of the transition.

Moreover, the social and psychological impact of transition can also be summarised in relation to students' motivation and self-confidence in a form of experiencing a slippery mindset. Referring to the biographical model [BISTM] in the theory chapter, we can understand that students were enduring perplexity through which they were moving in a kind of a vicious circle of meaning. Bourdieu (1990, p. 108) referred to this situation by the phrase "a fish out of water" to explain the idea of culture shock, resulting from the hardship encountered to establish congruency within a new cultural system. In this sense, HS and HE can also be understood as two culture systems each with their own norms. Thus, transition from the former to subsequent context may result in experiencing a slippery mindset (Appendix Thirteen, pp. 401-402), which can affect students' incorporation process in the context of this research.

According to the U-Curve Theory of Adjustment (Risquez et al., 2008) and Menzies and Baron's Model of Student Adjustment (2014), culture shock seems to be the longest period which people are likely to go through after the honeymoon period and prior to the adjustment stage. Indeed, this aligns with many cases in this research. The fact that interviews were conducted with participants over the second semester of their first-year, some of them were still facing significant challenges as transition was still unfolding. At this stage, the adjustment phase is expected to come after the culture shock stage with the help of institutional interventions. This, however, was understood in the BSITM to take effect via individuals' efforts in terms of ingroup negotiations of meaning, self-reflection and action in line with personal goals with the aim of establishing a new habitus compatible with the values and norms

of the actual setting. The following section will seek answers to the methods participants used to make meaning and recover from the impact of transition to make progress and gain new outlooks.

7.4. Research Question Three:

How do both on-campus and off-campus first-year university students cope with change?

The findings showed a range of behaviours which characterised participants' strategies of coping with their transitions. This involved processes of adjustment, adaptation and coping. The beginning of the process of meaning making started with appraisal of contextual and institutional aspects. This indicates a move beyond the 'Neutral Zone' and 'culture shock' stage (Risquiz et al., 2008) into the 'New Beginnings' phase, wherein individuals start to substitute the old structures, which persisted amid the liminal phase, with new meanings (Bridges, 2004, p. 157). However, 'New Beginnings' does not necessarily mean persistence in the new setting. Rather, according to Tinto's (1975, 2012) student dropout model, students may develop potential decisions involving both persistence and attrition. For example: "If I consider the actual situation, it is not for accommodating my needs" (Lynda). This is the result of their ongoing observations and interactions with the new educational setting (e.g., social members, institutional procedures) and the influence of the external environment (Tinto, 2012).

In many cases, participants' coping strategies had several functions and outcomes, depending on the situation which inhibited progress and triggered stress. Below is an account which discusses participants' appraisal of their situations.

7.4.1. The appraisal stage

Participants' appraisal can also be understood in terms of Schlossberg's (2008) term *Situation*. This element is one of the four 'S' system which individuals can draw on to weather

transitions. It denotes how people consciously or unconsciously endeavour to make meaning of a situation reflexively (p. 48).

On the personal level, participants identified specific instances related to their emotionality and reflection, as they started establishing engagement with the new context: “The fact that I am undertaking my first year for the second time makes me feel unenthusiastic and uncomfortable. For me, the cost is time and motivation” (Amina). This example from Amina’s narrative shows how she processed an evaluation of her personal circumstances and frustrations with reference to the impact of being a repeating student. For Lazarus and Folkman (1984), appraisal is crucial, particularly when a situation takes different shapes over time and still taxes a person’s well-being.

In contrast, “I still have no idea how my current situation will inform my future. I am still having difficulties understanding the implications of transition and the situation for both short- and long-term horizons” (Lynda). Whereas Amina was able to situate herself, Lynda’s observation of her situation did not appear meaningful and helpful for her. Referring to the BSITM figure, Lynda’s circumstance can be explained by the third stage ‘disorientation’. She was likely experiencing a slippery mindset (the inability to draw a satisfactory interpretation/meaning), characterised by the sequels of value incongruence. This, therefore, appears as an inner struggle muddled amid both contextual and institutional values.

On the academic level, concerns about understanding the curriculum and the university system were also apparent in participants’ speech. These might have played a key role in minimising students’ engagement during their transitions. Madjid believed that “most new students have not yet understood the LMD system and its association with assessment”. This academic aspect became an inconvenience and rendered “the beginning [of the transition] difficult” (Yacine). In terms of teaching-learning processes, according to Lynda’s observation,

“(...) students are not involved enough (...). Also, there is a considerable lack of study materials, and research means, (...) library spaces, and IT rooms to research”. Madjid’s and Lynda’s evaluations corroborate with Wilson et al.’s (2014) findings in identifying early transition needs and problems students encounter, including, for example, difficulty understanding assessment task requirements, accessing resources, and establishing peer relationships.

On the institutional level, concerns around student orientation and advisory services were identified regarding students’ ability to navigate their university experiences. According to Yacine: “(...) Because there are no orientation programmes to help students better understand the university setting... it is unlikely for them to make meaning on their own”. Based on this quote, students, in this study context, needed an institutional approach, which could provide a comprehensive transition to enable students to take part in the process of integration and student identity (Gale and Parker, 2014).

On a social level, a few participants had struggled with the social life, particularly within the university accommodation premises. Fatiha had issues with interpersonal engagement within student accommodation, as she identified that students had different background in terms of behaviour and thinking. This caused her low mental well-being because “during that period, I still had no close friends to talk with, and students here have different lifestyles and mentalities”. Indeed, Bulter et al., (2022) found that peer relationships serve as a protective factor among young people, having less advantaged backgrounds. Furthermore, Samir was unhappy to observe “students... taking toxins and probably becoming addicted to them” and was not anticipating a positive return to university after an unsuccessful attempt to join the military service. Such illegal behaviour within the university premises was a concern and might have had a significant impact on Samir’s psychological well-being or probably even insecure: “that was not what I thought about being here” (Samir).

Appraisal was an important aspect within participants' coping process, since this task had enabled them to reflect, observe, and then act as needed. The appraisal phase, in this regard, might have a link with the Piagetian term 'assimilation' (Piaget et al., 2000), but not entirely in relation to how cognitive structures and abilities come to existence. Rather, this is in line with how people generate meaning which feeds into their personal repertoires, therefore, histories. Yacine stated: "My initial thoughts were that... HE is a process of going through new experiences... we... become open to different mentalities... We learn through these experiences".

Assimilation refers to the process of how new knowledge is added to the existing schemata. Participants, however, were involved in the construction of meaning via "the experiencing individual" (Bainbridge and West, 2012, p. 7). Even if this new meaning, in many cases, contrasted students' expectations and motivations, the added value was not in the form of actual knowledge but the development of an inner capacity in understanding the surrounding, marking a given sequence within an experience. Zittoun (2007), in this essence, considers meaning making as a crucial step for a successful adjustment during transition in addition to knowledge construction and social relocation. Below, I discuss participants' actions in weathering the effect of challenges and stressful encounters.

7.4.2. Students' coping strategies in non-event transitions

The findings of this study demonstrated a range of methods and resources which participants used to manage adversities, depending on personal circumstances. These strategies can be classified within a range of behaviours, including active / passive coping, adjustment, and adaptation.

7.4.2.1. Adaptation through time

Both Amina's and Lynda's motivations were undermined by parental factors. This resulted in a passive engagement with the university life. However, despite incongruencies, they attempted to understand the positive side of the experience in flux. Amina said: "(...), studying at university was not a mandatory option in my life (...). This helped me to be mentally flexible to the new context, (...), I started to think how it [university course] may help me in the future (...). I believed having more engagement with the new space over time would be valuable". Considering Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) notions of 'functions' and 'outcomes' of coping strategies, time, in this regard, served Amina to achieve a specific outcome, which was establishing engagement with the new setting. Notwithstanding, the literature on coping refers to such choices and strategies (e.g., time) as maladaptive behaviours since these involve a low commitment to negotiate the stressor (Carver, 2013; Folkman and Moskowitz, 2004).

Similarly, to Lynda, even if she still had "no idea how [her] current situation will inform [her] future", she soon started to think how she could draw on her university experience: "I will figure out how this can be beneficial" (Lynda). Although the idea of 'time' here is not explicitly communicated, this might be linked to how time provided space for the participant to initiate a self-reflection and generate alternatives, which can connect her previous aspirations with the actual situation to achieve future objectives. Further, this may indicate how the process of appraisal is in constant change and progress in relation to thoughts and actions (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). In doing so, acceptance of the non-event transition could be possible because both Amina and Lynda had generated new objectives pragmatically, signalling a change in the "epistemic assumptions" (West et al., 2013, p. 121). On the other hand, the inability to come up with new options may result in enduring the situation until the end as exemplified below.

Additionally, Lynda's quote echoes a kind of optimistic attitude about the self by considering the potential benefit of a stressful situation. It has been referred to as an essential resource for coping because having a positive belief and thinking could make a desirable outcome achievable and promote confidence in oneself (Conlow, 2014; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984).

7.4.2.2. Do-nothing

According to Schlossberg (2008), people can resort to a range of behaviours as a response to a situation. Do-nothing can be one of the options that may be implemented during transitions. This was apparent in the findings, particularly regarding Samir's return to study at the university:

In the beginning, I did not do anything to help me forget all the messy things in my mind. I was overwhelmed by all that had happened before.

This sequence in Samir's experience denotes the idea of avoidance-oriented coping, which involves voluntary tasks in disengaging with challenges (Endler et al., 1993). However, considering the inner circumstances being "overwhelmed" by previous events, it seems intricate to claim that Samir was involved in a deliberate disengagement with the situation. In this, understanding experiences should not be limited to particular instances, rather it is important to consider the relationship among the dynamics which shape the whole human being, hence histories in frame (Bainbridge and West, 2011).

7.4.2.3. Adaptation through faith

The expression 'God's will', in some participants' speech, may catch one's attention and potentially may have different readings. Rezki and Amina are pertinent examples to refer to as their use of the expression may signal distinct meanings, therefore, different coping behaviours. To recall, Rezki stated regarding his comparison of the two pedagogies in school and university:

(...) With all these factors, certainly, the beginning was not easy, particularly in establishing engagement with the new context (...), but I will overcome, God's will, all these challenges soon.

Similarly, Amina said that her

enrolment at university was only to satisfy my parents, who wanted me to consider university studies. (...). Now, I can say that I do have patience for accountancy. This helped me to accept and pursue studies in HE, hoping to become an accountant God's will.

The Derridean deconstruction of text can help understanding in both meanings; the phrase 'God's will' (إن شاء الله / In-shaa-Allah) may imply different potential meanings and functions in relation to religious, cultural and daily speech affairs.

From the Islamic tradition, having trust in 'Allah' (God) is a crucial aspect before undertaking a given action or plan. This is entirely related to how 'Allah' is the ultimate provider and disposer of affairs. To illustrate from the Quran:

(...) وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَكَفَى بِاللَّهِ وَكِيلًا

(الأحزاب. س 33- ر 4)

And put thy trust in Allah, and Allah is sufficient as a guardian (Ahmad, 2017, chapter, 33, verse 4, p. 410).

In addition, the belief in destiny and how our lives are already predicted by 'Allah' are further aspects which can be misunderstood. That is, people may think that if our lives have already been predicted in terms of beginnings, evolution and endings, why should we worry or work towards something? Let us just wait for those endings. Considering this idea, I felt in Amina's use of 'God's will' a kind of procrastination and uncertainty regarding the extent to which she would be involved in the process of coping. My interpretation is that her speech communicates aspects related to waiting for what the future would hold over the actions which she needed to undertake.

Nevertheless, considering some of the text and neglecting some of the other may act against the person's well-being and even the faith itself. For example, in Chapter Nineteen (Mary), we can

find an incitement towards diligence and persistence even during hardship to solve situations regardless of the extent to which a person has trust in God:

فَنَادِلَهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَّا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيٍّ 24 وَهَزِي إِلَيْكِ بِجِذْعِ النَّخْلَةِ تُسَاقِطُ عَلَيْكَ رُطْبًا جَنِيًّا 25

(مريم. س. 19 ر. 24-25)

But the one that was below her called to her, ‘Nay, do not sorrow; see, they the Lord has set below thee a rivulet (24). Shake also to thee the palm-trunk, and there shall come tumbling upon thee dates fresh and ripe (25) (Arberry, 1955, chapter 19, verses, 24-25, p. 304).

Therefore, having faith in God or waiting for help are good starting points, but it would be more effective if this were to be followed by plans, efforts and actions to complete the actual trust in God.

By contrast, Rezki’s use of the phrase ‘God’s will’ gives the impression of sounding like a culturally embedded speech within an individual’s everyday discourse. This may not suggest that people will not act or not navigate situations if the expression manifests in their speech. Religiously and culturally speaking, events are considered to have a connection to the unseen future, which only ‘Allah’ knows; people tend to refer to uncertainty through particular expressions, such as ‘God’s will’ (إن شاء الله / In-shaa-Allah), implicitly.

7.4.3. Active engagement was a requisite amid non-event transitions

7.4.3.1. Seeking emotional and social support

Although Amina was a repeating student who knew what characterises a university life, she believed that being constantly with friends was helpful for her when she first came to university. She retrospectively recalled:

I was all the time with my friends. Every day, we tried to be close as much as possible. (...) Also, my flatmates have played the role of a university family and replaced that feeling of the natural family environment.

Being socially connected was a social competence in which Amina and her friends were experiencing transition collectively. In doing so, they mutually created a space which promoted

congruence, hence a protection for their mental health via sharing common interests, behaviour, and norms (Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). Indeed, a number of studies show that developing social competencies acts as a buffer against social anxiety and loneliness, however, this has a significant association with self-esteem (Daraee et al., 2016; Riggio et al., 1990).

Whereas establishing compatible behaviour and attitudes with friends promoted Amina's positive belief in herself, flatmates in the student accommodation bestowed a sense of a family environment. The latter is more about establishing a positive emotional context, considering Amina and other students' coherent relationships. In this regard, this evidence is not in accordance with Holton's (2015) findings about the challenges that students may experience inside student accommodation, resulting, for example, in boundary-making and limiting interaction.

Regarding Hakim's case, although he used to travel to different places for competitions, resuming university was overwhelming, considering what he had experienced before. He considered spending time with his family as a requisite:

After the end of each week, instead of staying over in student accommodation,
I go back home and spend the weekend with my family.

Amina and Hakim had a similar type of transition. Additionally, they were both on-campus students who required emotional support via family relationships and individuals who could understand their situations.

7.4.3.2. Developing sports habits and socialising

Samir had an injury which hastened the end of his professional career. Then, things were unsettled for him once he returned to HE because of concerns related to expectation mismatches and student identity. This further exacerbated the time he observed toxin consumption inside the student accommodation. Samir needed to move beyond all these overwhelming accumulations. Samir started to exercise regularly and then decided to join a cultural club

aiming to establish a different dynamic (atmosphere) which could potentially support his emotionality and help to fix “the messy things [he had] in his mind” (Samir). According to him, “being a member of this society helped [him] to gain confidence, (...), keeps [him] busy; therefore, dispose of the daily routine at university”. From this, Samir might have aimed to engage in an interactive environment, where people can establish interrelationships. Understanding Samir’s action in relation to cognitive psychology, Bandura et al., (2001) argue that social interconnectedness contributes to psychological well-being by gaining satisfaction, diversity acceptance and mainly a purpose in life. Samir said further: “(...) this society helped me to gain confidence in myself because my role is partly ensuring the good running of the organisation (...)”.

Moreover, Samir’s strategy is in line with Schlossberg’s (2008) strategy: ‘*Support*’. The term explains how individuals can take stock of various support systems (e.g., other people and organisations) in order to receive aid, affirmation and affection (p. 64). Interestingly, to some extent, Samir’s action fulfilled one of Pearlin and Schooler’s (1978) coping functions, which is to control the stress after it occurred.

7.4.3.3. Seeking extrinsic motivation and developing time management

The unexpected change of Lynda’s plan after school was not helpful for her university experience. Once at university, Lynda identified few elements, students were not involved in teaching-learning processes and lack of study materials and spaces. She believed these could impact the overall students’ performance. Therefore, the social and university impact on Lynda’s experience in terms of having a slippery mindset and enduring constant stress caused her to reflect: “Honestly, I feel like I am losing my future because I still do not know about it, in addition to being fed up with the situation. It causes constant stress”. In this regard, Bainbridge and West (2012) argue that anxiety is an evident reaction in education because it is

“a product of very real tensions between how an individual might wish to respond to a situation and psychological, societal, and cultural expectations” (p. 10). They further elucidate, because it represents a moment of discomfort, it can also lead to deeper forms of learning, characterised by reflection towards meaning making and seeking solutions, hence finding expression for experiences of selfhood (West and Bainbridge, 2012, p. 244).

Indeed, to weather these stressors, which impeded progress, Lynda adopted a few actions. The first move she made, as we have seen previously, was thinking of ways that her university experience could be beneficial for her to achieve her initial objectives. This helped her reposition herself in the new settings and construct new compositions. Second, she sought advice using virtual platforms: “Sometimes I watch motivational videos on YouTube”. Although this technique was not the ultimate one, it provided her with some input rooted in real individuals’ histories. Therefore, engaging with virtual materials acted likewise as social support, which is pertinent in protecting student mental health during the transition (Alsubaie et al., 2019). Drawing on others’ advice and experiences, therefore, appears to have benefited Lynda in organising her actions in terms of developing time management skills in activities inside and outside the university context. For her: “Instead of spending the whole time at university, I take advantage of my spare time to do other activities beyond university life”. This indicates a process by which Lynda attempted to balance internal and external demands in addition to regularly coordinating tasks (e.g., learning and training).

The discussion above illustrates the longitudinal integration process through which participants attempted to respond to various stimuli. Participants who had non-event transitions had to navigate a range of social and institutional factors in and out of the new educational context. Both passive and active behaviours characterised their coping behaviours. The move from passive to active indicates a greater extent, a result of the inner strength *Self*, which allows individuals to construct their resilience amid hardship (Schlossberg, 2008, p. 58).

Similarly, the discussion below shows the extent to which coping behaviours vary among participants having anticipated transitions. Their approaches converge and diverge with those who experienced non-event transitions. However, having an anticipated transition was advantageous, affecting how prompt coping and adjustment could be established significantly among both categories.

7.4.4. Students' coping strategies in anticipated transitions

Anticipated transitions were not stress-free experiences since there were many instances where students felt a kind of disorientation in the new experience. However, environmental resources and participants' backgrounds played a significant role in managing the passage. Below, I amalgamate the mechanisms which sustained anticipated transitions.

7.4.4.1. Emotion regulation

Folkman and Moskowitz (2004) consider emotion as the earliest aspect affected during the transition and engaging with change necessitates the moderation of negative emotions (p. 747). Fatiha's case may better illustrate this argument.

Fatiha had issues with the affective aspect, which resulted from the absence of peer relationships. In this respect, she said: (...). During that period, I still had no close friends to talk with, and students here have different lifestyles and mentalities". This was harder with various mindsets and behaviours among other students, particularly in student accommodation. This impeded social interconnectedness and rendered Fatiha's transition a lonely experience. Fatiha resorted to her family as an ultimate source of affection to minimise this. However, later, she realised that her parents had not tended to ask frequently after her news. This further created another layer of emotional distress, causing the venting of emotions. She said:

I called my family and started blaming them because my parents did not ask much about my situation here at the university.

The literature suggests that emotion regulation is the process of how individuals decide which emotions they express (Gross, 2002). Fatiha's quote may indicate the contrary; instead, expressing this emotion is rooted in the pressure accumulating and anxiety she endured over the early stages of her transition amid the absence of new friends. That is, the venting of emotions did not occur in a vacuum. Nevertheless, the act of 'blaming' can also be explained in relation to Fatiha having an observer perspective about her situation and her needs (Lazarus, 1991). Ultimately, Fatiha was involved in regulating her emotional distress via an emotion-focused coping strategy (Smith et al., 2016; Baker and Bernbaun, 2007).

7.4.4.2. Taking stock of environmental resources

Taking advantage of the resources at one's disposal is considered to have a positive effect on well-being and the integration process (Anderson et al., 2012; Hobfoll, 2011; Schlossberg, 2008) since this arguably helps to weather change as quickly as possible. The findings show that students, who had anticipated transitions, had to make necessary adjustments and, most of the time, substantial efforts to manage situations with different complexities. Coping, however, varies among participants depending on their circumstances within and outside the institution (e.g., campus-based, off-campus, cultural and social capitals). Therefore, the more students are exposed to resources within their environments, the greater the likelihood of making progress in transition.

7.4.4.2.1. To what extent are cultural and social capital relevant for coping?

While Bourdieu's (1990; 1986) notions of habitus, cultural and social capital are referred to as a system of reproduction, the findings demonstrate that having such assets helped some participants to mitigate transition, particularly in relation to cultural and social capital. These operated beyond any social class system within the Algerian context. Participants'

backgrounds acted as a shield against significant loss of motivation, and at other times, became a protective factor for persistence.

Considering Farida in her anticipated transition, her struggle to get to and from university was taxing her academically and physically. That is why she decided “to move and live with [her] sister in town. She lives near [the] university, and this made the distance much closer”. Bourdieu’s (1986) distinction between forms of capital involves the social realm of networking and acquaintances (p. 242). In this regard, despite Farida’s sister was, to some extent, outside the perimeter of Farida’s transition, the support she could provide had a significant impact on Farida’s academic engagement: “This also allowed me to study regularly with my classmates and friends in the library (...)”. In the language of Winnicott (1991) the presence of nurturing surroundings (sister and peers) in Farida’s student life formed a positive transitional space, where she could relate and identify herself with the university life. This also worked in Farida’s favour, since such an environment gave her a space, where she could systematically move from a dependence state, being inevitable during her transition, to a more self-sufficiency.

The latter quote shows that a given action, which might be evident, can contribute to a person’s progress amid a challenging situation. That is, Farida’s move to her sister’s property not only reduced the distance to the university but strengthened Farida’s establishment of peer relationships, hence social interconnectedness (Bandura et al., 2001) with the external shared reality (Winnicott, 1991).

Networking and acquaintances are also notable in Rezki’s story since these aspects allowed the student to form an earlier idea of what university life is like:

(...) I knew some people who had already progressed into HE before me. For example, my brother has already graduated from university, and he used to tell me about the university environment...

The social interaction and construction of meaning, which took place prior to Rezki's experience, allowed the participant to gain an earlier understanding of the world and the context he had anticipated. Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD is relevant because it explains the dynamics that characterise knowledge construction among social members. That is, before Rezki attended university, there was a space in a form of 'social-relational interactions' which stimulated the emergence of new ideas that were external to the participant; however, this was achievable with the help of others (Alanazi, 2016; Bainbridge and West, 2012).

Furthermore, the narratives, to some extent, showed that Yacine was the privileged participant who understood the university's implications in a critical view, for example, the modalities that needed to be in place (please, see the appraisal stage above). Drawing on the ideas which his father transferred was a practical option not only in avoiding significant stress but for meaning making as well:

Occasionally, I came here with my father when he was the head of the department of English. Also, when we were young, he used to talk about events and his daily experiences in lecturing. This allowed me to know at an earlier stage what HE means. So, I have not had significant difficulties (...).

Having the opportunity to understand the university context from different angles, Yacine, in his speech, communicated potential aims towards constructing a new habitus and cultural capital but not of becoming a lecturer like his father. According to him, a new habitus and capital involve, for example, "developing competencies", gaining a "psychological maturity", "socialising with others", "understanding the relationship between disciplines", and potentially "travelling abroad". This interpretation contrasts with Bourdieu's reproduction idea among social class systems since Yacine's narrative suggested that he aimed for a new form of capital based on learning "through these experiences".

7.4.4.2.2. Peer support as a source of extrinsic motivation

Previously, in non-event transitions, we have seen how Lynda sought extrinsic motivation by resorting to social media platforms. While she relied on virtual support, Farida needed someone to support her in her academic work, as the shift to her sister's house was not the ultimate remedy for every concern. To recall:

(...) It is hard to study at home on my own. I always needed someone to orient, advise, and explain things. As I said earlier, I did not make any progress because I did not have enough time over the first weeks.

The purpose of seeking extrinsic motivation was to compensate for the loss Farida experienced in the first weeks of her transition. She had to commute daily to and from the university; this caused her to experience fatigue and unable to manage her studies at home. We can understand from the quote that *appraisal* of her *Situation* was a continuous task (Schlossberg, 2008; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). This allowed her to find answers to what caused her academic delay and what she needed as support to compensate for the previous loss. Regarding the relationship between peer support and problem-solving skills, Smith and Burton's (2013) findings are per Farida's seeking for extrinsic motivation because peer support sustained Farida's PSS in identifying strategies to actualise her university experience. Therefore, Farida's behaviour since she moved to her sister's house was a process of developing a resource surplus (Frydenberg, 2014), or potentially a quest for a supportive transitional space towards mirroring self with other (Winnicott, 1991) to counteract the effect of the previous loss.

In other words, she took stock of the resources at her disposal but used the relevant ones accordingly (Hobfoll, 2011). Farida had gone through several stages. First, appraisal served her to identify needs. Second, moving to town was the result of her relationship with her sister. Third, the possibility of networking at university. Altogether, these helped Farida to construct a series of resources, referred to by Hobfoll as a *resource caravan passageway* (2014, p. 22).

These served her to negotiate not only stages of the transition but sustained a sense of developing academic competencies via problem-solving techniques. For example:

in the past, I used to use more colours when I wrote about my lessons, now, as my objectives are to understand and reach the information, I started to take notes more quickly without caring about the aesthetic aspect... also, I think I am becoming more responsible towards my studies.

7.4.5. Adjustment behaviour and internal locus of control

Whereas most participants who had anticipated transitions were involved in developing coping mechanisms, adjustment was only applicable to a few students. Yacine and Yasmina are pertinent examples to understand adjustment behaviour.

The combination of various factors meant that Yasmina experienced a low level of liminality after she became involved in the university. First, her transition was anticipated, thanks to her efforts at school. She had an objective to enrol on the subject of her choice. In doing so, this helped her to skip mundane processes, such as submitting appeals which might have resulted in a waste of time. Second, her motivation was still intact since plans were happening as expected. In this way, Yasmina appears to develop an early internal locus of control which sustained her to develop a resilient approach during the transition:

When I was at school, being mindful of enrolling on a course of my choice played a crucial role in my success in the BAC exam. I find... for me; it is still a helpful technique (being proactive) because it allows me to oversee situations and act accordingly.

In this sense, Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy is of paramount importance as it helps us understand how Yasmina had high expectations to fulfil what she planned to do. This might result from coordinating cognitive, emotional and behavioural responses to achieve the desired outcome (1997, p. 36).

Kronborg et al.'s (2017, p. 70) longitudinal research about motivational factors in students concludes that students having an internally focused locus of control strengthens their resilience profile in coping with stressors. The act of observing the environment with an attempt to

understand how these might affect the university experience was a consistent strategy, according to Yasmina. Moreover, this allowed her to gain a step forward by constantly appraising her surroundings. In this regard, Yasmina further stated:

I know a few students who are currently retaking their first year, and in my opinion, they do not seem motivated and some lost interest. So far, this is my primary concern, and it will not be easy... I mean, I cannot imagine myself studying the same thing next year. This cannot happen, and I have to consider this carefully.

Intercepting potential unhelpful factors which might put Yasmina's experience and well-being at risk was a convenient technique. Considering these, it was likely that Yasmina performed a range of tasks (e.g., observer, adviser and doer) within a single experience. In the literature, this has been referred to as attaining higher levels of perceived self-efficacy in reaching higher levels of resilience in terms of adaptability and engagement (De Caroli and Sagone, 2014, p. 867).

Moreover, Yacine believed that he possessed "an inherent mental faculty" that allows him to navigate stressful encounters. The phrase denotes a natural potential or maybe a spontaneity in processing, understanding, and responding to situations as effectively as possible without external factors. Although Yacine's narrative does not explicitly explain the extent to which this internal aspect is consistent across a range of situations, it can be aligned with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) idea of positive beliefs and Bean and Eaton's (2002) definition of internal locus of control. In the former, Yacine attempted to build trust in himself by positively viewing his ability to moderate hardship (Conlow, 2014; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984). The latter can be the outcome of viewing oneself positively, which contributed to triggering Yacine's internal locus of control. Therefore, he became instrumental in his actions (Bean and Eaton, 2002) by "making sense of what is happening" and then associating this with "[his] abilities to respond to circumstances as effectively as possible".

Participants' behaviours in managing transitions diverge and converge (e.g., extrinsic motivation was apparent in both counts) in many situations, depending on personal circumstances and resources. The divergence, however, may reside in how participants drew on various resources (sometimes similar) regarding their motivations and the types of stressors encountered. Both campus and off-campus students had a range of stressors which forced them to engage, for example, in both active and avoidant coping.

For participants with non-event transitions, their coping behaviour was a form of *rites* (Van Gennep and Kertzer, 2019) characterised by a movement from passive to active engagement. This necessitated an appraisal stage which enables participants to understand a range of aspects related to their personal/emotional, institutional, and social well-being and the factors which negatively taxed their experiences amid the scarcity of institutional support and orientation. This led to different modes of adaptation, including time, do-nothing, and faith. However, this behaviour was not static because these were not 'good enough' elements to weather the impact of transition. Therefore, seeking emotional and social support, developing healthy habits, socialising and seeking extrinsic motivation were essential factors which sustained participants. Some of the strategies were individual-centred, and others were collective.

The second category with anticipated transitions related to the negotiation of institutional, academic and other conditions outside the university life. Taking stock of environmental resources (e.g., cultural and social capital, peer support) and internal/cognitive faculties can amalgamate most of the participants' coping strategies in achieving specific outcomes, such as establishing academic engagement and recovering from previous losses (e.g., Lynda and Samir). Others (e.g., Yasmina and Farida) attempted to construct a 'resource caravan passageway' (Hobfoll, 2014) to achieve various ends, which necessitated different approaches.

Mitigating transitions might have a time frame in which individuals attempt to relocate themselves emotionally and socially. However, since life is constituted of both previous and upcoming transitions (please, refer to the BSITM figure), it becomes a requisite to understand the implications or the added value of each passage individuals experience. Ultimately, this study aims to provide an understanding of the educative significance that participants drew from their university transition experience. Below is the discussion of the final question.

7.5. Research Question Four

What is the educative significance of experiencing transition to HE?

An appealing view from the Deweyan perspective is that telling stories is a way to construct meaning and learn the worthiness of an experience, as it involves a process of learning by doing (1938). Additionally, the interplay between the subjective (micro) and objective (macro) worlds render life histories rich and complex at the same time (West et al., 2007). Therefore, learning occurs due to individuals' actualisation process in negotiating meanings. In this regard, a number of participants evaluated the implications of experiencing a transition in their short- and long-term life.

First, the transition may cause a loss in terms of the delay in establishing meaning and the extent to which an experience might not be valuable for a person. This idea can be explained through Rezki's comment:

I would evaluate my experience as being between the negative and the positive (laughing).... well, I am still in the beginning and have not yet experienced much.

Lynda's perspective also aligns with this notion of lack of value for life: "my future is in danger" and "I feel like I am losing my future", denoting the loss of motivation in finding alternatives to appreciate the university experience. While the educative significance in Rezki's case was delayed or neutral because the participant needed more engagement with the experience,

Lynda's initial aspiration, on the other hand, persisted despite the coping process she was involved in. Therefore, Rezki could not identify potential outcomes of his experience, whereas Lynda was concerned about her university experience's certainty and credibility.

Second, the transition can lead to learning and development. Although Fatiha had endured emotional instability and difficulty in handling the student accommodation circumstances, developing a 'keeping on, keeping on' attitude was the aspect she believed that her university experience had taught her:

You learn how to be patient and responsible. In the past, I was not responsible for myself because I did not assume what I did... it was my parents' job. Now, it is different; I am more involved in solving my concerns.

In this regard, aspects of resilience in the above quote are apparent. Resilience, here, is not located in developing a solid self-efficacy approach but rather, a worldview about the necessity of withstanding hardship through awareness. This understanding, therefore, emerged from Fatiha's retelling of her story retrospectively, which aligns with Dewey's idea that telling stories stimulates both meaning and learning.

Finally, the transition can lead to the acquisition of new assets in the form of capital. Yacine and Yasmina provided insights into how they gained a sense of what constructs one's individuality through generating ideas about how they expected themselves to develop and become via internal growth and determination. The way both participants anticipated 'New Beginnings' (Bridges, 2004) can be illustrated as follows:

Although there are many unhelpful situations within the institution, I aim to invest as much efforts as possible in my studies. This would allow me to acquire new knowledge I did not have access to before. Also, this, in my belief, will help me to become more mature psychologically (Yacine).

Furthermore, Yasmina's approach in taking a step forward in life persisted and extended to life beyond graduation:

I felt that I became aware of how to anticipate things or think ahead of how to achieve my ideas more successfully in the future. For example, I started to

ponder about what I needed to do after my graduation to set new objectives to achieve in the future.

From these quotes, therefore, we can understand glimpses around the meaning of ‘selfhood’ rooted in interpersonal processes and wider contextual aspects. In this regard, Yacine’s and Yasmina’s ideas were mainly focused on how to perform better in life or how “to rebuild and move beyond the fragments of a life” (West, 1995, p. 154). The possible ways, therefore, to stand against life struggles was promoting internal growth and drawing determined objectives to achieve in the future. These two elements can help a person to better position the self in life with a clearer idea in mind.

7.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed in detail the significant research findings and structured the chapter through the research questions. The discussion in relation to each research question drew upon the literature presented in Chapter Two, students’ perspectives, context, my interpretations, and possible readings of narratives. Additionally, Polkinghorne’s (1995) assumptions of narrative analysis provided insights into how to approach stories.

Considering the chronological timeframe of stories helped to situate them within frames of interpretation, for example, the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, including temporality, sociality, and place (Clandinin and Connelley, 2000). In other words, I endeavoured to understand the overall *Gestalt of lives* of the subjective and objective worlds (Merrill and West, 2009, p. 136; West and Bainbridge, 2012).

The discussion showed that appraisal was at the heart of meaning making and action-taking. Coping strategies, in this regard, had different functions, although both groups might have resorted to similar techniques. Adaptation, coping, and adjustment behaviours were also apparent in the narratives and varied from participant to participant.

Finally, non-event transitions significantly impacted participants since these were the result of the clash between individuals' aspirations and contextual factors. Recovery, therefore, was a challenge, particularly for those who returned from an unsuccessful career intake. However, findings showed that the more resources at one's disposal, the higher the likelihood that hardship became controllable. This was also suggestive of how people should strive to build and use their resource reservoir as conveniently as possible.

The concluding chapter starts with a recapitulation of the essence of this study. It highlights the answers to the research questions, includes my reflection on the study process, and ends with recommendations and suggestions for possible future research and application.

Chapter 8: Conclusions

Ur-ntruzu zat-w-urfan	We won't give in to adversity
Ma-texled amzun t-esffa	Even if it's muddled; [let's see it] as plain
Ma-numen s-dwa bussan	If we believe in the cure of the days
Ahat ad-yelhu u-zekka	Maybe tomorrow will be better

(Aït Menguellet, 1996)

(Translation)

(...), I started to think how it may help me in the future when I start [maybe] a culinary business or just becoming an accountant (...). I believed having more engagement with the new space over time would be valuable (Amina: research participant).

This research provided insights into students' stories of transition to university within the Algerian context through the lens of an auto/biographical narrative inquiry approach. I endeavoured to understand the first-year experience better, focusing on students' perceptions in negotiating change after progressing into HE. Two categories of participants were interviewed: campus-based and off-campus students. The former group had to negotiate not only institutional challenges but also had to establish congruencies within student accommodation. This was to assess whether the locality is an influential factor in student transition and change.

8.1. Research questions and answers

Regarding the first question about students' perceptions and expectations before and during the transition to university, narratives indicate the incompatibility between what participants anticipated and what they experienced in university life. On the emotional level, most students had a satisfactory feeling and excitement about progressing into HE. Therefore, participants' sense of positivity in the prospect of developing other values and skills was elevated and full of optimism. Some, however, did not want to study at university regarding their personal motivations and plans after school.

Participants' apparent motivations were constructing cultural and economic capital through attending HE. However, things started to take other directions once contact was established with the new setting. This is due to issues of preparedness which affected students' ability to negotiate the transition. Therefore, aspects such as the nature of the curriculum, institutional management and poor student services affected students' engagement. At this stage, institutional interventions were not effectively provided to sustain students in their separation phase from the previous setting and facilitate their integration and meaning making within the new educational context. Subsequently, the absence of what Van Gennep (2019) referred to as *rites of passage* significantly impacted students' negotiation of new structures during their transitions. Thus, the *Endings* and *Beginnings* (Bridges, 2004) of students' experiences were not effectively bridged to facilitate the period of the *Neutral zone* or the liminal phase. This was further exacerbated by the influence of contextual values, such as familial views, on participants' personal goals after completing HS.

Regarding the effect of transition on participants social and psychological well-being, evidence shows that the transition process significantly influenced student self-confidence, social behaviour (interaction) and resilience. This depended on the type of transition and locality participants had experienced. To illustrate, students struggled to establish strong affinities with other students due to a significant difference in attitudes and behaviours, particularly within the student accommodation. This resulted in minimising contact with other social members; hence the level of inhibition and self-reserve became apparent, and a resilient approach towards finding potential alternatives to address the actual situation became minimal.

On the psychological level, due to concerns about students' preparedness for the new experience, establishing a relevant meaning was not accessible for most participants. This resulted in poor engagement with the new compositions. Eventually, the most significant psychological impact lies in being in a liminal state for a prolonged period because, at this stage,

individuals have neither dismantled previous contextual structures and roles nor incorporated the new values. Regarding participants who had an unsuccessful start to a professional career, their mental well-being was greatly affected since they experienced two transitions, each with its own challenges, in a short of time. The concern here has to do more with uncertainty and the inability to reflect on a proper plan that can help to gain a stable state.

All these factors made most participants feel as if they were “a fish out of water” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 108), therefore, experiencing what I referred to in the BISTM model, a slippery mindset which contradicts the idea of a ‘fixed mindset’ (Dweck, 2006). This condition is due to culture shock, through which people encounter difficulties establishing the satisfactory meaning of the situation, hence incompatibility with a new cultural system and values. Indeed, I consider both HS and HE as two distinct cultural systems, having distinct norms affecting motivations and self-confidence. Accordingly, individuals need to navigate these norms over time to enable their minds to accommodate the new. Considering personal goals in this study and how students differed in their attitudes about the world, I deduced that HE might not be for everybody since personal motivations and wishes may significantly direct the success of a given action in various ways.

Negotiating transition was challenging for most participants since they were expected to make the necessary adjustments relying greatly on their resources. Participants’ circumstances, including the type of transition, cultural and social background, and the place where the transition was experienced, contributed significantly to the type of behaviour students had implemented in the integration process. In this regard, avoidant (passive) behaviour, adaptation, adjustment and active engagement were the main behaviours which characterised participants’ coping processes. These coping mechanisms were apparent in both anticipated and non-event transitions.

In the non-event transitions, some participants' actions seem to have had a progressive occurrence. Generally, this started with a passive behaviour through which avoidance persisted over the entire experience. Avoidance can be understood in terms of enduring situations without making substantial efforts and waiting passively until the end of a stressful encounter. Consequently, this resulted in an adaptation process that has to do with coping with circumstances whether individuals fit in or not (Bean and Eaton, 2002). Avoidant coping was due to expectation mismatches and unrealised initial plans after school. Eventually, as participants developed frequent engagement with the context, they started to construct some understanding and meaning. This enabled them to move from passive to active behaviour, endorsed by constant reflection and appraisal of situations. This resulted in the internalisation of new values and helped with the familiarisation process. Ultimately, engaging with the wider context became possible in addition to participating in different activities to promote personal well-being and social interconnectedness.

Regarding participants who experienced anticipated transitions, their coping behaviours appeared to be associated with their habitus and cultural/social capitals (Bourdieu, 1986). A few Participants in anticipated transitions had to go through an adjustment process rather than adaptation or longitudinal coping. This is because the situation was already in line with their personal goals; hence things were, to some extent, settled compared to others. Participants' cultural/social backgrounds were factors which sustained students to generate understanding of the new setting and significantly contributed to their social mobility. The more resources students had within their environments, the quicker progress was achieved. Such resources acted as tools that facilitated participants' engagement with institutional structures. Others used what Hobfoll (2011) refers to as the conservation of resources (maintaining actual resources and pursuing new ones) by taking stock of environmental resources using Schlossberg's (2008) 4-Ss factors, *Support* in particular to minimise stressful situations and weather challenges.

Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) problem and emotional forms of coping were at the heart of students' coping behaviours. Emotion regulation, for example, is the result of evaluating of personal circumstances and external stimuli, allowing the individual to react and express emotions in various forms. Emotion regulation in this study was understood as how an individual may express discomfort about a situation through venting emotions. In this way, it can be a helpful way to express one's needs regarding a given situation which taxes well-being.

Finally, the extent to which university experience contributed to students' personal development appeared to act on two primary levels towards person becoming. The first value consists of personal growth in independently making meaning of situations and negotiating challenging circumstances. This was not apparent in their attitudes at school since they were constantly under supervision. The second added value students learn relates to the long-term horizons and coming life experiences. This is in terms of being aware that every experience is likely to contain a kind of hardship, which needs to be managed through a reflective process and, more importantly, understanding how to draw on previous experiences to perform better in future instances.

8.2. Suggestions for improvement in the Algerian context

Throughout this research and my experience as an overseas student in the UK, I have understood the importance of student support over different stages of their experiences, regardless of whether they are new starters. Other modalities and resources encompass, for example, university open days, induction, student advisory teams, and counselling. These aspects are of paramount importance to enable students to understand the new setting and give them a little impetus to integrate into the new educational context and provide support for personal issues.

Evidence in this research shows that four participants out of ten had no intention to undertake a university course but rather to start a professional career after finishing school. This number appears critical regarding students' motivations and persistence at university. Helping students choose an appropriate subject beyond HE is also a potential solution. For instance, this can be achieved through an early assessment at school or college, where institutions can keep track of students' performances throughout their defined course timeframe. Institutions, however, before taking any decision, should liaise with both students and their parents to avoid any kind of misconceptions. Practically speaking, the work should promote students' development and success in a subject of interest, which can ensure long-term persistence, rather than subjects likely to have short-lived durations.

In this regard, I invite policymakers and institutions to develop a consistent plan to help students at an early stage make the appropriate decision about their future. As an initial suggestion, we should implement a bottom-up plan instead of a top-down one, considering the ongoing mobility of the modern. Student needs analysis, therefore, is a crucial step to start with at the level of institutions. The results should be communicated to policymakers, the Ministry of Education and Higher Education. Liaising between different state apparatuses is crucial to act collaboratively towards ensuring the success of students' transition experiences. Indeed, transition models emphasise the importance of communications between different institutional services to bridge different educational settings and render students' transition experiences as smooth as possible (Briggs et al., 2012). However, such systemic approaches should not operate in isolation; rather, they should cultivate a continuous supportive environment that acknowledges the diverse backgrounds of students as valuable assets rather than differences (West et al., 2013). Ultimately, the presence of a supportive environment can enable new students to navigate the transition to higher education, empowering them to move beyond the

intermediate area by creating new meanings and bridging their subjective experiences with the shared reality (Winnicott, 1991).

8.3. Reflections on the process of the research

The fact that this research emanated from my reflection on my previous transition experience into HE made the process motivational as I finally had the chance to understand the implications of transition and find meaning for my story after many years. Researching coping behaviours regarding the impact of transition taught me how to navigate challenges researching in an international context. It was, therefore, a process of learning about different theories and, at the same time, attempting to implement these into my life. It was a road towards a personal construction in terms of developing an understanding of a subject via different theoretical lenses and participants' perspectives. My participants' contribution rendered the study's quality a rich source of ideas. This richness resulted from understanding the dynamics that shaped life experiences considering the subjective and objective worlds.

Additionally, the epistemological stance I selected contributed significantly to generating understanding and knowledge. In this, situating this auto/biographical research in the social constructionist, and post-structuralist perspectives was the right choice as it was possible to explain instances within narratives in relation to participants' perceptions, the wider context, potential readings, and my subjective interpretations. This provided various possibilities to uncover situations, for example, why some parents influenced their children's decisions after school, which does not have an ultimate explanation, considering the range of interpretations people may hold.

Transition is challenging, but it depends on individuals' actions and how conducive to transition their environments are. The more an individual evaluates, seeks support and accesses resources, the greater the likelihood of understanding and mitigating better situations. The

reverse is true; the more passive a person's actions are, the harder to get through the liminal state. This study, therefore, demonstrated that transition is a process over time which has a significant relationship with one's circumstances and the ability to negotiate various stages of the experience.

This study investigates the subject regarding context-specific factors. Although researching students' transition experiences to university is not a newly investigated subject, I attempted to contribute to generating new knowledge through various aspects of the research. As highlighted in the beginning, concerns about student support and counselling during their transition into HE appears to be scarce within the Algerian research site in this study. Therefore, students are likely to manage this challenging period relying on their outlook without reference to institutional interventions. This idea forms a significant gap in the field as little is known about the extent to which new university students can navigate transition with reference to their meaning making processes.

Moreover, the nature of the methodology I implemented, namely auto/biographical narrative inquiry, can add significant value to the research process. This enabled me to blend my own story with my participants, resulting in the researcher being a participant. Accordingly, even power relations while undertaking fieldwork were minimal as I took part in disclosing essential parts of my story. The added value here is achieving the essence of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) through which my participants and I were able to frame our stories and meanings regarding temporality, sociality and place. In this regard, Dewey states:

(...) An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment (...) (1938, p. 43).

Finally, instigating the student transition process, I can say that I have managed to understand the Gestalt of lives related to students' experiences in relation to their perspectives, cultural context, motivations, values and discourses (Merrill and West, 2009; Gergen, 1999).

8.4. Research recommendations and suggestions

In this study, I investigated participants' transition experiences around the end of the first semester and students were interviewed once, and no further data was collected because of issues related to the spread of Covid-19 and time constraints. My suggestion, therefore, is that this study can have a longitudinal aspect. A researcher will consider a focus group through which s/he can undertake a series of interviews within specific time frames, for example, before transition, amid transition, and after completing the first-year, to understand better the development of students' experiences. In this way, it will be easier to establish stronger researcher-participant relationships and understand each student's personal situation better. This can result in capturing more nuances related, for instance, to students' lives and circumstances, allowing for the construction of rich and rigorous narratives, covering intelligibly different aspects of students' experiences.

Alternatively, if the researcher has counselling qualifications, for instance, it might be possible to investigate the extent to which a researcher's counselling skills aid students in overcoming hardship. In this case, the research focus might be on students' needs and issues at university and what support a researcher can bring to reduce the impact of transition. This also requires a follow-up action and plan to check on participants after interaction with a researcher.

In terms of my future research plans, I aim to use the transition model (BSITM) I created in the theoretical chapter as a framework for conducting future research. This is to assess how reliable this model is across different settings. If I take, for example, Algeria's different regions (east, centre, west and south), these can form a starting point to corroborate evidence supporting

the framework. At this level, the size of the territory is a vital aspect to consider because, although it forms a single cultural context, it encompasses a variety of values and thinking patterns a researcher can draw on. Ultimately, there is a good opportunity to move from an auto/biographical narrative inquiry approach to ethnographic research involving different ethnic groups, each with its values and structures. To process such a project would necessitate the presence of a transition that creates a dynamic within individuals and their social groups. Accordingly, I can amend the framework in relation to evidence to render it more succinct in presenting the transition process. Once this is achieved with enough evidence, applying the updated model in the international context can be possible.

Indeed, contexts can significantly diverge regarding social values and how the transition is approached. At this level, investigating specific topics related to individuals' personal lives, such as transitioning from a single to a married status and to divorcing at a younger age, can form good examples to explore the idea of a *slippery mindset* in transition. the slippery mindset in this research parallels Bridges' (2004) *Neutral Zone* regarding how previous compositions persist in the new experience. Individuals, therefore, struggle to make meaning within the mediacy rendering their experiences muddled and uncertain.

The purpose of selecting this aspect is to understand how people respond to similar or anticipated experiences (marriage/divorce), which are generally expected to happen almost within everyone's life regardless of where experiences occur. Therefore, it seems possible to bring BSITM stages to explore how individuals respond and manage anticipated / collective experiences within various settings.

Finally, reflecting on my recent experience in the final stages of my PhD research journey triggered the idea of investigating the extent to which institutional support services are congruent with students' needs. From a personal point of view, speaking about student support

and well-being is to consider specific cases likely to vary from student to student. When someone asks for support, they implicitly expect the help they need not as the other party suggests or provides. In his book *Man's Search for Meaning* (1946), Viktor Frankl reflects on his experiences as a prisoner in one of the Nazi camps during the Holocaust. From an autobiographical account, he developed the logotherapy theory, which is based on the idea that "striving to find a meaning in one's life is the primary motivational force in man" (Frankl, 2004, p. 80). Frankl's view here favours values and ideals.

In this regard, my motivation towards investigating students' needs and institutional support services is to sensitise and maximise students' chances of receiving the support they want regarding their circumstances without enduring high frustration and uncertainties. Institutional regulations should be malleable. These are human constructs; hence rules and regulations are prone to have gaps at various levels. These gaps, in my experience, significantly affect students' motivational longevity in achieving foreseeable goals. Therefore, sensitising about the importance of implementing an approach in which flexibility and the ability to accommodate students' needs is an essential topic for research. This idea does not promote discrimination among students but is a possible way through which institutional interventions can mitigate unpredictable hardships students may encounter, particularly during critical times.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Initial organising concepts in relation to participants' stories of transition.

Initial organising concepts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">-Being fed-up with constant stress-Comparison between HS and HE-Relocation (moving from countryside into town to live with relatives)-HE: dream realisation-New ways of approaching studies-Flexibility to choose among variety of courses-Family influences undermined personal goals:<ul style="list-style-type: none">-The strong belief of the importance of undertaking studies in the local context-In-depth understanding of complex matters-Consulting learning materials independently-Considering the negative side of things-Seeking support from family-Knowledge acquisition-Understanding the complexity of (his) situation-An important stage in education-Friendship-Unconvinced with the actual situation-A bridge towards future aspirations-Doing nothing (helpless)-Undertaking a part time training course-Developing qualities like responsibility and patience-Transition into HE is similar to other life transitions-Distance from the familial environment (lack of affection and caring)-Happiness-Sociocultural activities

- Seeking virtual support
- Optimism
- Placing self in the assumed position
- Self-satisfaction (pride)
- Apprehension (anxiety)
- Transitions are different experiences and challenging
- Not having been offered suitable resources and advice for in-depth exploration and engagement
- Enduring the situation until the end
- Uncertainty
- A shift in the language of instruction
- Unprepared
- Having faith in God (God's will)
- Acquiring a sense of responsibility
- Uninformed
- Difficulties to adjust to the new norms
- Planning ahead to undertake the chosen course and having an anticipated transition:
 - Acquiring more knowledge
 - Getting acceptable marks before transition into HE.
- Regular attendance (physically)
- Regular attendance of lectures
- Insufficient information about the setting because orientation has not been provided
- Mindset revision
- Preliminary idea about HE:
 - Having a rough idea about what a transition looks like
- Insufficient means of transportation: time consuming and the inability to do extra work at home
- Transition as an unpredictable experience
- Evaluating (appraisal) the situation over time
- Having a fixed mental structure about what HE looks like:
 - Seeing the self from a fixed mindset:
 - Having extra time for activities outside the university life (e.g., training course)

Having less pressure than used to be at school,
Receiving more input from lecturers.

- Visiting family and seeking support
- Anticipation
- Inconsistencies and reluctance from the parts of both students and lecturers
- Students are not sufficiently involved in the teaching and learning process
- Developing self-reliant behaviours to extend knowledge outside the university boundaries
- Acquiring and sustaining knowledge
- Venting of emotions
- Getting substantial guidance and support
- Becoming the doer (internal locus of control)
- Persistence and course completion
- Poor assimilation of the institutional system
- Interaction with peers for advice
- Developing management skills
- Emotional distress and negativity.
 - The inability to appraise the situation
- Developing a sense of independence and responsibility
- Adaptation through *time*
- Feedback from family and friends
- Psychological maturity
- Unprepared for the new pedagogical and social landscape
- Personal growth and maturity
- Enduring the situation
- Getting used to stress
- Getting a good job
- Unable to establish meaning of the situation
- Academic self-reliance and engagement

- satisfactory career
- Thriving towards identity formation
- Organisational measures are not congruent with students' needs
- Dream realisation elsewhere
- Satisfactory engagement and positive academic results
- Changing the setting because of socio-political situation
- Being lost in the new environment
- Insufficient and lack of study resources (IT rooms, libraries)
- Information seeking
- The impact of injuries on professional success
- Bringing a new approach to establish compatibility with the new academic life
- Seeking new experiences independently
- New meaning and new outlooks
- Exam planning was unclear followed by lack of advice and information
- Keeping up to date with course progress
- Previous plans went wrong causing disappointment and disengagement
- Time: through repeating the academic year: feeling *ashamed* and *guilt*
- Poor assimilation: the inability of understanding the relationship between institutional procedures and curriculum objectives
- Many information to enquire about
- A lot of paperwork which causes time consuming and boredom
- Developing academic regularities
- Engaging in sport activities
- Background knowledge about the university setting
- Self-questioning but no answers
- Time
- Most of participants realised that their expectations were not manifesting. (Expectation incongruence)
Events took another shape than expected before

- Aspirational bankruptcy
- Self-persuasion (to accept and deal with the situation)
- Loss of interest and focus
- Social support
- New roles and assumptions
- Being in charge of the daily necessities without external help
- Unconvinced by the situation (lost in transition)
- HE is not suitable for (*my personal*) goals
- The effect of social and administrative unfairness
 - Nepotism and bureaucracy
- Loneliness and anxiety
- Developing habits
- Interacting with university students and staff
- Incongruency with the new roles
- Future thoughts and reflections about potential circumstances
- Engaging in self-learning and teaching
- Uncertainty
- Not being mindful of the potential value of their time at university
- Time as factor to establish more engagement
- Interaction with people
 - Remorseful feeling: A feeling of regret of enrolling at university
- Identifying and reflecting on potential scenarios and situations before they take place
- Poor management skills:
 - Inability to navigate daily activities independently
- Different educational system: LMD system is not clear enough for new students
- Familiarisation with the context
- Problem solving skills
- Recurrent industrial actions
- Different mentalities

- Drug consumption within the university accommodation
- Vagueness of the educational approach, especially during lectures
- Lack of background information about transition and newly implemented courses
- The necessity to manage adversities and sustain progress
- Drawing on and taking advantage of lecturers' feedback
- Fatigue and low energy: due to the daily commute to the university
- Developing the quality of attentiveness during lectures
- Confusion and stress during exams
- Being exposed only to basic and general matters
- Poor engagement with university life
- Active interaction with friends
- Overseeing (her) success and progress
- Significant differences in terms of methodology, lectures delivery, curriculum, and assessment.
- Possessing an inherent mental faculty of adjustment
- Transition into HE is only physical
- Confidence in managing future transitions

Appendix 2: Synopsis of Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart*

Chinua Achebe's work demonstrates the pre-colonial life in the southeast of Nigeria in terms of "the immemorial conflict between individuals and society" (Achebe, 1995, p. i). In this, questions of personal status in society are measured by the person's prosperity. Therefore, Okonkwo (the main protagonist in the novel) had to persevere and make significant efforts to maintain and strengthen his economic growth. Society, in this way, influences individuals' behaviour as it dictates codes of thinking and conduct, which most of the time does not align with individuals' objectives in life (as shown in the second sub-theme above). Rather, people seem to be forced indirectly to follow and accept what tradition dictates to them. In this respect, the use of the literary work is neither to exclude tradition nor promote change, rather the purpose is to show and explain the way external factors can influence individuals' decisions-making. The point is also to find an effective way of balancing both tradition and change, ensuring that we are not living at any of the extremes.

Appendix 3: Ethical Approval Form



Dr Robin Bown
Research Ethics Committee Vice-Chair
Senior Lecturer in Marketing Interpretation

Oxstalls Campus,
Longlevens, Gloucester, GL2 9HW

Tel: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

Hamid NEDRI
21 October 2019
Via email

Dear Hamid

Thank you for your application for ethical approval.

I am pleased to confirm ethical clearance for your research following ethical review by the University of Gloucestershire – Research Ethics Committee (REC).

Please keep a record of this letter as a confirmation of your ethical approval.

Project Title:	Exploring campus-based and off-campus students' experiences of transition to Higher Education: a self-reliance approach for integration and adjustment.
Start Date:	21 October 2019
Projected Completion Date:	30 November 2022
REC Approval Code:	REC.19.83.2

If you have any questions about ethical clearance please feel free to contact me. Please use your REC Approval Code in any future correspondence regarding this study.

Good luck with your research project.

Regards



Dr Robin Bown
Vice-Chair of Research Ethics Committee



University of Gloucestershire, The Park, Cheltenham, GL50 2RH. The University of Gloucestershire is a company limited by guarantee registered in England & Wales. Registered number: 06023243. Registered office: The Park, Cheltenham, GL50 2RH. Tel 0844 801 0001 www.glos.ac.uk

Appendix 4: Access letter into the research site



Full Name: Hamid Nedri

on 05th February 2020

Address: Boussouar, Ait Aissa Mimoun, Tizi-ouzou, 15098

Email: [REDACTED]

Subject: requesting access to the university site for data collection

To the director of the University,

I am a postgraduate research student at the University of Gloucestershire in the United Kingdom. My research subject is investigating student transition from school to university, and I have chosen to work with Algerian students who are progressing from high school to higher education.

Regarding the need for conversations with those students to know about their attitudes and experiences, I need access to the university site to make the practical part of my research. My work consists of interviewing students in a friendly atmosphere without posing any harm to them, be it either psychological or physical, instead being empathetic as much as possible to ensure and maximise their well-being. They will be informed that their answers will be anonymous and secured and they hold the right to withdraw at their convenience.

In this respect, I would like to ask permission to access the university to complete an essential part of my study.

Thank you very much for considering my request, and please accept my sincere regards for your cooperation.

Yours sincerely

Hamid Nedri

Access letter (translated)



Nom et Prénom : Hamid NEDRI

Le 05 février 2020

Adresse : Boussouar, Ait Aissa Mimoun, Tizi-ouzou, 15098

Email : [REDACTED]

Sujet : Demande d'accès au site de l'université pour recherche de post graduation.

Au directeur de l'université,

Je suis un étudiant en troisième cycle au Royaume Uni et ma recherche consiste de collecter des données sur les attitudes et les expériences des étudiants en pleine transition du lycée à l'université. A cet effet, j'ai l'honneur de vous demander et de m'accorder la possibilité d'avoir accès au sein universitaire afin de compléter l'étape pratique de ma recherche.

La collection des données reposera sur des conversations avec les étudiants bacheliers qui sont entrain de progresser du lycée à l'université. Les étudiants qui vont participer ne seront jamais exposés à aucun danger que ce soit psychologique ou physique, en revanche être empathique avec eux leur donnera le sentiment du bien-être et de la quiétude. Ils seront aussi informés que leurs réponses seront anonymes et ont le droit de démissionner à tout moment.

Je vous remercie infiniment de prendre ma requête en considération et veuillez accepter mes salutations les plus distinguées.

Signature de l'intéressé

Hamid Nedri

Appendix 5: Participants' Information Sheet

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

School of Education and Humanities

Participant Information Sheet

Exploring first-year university students' social and psychological coping strategies during the transition into higher education

The topic of student transition from school into university is investigated from different perspectives. Education is one area in which transition is likely to be researched. The fact that transition is seen as a recurrent theme within individuals' life; it is viewed as a constant process from one state to another.

Aim of the research

This study aims to understand how first-year university students experience the transition from high school to university and how they manage to adjust to change. To do so, I plan to interview two groups of students, those who live within university accommodations and those who live at home. This study will then focus on four main points:

- The perceptions and attitudes of students before and after the transition to university.
- The effect of transition on the social and psychological well-being of the students.
- The strategies they adopt to adjust psychologically and socially at university and
- whether these strategies help the students to build new understandings and attitudes about the new learning situation.

The research will consist primarily of interviewing students transitioning to the university. It is not any kind of assessment or evaluation of the students at the university, nor will it affect their academic attendance or results.

Method

Interviewing is a face-to-face conversation between the researcher and the participants (students, lecturers, employees, administration staff members, etc.) In this study, the interviews will be used to collect students' narratives about their transition experiences.

Please, read the participants' privacy notice, which is given to you, to learn more about the data collection process and measures taken by both the university and the researcher to secure data, ensure participants' and researchers' safety, and minimise potential risks.

- a. It is brought to your attention that taking part in this study will not impact your academic learning, especially your exam marks.
- b. Your lecturers will not be part of the research. If your lecturers ask you about volunteers to participate in the research, remember that this is not obligatory and is not for assessment or evaluation. Thus, it will not have any influence on your studies.
- c. If you accept to participate, your lecturers will neither have access to nor view any answers you provide.

d. Your answers will be anonymous and confidential, and no one can have access to or use them for other purposes except for this research.

e. No personal information will be collected during the interview, and your names will remain unknown and will not be shown in the analysis of the data nor displayed in any research presentation. Instead, your answers will be given pseudonyms, and you can suggest one if you have any.

f. At the end of the research, your answers will be completely anonymised.

j. I may record the interview electronically. A password protects the device, but you can accept or reject audio recordings.

h. You can change your mind after participating in the research and withdraw your answers. You can withdraw at any time up to 30th July 2020 without giving any reason. To withdraw, please contact the researcher via email, giving him the participant's number or the code, which will be given and written on the debrief sheet and express the will to withdraw.

i. In case you feel psychologically and emotionally distressed, please refer to the student inquiry service to get the appropriate advice and support at:

1. vrdp@ummto.dz tel: 026112947

2. Please, contact your General Practitioner for a routine assessment.

3-Below is a non-profit organisation that provides free medical consultation by qualified staff. Services are running 24/7 and open for all age categories.

Psychiatric Hospital FERNANE HANAFI:

12 Oued Aissi, Irhalen

Circumference: N12

Tizi-Ouzou (15), Algeria

Tel: +213 (0) 26225123

4. Please, note that you will need to call this organisation in order to make an appointment before travelling to their centre:

Association Algérienne pour l'Aide Psychologique, la recherche et le perfectionnement en psychologie (SARP).

(Algerian society for psychological assistance, research perfectionism in psychology)

27, rue du Boulodrome Dely Ibrahim,

16320, Alger

Tel: 023241443

Mobile: 0556696618

Task:

Before starting the interviews, you will be invited to have a friendly discussion with the researcher, exchange ideas, and ask for any information and question. Then, after introducing the subject, **you will be asked to think about your transition into university and share your own experience about progressing into HE**. Please, note that you will not be interrupted once you start talking, but throughout the interview, I may ask for clarifications or some questions.

Processing the interview

-The interview may last from 45 minutes to 1 hour. You can ask any question for clarification at any point during the interview.

-You will be asked if your answers can be recorded electronically; if not, I will take notes. After the end of the conversation, you can view my notes and discuss them.

-If you are not comfortable to talking, you can write your thoughts on paper without putting your name on it.

-Your answers will be stored in a secure, protected computer, and only the researcher can access that device.

-Your answers will be anonymised, and your real names will not be used. Each student will be given a specific pseudonym. However, you have the right to withdraw.

-You can withdraw from the research by contacting me at the email cited in this information sheet. You will need to tell me the code/pseudonym I give you after the interview. This will help to indicate which answers I need not include in the research if you withdraw. Please, note that withdrawal from the study is up to 30th July 2020.

Risks

Despite the risks of harm being low in this study in terms of physical or verbal, it is worth pointing out potential issues which may emerge. I understand that transition is a period in which people may feel confused. In this regard, the transition from high school into university may cause students to be under the factor of stress. Due to stress, individuals may be unable to establish a clear focus and difficulty acting confidently during the transition. In this regard, if you have any significant stress and/or believe that expressing your thoughts to a stranger may affect you, you should not take part, and do not have to give any reason and contact your general practitioner for a medical assessment.

Consent

If you wish to take part in this research, please complete the consent form.

Kind regards

Hamid NEDRI

Email: [REDACTED]

Participants' Information Sheet (translated)

UNIVERSITÉ DE GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Département d'éducation et du Science Humaines

Fiche d'information du participant

Titre : Exploration des expériences de la transition des étudiants vers l'enseignement supérieur : leurs approches d'adaptation sociale et psychologique.

Le sujet de la transition des élèves du secondaire à l'université est étudié sous différents angles et perspectives. Le fait que la transition soit considérée comme un thème récurrent dans la vie des individus, elle est considérée comme un progrès constant d'un état à l'autre. L'éducation est un domaine parmi d'autres où la transition est un sujet d'étude en premier degré.

Le but de l'étude

Cette étude vise à comprendre comment les étudiants universitaires vivent/vécu la transition du secondaire à l'université et comment ils parviennent à s'adapter au changement. Pour ce faire, j'ai l'intention d'interviewer deux groupes d'étudiants, ceux qui résident dans des résidences universitaires et ceux qui parcourent la distance de leurs demeures à l'université. Donc, cette étude se concentrera alors sur quatre points principaux :

- Les attitudes des étudiants avant et après la transition vers l'université ;
- L'effet de la transition sur le bien-être social et psychologique des étudiants ;
- Les stratégies qu'ils adoptent pour s'adapter psychologiquement et socialement à l'université et
- si ces stratégies aident les élèves à acquérir de nouvelles compréhensions et attitudes à l'égard de la nouvelle situation d'apprentissage.

La recherche consistera principalement à interviewer des étudiants en transition vers l'université. Il ne s'agit en aucun cas d'une évaluation et cela n'affectera pas leurs engagements universitaires ou leurs résultats d'examens.

L'entretien ou l'interview est une conversation en face à face entre le chercheur et les participants (étudiants, enseignants, employés, membres du personnel administratif, etc.). Dans cette étude, les entretiens seront utilisés pour recueillir les récits des étudiants concernant leurs expériences de la transition.

Veuillez lire **l'avis de confidentialité** des participants pour en savoir plus sur le processus de collecte de données et les mesures prises par l'université et le chercheur pour sécuriser les données, assurer la sécurité des participants et des chercheurs et minimiser les risques potentiels.

- a. Il est porté à votre intention que la participation à cette étude n'affecte pas votre apprentissage académique, en particulier vos notes d'examen.
- b. Vos enseignants ne feront pas partie de la recherche. Si vos enseignant en classe demandent des volontaires pour participer à la recherche, ce n'est pas obligatoire et ce n'est pour aucun type d'évaluation. Donc, cela n'aura aucune influence sur vos études.

c. Dans le cas où vous acceptez de participer, vos enseignants n'auront ni accès ni visionner les réponses que vous fournissez.

d. Vos réponses seront anonymes et confidentielles et personne ne pourra y avoir accès ou les utiliser à d'autres fins que pour cette recherche.

e. Aucune information personnelle ne sera collectée pendant l'entretien et vos noms resteront inconnus, ne seront pas montrés dans l'analyse des données ni affichés dans aucune présentation de recherche. Comme alternatif, un pseudonyme ou un code sera attribué à vos réponses et vous pouvez en suggérer un si vous en avez.

f. À la fin de la recherche, vos réponses seront complètement détruites.

j. Je peux enregistrer l'interview électroniquement. L'appareil est protégé par un mot de passe, mais vous avez le droit d'accepter ou de refuser l'enregistrement audio.

h. Vous pouvez changer d'avis après avoir participé à la recherche et retirer vos réponses. Vous pouvez vous retirer à tout moment jusqu'au 30 juillet 2020 sans donner de raison. Pour vous retirer, veuillez contacter le chercheur par e-mail en lui indiquant le numéro du participant ou le code qui sera donné et écrit sur le compte rendu.

i. En cas où vous vous sentez psychologiquement en détresse, veuillez-vous présenter au service universitaire pour obtenir les conseils et le soutien appropriés à:

vrdep@ummto.dz Tel:

Le standard universitaire au +213 (0) 26115651.

2. Veuillez contacter votre médecin généraliste pour faire une consultation médicale.

3. Ci-dessous se trouve des organismes à but non lucratif qui fournit des consultations médicales gratuites par du personnel qualifié. Les services fonctionnent 24h / 7 et sont ouverts à toutes les catégories d'âge.

1-The Psychiatric Hospital Fernane Hanafi. 12 Oued Aissi, Irhalen Circumference: N12 Tizi-Ouzou (15), Algeria Tel: +213 (0) 26225123	2- Hôpital C.H.U Nedir Mohamed. Avenue Abane Ramdane, Tizi Ouzou, Algeria,	3-Association Algérienne <u>pour l'Aide Psychologique,</u> <u>la recherche et le</u> <u>perfectionnement en</u> <u>psychologie (SARP)</u> 27, RUE DU Boulodrome Dely Ibrahim, 16320, Alger Tel : 023241443 Mobile : 0556696618
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- Veuillez s'il vous plaît appeler l'organisation numéro 3 (Association Algérienne pour l'Aide Psychologique, la recherche et le perfectionnement en psychologie (SARP) afin de prendre rendez-vous avant de vous rendre dans leur centre.

Notez bien:

Avant de commencer les entretiens, vous serez invité à avoir une discussion amicale avec le chercheur pour avoir la possibilité d'échanger des idées et de demander des informations et des

questions qui pourraient vous venir à l'esprit. Ensuite, après avoir introduit le sujet, il vous sera demandé de réfléchir à votre transition à l'université et à certains événements passés (avant d'entrer à l'université, vos premiers jours à l'université).

-Tout d'abord, vous parlerez de ce que vous attendiez, pensiez et viviez à l'université au début. Cela peut inclure vos impressions sur l'enseignement supérieur lorsque vous étiez au lycée et vos perceptions maintenant en tant qu'étudiant universitaire.

-Deuxièmement, parlez de l'impact que vous pensez que la transition exerce sur votre bien-être social et psychologique.

-Troisièmement, pensez aux techniques que vous avez utilisées ou que vous utilisez pour ajuster votre psychologie et les méthodes sur lesquelles vous comptez pour vous intégrer dans le nouveau contexte académique.

-quatrièmement, une fois que vous avez réussi et devenu un membre de la communauté, dites-nous si vous avez remarqué un changement sur le niveau de votre comportement ou une la possibilité d'acquérir une nouvelle attitude par rapport au contexte universitaire.

Le déroulement de l'entretien

-L'entretien peut durer de 45 minutes à 1 heure. Vous pouvez poser n'importe quelle question pour des éclaircissements à tout moment au cours de l'entretien.

- Je vous demanderai si je peux enregistrer vos réponses sur dispositif électronique, sinon je prendrai des notes.

-Si vous n'êtes pas à l'aise pour parler, vous pouvez écrire vos pensées sur un papier sans y mettre votre nom.

-Vos réponses seront stockées dans un ordinateur sécurisé et seul le chercheur aura accès à cet appareil.

-Vos réponses seront anonymisées et vos vrais noms ne seront pas utilisés. Chaque étudiant recevra un code ou un pseudonyme spécifique. Je vous donne mes coordonnées si vous souhaitez vous retirer de l'étude.

-Vous pouvez-vous retirer de la recherche en me contactant à l'email cité dans cette fiche d'information. Vous devrez me dire le code / pseudonyme que je vous donne après l'entretien. Cela vous aidera à indiquer quelles réponses je ne dois pas inclure dans la recherche au cas où vous vous retireriez. Veuillez noter que le retrait de l'étude est jusqu'au 30 juillet 2020.

Risques Potentiels

Bien que les risques de préjudice soient faibles dans cette étude en termes physiques ou verbaux, il est important de signaler des problèmes potentiels qui peuvent apparaître. Je comprends que la transition est une période dont les gens généralement sont confus et vivent un décalage avant d'assimiler la nouvelle situation. À cet égard, les étudiants en transition du secondaire à l'université peuvent endurer un stress avant qu'ils comprennent les nouveaux principes du nouveau contexte. A cet effet, les individus peuvent être incapables d'établir une concentration claire et des difficultés à agir en toute confiance pendant la transition. Donc, si vous avez un stress élevé ou si vous pensez qu'exprimer vos propres pensées à un étranger peut engendrer ou

augmenter le niveau de stress, vous ne devez pas participer et vous n'avez pas à donner de raison.

Approbation

Si vous souhaitez contribuer à cette étude, veuillez remplir le formulaire de consentement.

Adresse électronique : 

Cordialement

Hamid NEDRI

Appendix 6: Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE School of Education and Humanities

Consent Form

Name of the Researcher

Hamid NEDRI

Title: exploring first-year university students' social and psychological adjustment strategies during their transition into higher education.

Please Tick ✓ the boxes to indicate approval of each statement.

1.I understand that my participation in this study will involve a face-to-face interview with the researcher around the topic of student transition into university.	
2. This study is intended only for adults over 18 years. Please tick the box if you are over the age 18.	
3.I understand that participating in this research is voluntary and I can withdraw at any time up to 30 th of July 2020 without giving any reason. To withdraw, please contact the researcher via email, giving him the participant's number, which will be given and written on the debrief sheet.	
4. I understand that I am able to ask questions during and after participation in the study by emailing the researcher.	
5.I am aware that if I feel psychologically distressed, I need to contact the university information desk service for more guidance.	
6.I am aware that in case of health emergency, I will contact my General practitioner immediately or ask for assistance from the psychiatric centre. Please find at the end contact details.	
7.I am aware that my name and answers will be anonymous, publicly not available, and unidentifiable. The information will be secured in safe place, only the researcher will have access to it.	
8. I understand that I have the possibility to suggest pseudonyms as reference to my contribution.	
9. I understand that I can use the local language to share my ideas and the interview may be electronically recorded by the researcher with a secured device.	
10. I am aware that participating in the research will not involve clinical intervention and undertaking interview will not be abusive or expressing verbal harm.	
11.I am aware that voluntary participation in the study will not affect my marks and my learning progress.	

12.I am aware that my teacher will not view my answers and will not consider my participation for evaluation.	
13.Being asked by the teacher to take part in the study is voluntary and does not involve any evaluation for your academic achievements.	
14. I will take part in the study only if a participants' privacy notice, participants' information sheet is given jointly with the consent form prior starting the work.	

-If you notice serious effects either psychologically or emotionally distressed, please refer to this non-profit organism for more assistance.

The Psychiatric Hospital Fernane Hanafi.

12 Oued Aissi, Irhalen

Circumference: N12

Tizi-Ouzou (15), Algeria

Tel: +213 (0) 26225123

If you agree and satisfied to the above statements, please sign this form below

Participant's signature and date,

.....

Researcher's signature and date,

.....

Consent Form (translated)

UNIVERSITE DE GLOUCESTERSHIRE Département d'Education et de Science Humaines

Formulaire de Consentement

Nom du chercheur

Hamid NEDRI

Email :

[REDACTED]

Titre du projet : Étude sur les stratégies d'adaptation sociale et psychologique des étudiants pendant leur transition vers l'enseignement supérieur.

Veillez cocher ✓ les cases pour indiquer votre approbation des déclarations suivantes :

1. Je comprends que la contribution à cette étude impliquera un entretien avec le chercheur sur le thème de la transition des étudiants vers l'université.	
2. Cette étude est désignée pour les étudiant âgé plus de 18 ans. S'il vous plait, cochez si vous avez l'âge indiquée.	
3. Je comprends que la contribution à cette étude est volontaire et je peux retirer mes réponses à tout moment jusqu'au 30 Juillet 2020 sans donner aucune raison. Contacter le chercheur par email en mentionnant le numéro de participation.	
4. Je comprends que j'ai le droit de poser des questions au cours et après l'entretien.	
5. Je suis conscient(e) que si je me sens en détresse psychologique, je contacterai le service universitaire pour avoir du l'aide.	
6. En cas d'urgence sanitaire, je vais consulter immédiatement un médecin. Vous pouvez aussi être en contact avec le centre médical ci-dessous.	
7. Je comprends que mon nom et mes réponses seront anonymes et confidentiels et aussi sécurise avec un mot de passe et que personne ne peut accéder les données.	
8. Je comprends que je peux suggérer des pseudonymes comme référence à ma contribution.	
9. Je comprends que je peux m'exprimer en Kabyle et que l'entretien sera enregistrer dans un dispositif sécurise.	
10. Je suis conscient(e) que la contribution à cette étude n'impliquera aucune forme d'interventions médicaux ou risque d'être victimes de violence verbale pendant l'entretien.	
11. Je suis conscient (e) que ni mes résultats d'examens ni mon cursus académique seront affectés en contribuant à cette étude.	
12. Je suis conscient(e) que mes enseignants n'iront pas accès à mes réponses et	

aucune forme d' évaluation pédagogique ne sera initiée.	
13. Si vos enseignants vous demandent s'il y a des volontaires qui veulent contribuer à cette étude, ça n'impliquera aucune évaluation académique.	
14. Je comprends que je ne dois pas être volontaire à moins que le chercheur me donne un avis de confidentialité des participants, fiche d'information des participants, et le formulaire d'approbation.	

Si vous remarquez un effet psychologique ou un malaise après avoir participé à cette recherche, veuillez-vous adresser à ces organismes pour consultation.

1-The Psychiatric Hospital Fernane Hanafi. 12 Oued Aissi, Irhalen Circonférence: N12 Tizi-Ouzou (15), Algeria Tel: +213 (0) 26225123	2- Hôpital C.H.U Nedir Mohamed. Avenue Abane Ramdane, Tizi Ouzou, Algeria.	3-Association Algérienne pour l'Aide Psychologique, la recherche et le perfectionnement en psychologie (SARP). 27, rue du Boulodrome Dely Ibrahim, Alger. Tel: 023241443 Mobile: 0556696618
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Si vous êtes satisfait de ces principes ci-dessus, veuillez s'il vous plait signer cette déclaration ci-dessous.

Signature du volontaire et date

.....

Signature du chercheur et date

.....

Appendix 7: Interview Schedule Questions

Setting a context

At the beginning, the process of interviewing will involve a broad discussion about casual things to integrate participants in the conversation and then moving to the context of the research topic by providing preliminary information. I initiate the topic reminding the participants about the subject and defining it if necessary. My first broad question will be as follow:

Q. Would you please tell me about your experience of transition into higher education?

Questions over the course of the interview

Part one

Q. What did transition into higher education mean to you the time you were studying at school?

Q. What are your motivations for pursuing studies at university?

Q. What expectations did you have about higher education before you progressed into university?

Q. After you graduated from school, did you believe that attending university matched your previous expectations?

Q. Could you please clarify why/how?

Part two

Q. Do you think that transition had an impact on your social and psychological well-being?

Q. Could you please explain how (either yes or no)?

Part three

Q. How did you manage to recover from these difficulties during your transition?

Q. Could you please explain in which way the strategies you used to cope with transition shaped your engagement in the institution?

Q. You have already spent one semester at university, do you think that you have succeeded to adjust within the university context?

Q. Could you tell me about some aspects of that?

Part four

Q. Have you noticed any other changes at the level of your personal development?

Q- Based on what has been discussed and your experience in particular, what is the meaning you derived from having a university experience?

Appendix 8: Interview Sample

The interview schedule questions attached above are only a reference to the types of questions asked while undertaking the fieldwork. However, researching individuals' stories requires flexibility in delivering questions, depending on each circumstance. Understanding peoples' meaning regarding their transitions and actions goes beyond the structural level.

-Thank you for accepting to participate in this study; your contribution will be anonymous. Before starting, I would like you, please hand me the consent form for my records.

-Our conversation today, as written in the participant information sheet, will be about students' experiences of transition into HE and the way they negotiate hardship. So, what would you say about your personal transition experience to university?

Yacine: Before starting my course at university, I anticipated with great apprehension some of the modalities characterising university life. For example, we needed more information about the nature of assessment at university and the measures they used to evaluate students. This was unclear.... my experience of transition... to begin the transition into HE in this context... is only physical. There is no orientation...no orientation at all for new students... Teaching methods in delivering lectures and exam planning are still vague, and it is not easy to understand how all these are processed. There is no orientation or information about the system, and little is known about the techniques used in shaping the methodology of the university. Simply, they had not provided us with orientation...

-Orientation in terms of what, for example?

Yacine: Normally, they should assign ... in every department a qualified advisor, who will be in charge of orienting new university students. Students find it difficult to understand substantial aspects related to HE. They have little knowledge about how the university system is running. I would say that pedagogy is in disorder. Someone should be placed to act as a student advisor to solve such problems and at least explain to students substantial information related to studying in the university context. I feel like the student is ignored and has not given as much care as it is supposed to be. This kind of issue must be a priority.

I just want to go back to when you talked about the methodology of the university. Could you please explain further?

Yacine: Both teaching and management methods are not clear enough. In terms of teaching, it is not really a critical problem, but management, mainly at the institutional level in general, is chaotic, in my opinion.

-I see what you mean and how frustrating the situation is. The overall institution structure seems not helpful for new students, probably in terms of issues in prioritising tasks.

-How did you manage such a major change, then?

Yacine: In my case,... I would say that I did not encounter major difficulties in my transition because, as I said, I had an idea about how this context functions. Also, I believe that I possess a kind of inherent mental ability to withstand challenges.

-Could you please explain this a bit more in relation to your knowledge of HE?

Yacine: Occasionally, I came here with my father when he was the head of the department of English. Also, when we were young, he used to talk about events and his daily experiences at work. This allowed me to know at an earlier stage what HE means. So, I have not had significant difficulties... it is not difficulties... Well I anticipated such an experience with some apprehension as I knew little about how work and studying at university differ from school. For example, the approach to teaching is not the same.

-What are your objectives and motivations for pursuing studies at university?

Yacine: The aim was to invest as much effort as possible in my studies; this way, I could acquire new knowledge that I had not had access to before. This also will enhance my psychological maturity... My progress after enrolling at university is positively shaping as I constantly learn new things. It is progressively developing despite resource scarcity and everything you already know. This changed my views because I now feel my mind is more open to other understandings (other disciplines and domains) that I did not know before.

-How would you describe your transition to university as now you have changed the setting and the way of studying? Or talk me through your first weeks at university?

Yacine: Yeah, the beginning was a bit difficult, especially for someone who has no idea about the setting. Any student can find him/herself lost at some point in such a context because there are no orientation programmes to help students understand better the university setting. It is ...ehh it is likely that for them to make meaning on their own.

-This is similar to what happened to me in my first year. First, I found myself alone because all my school friends followed other pathways and subjects...I was a bit naïve; I mean, during my first year, I came to the university regularly as I thought the academic year would start in early September as in HS. However, the irony was that we did not start until mid-October. I waited for a long time to hear about the exact date to start the academic year.

-You have spoken before about the need and the benefit of orientation programmes for new students. As you are now a full-time student, is there anything else you think affects you and other students which need to be improved in the future?

Yacine: First, studies are essential for my professional career and mainly to develop my competencies. This would help me carry out my studies abroad because, as far as I knew, some international contexts dedicate significant efforts to developing education. In my opinion, here we are limited in terms of activities. Also, the process of studying and doing research is not in-depth... they are too general.

-What impact did transition have on you, your expectations in particular?

Yacine: Unfortunately, this did not match my expectations. This acted against my hopes... we do not study thoroughly, and there is a dearth of initiating research. Most of us study just to succeed in exams. My initial thoughts were that transitioning to HE is a process of acquiring new things, going through new experiences and socialising with others. Therefore, we... become open to different mentalities... We learn through these experiences, contrary to HS, which was totally different.

-You said something about your ability to manage situations relying on your mental faculties. Could you please explain what exactly you mean by mental faculties and how you drew on these to solve situations?

Yacine: ..., as I said, I believe I have an inherent mental faculty that helps me go through difficult situations. This is not the first time I have drawn on that... Even before my transition to university, I have been through hardship, and the first thing I do is reflect on the situation and attempt to find out the best step for me to minimise frustrations. I prefer first to make sense of what is happening and then relate this to my abilities to respond to circumstances as effectively as possible.

-Have you used any other strategies to balance the difference between university and school?

Yacine: I have not used any specific technique to deal with differences. All I tried to be attentive and focused on my lectures and tutorials as much as I could.

-How about your personal development? Have you seen any changes?

Yacine: Although there are many unhelpful situations within the institution, I aim to invest as much efforts as possible in my studies. This would allow me to acquire new knowledge I did not have access to before. Also, this, in my belief, will help me to become more mature psychologically.

-My last question is about your progress in transition. How could you evaluate your progress at university after studying for almost a semester?

Yacine: I would say that my progress is taking a positive dimension as I am constantly acquiring new knowledge, and also, my mind opens to other things we did not learn at school and also getting to know more about other disciplines.

-Thanks a lot, Yacine; your contribution is much appreciated.

Yacine: My pleasure!

*Handing the debrief form to the participant.

Appendix 9: Further trustworthiness criteria of the research and data

Whether qualitative research should be valid, reliable, trustworthy and credible is a recurrent theme in the literature. Some scholars consider both binaries applicable in qualitative research (Collis and Hussey, 2014; Golafshani, 2003), as the researcher needs to adapt them to be relevant to the key concerns addressed by the interpretive (Carcary, 2009). In contrast, other scholars, particularly within the mixed method approach, claim that “the criteria for judging a qualitative study differ from quantitative research” (Creswell and Creswell, 2018, p. 326) and concepts such as validity and reliability are considered quantitative terminologies (Noble and Smith, 2015; Farrelly, 2013).

From a qualitative standpoint, validity consists of weighing what is intended to be weighed (Farrelly, 2013). Alternatively, trustworthiness, credibility, consistency and conformability are the terminologies and criteria to judge qualitative research quality and rigour (Creswell and Creswell, 2018; Sandelowski, 1993; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Since this inquiry aims to understand individuals’ life experiences, it is likely to interact with other variables that a researcher might not have previously considered or selected for the inquiry. Accordingly, emerging variables can provide dynamic movement for the qualitative research process, likely to be characterised by the values of the interpretive researcher’s position (Farrelly, 2013, p. 149).

Additionally, since experiences are personal narratives, social constructs and relative to one another, the criteria of trustworthiness can vary depending on the nature of the research. In essence, there are no particular prescribed criteria to follow in the narrative approach to provide evidence about the trustworthiness of data (Noble and Smith, 2015). Researchers can select commonly used strategies in qualitative inquiry, such as utilising member-checking and expert audit reviewing (Burtina, 2015, p. 195).

Scholars argue that trustworthiness criteria “are pragmatic choices for researchers concerned about the acceptability and usefulness of their research for a variety of stakeholders” (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 3). Although this has to do with how given research is beneficial for specific contexts and purposes, the central goal is to fill a significant research gap in the literature and provide implications and suggestions, particularly for the Algerian context. In this section, I shall explain how this inquiry aligns with the criteria of trustworthiness by considering criteria related, for instance, to my research epistemology, research methodology, fieldwork (participants, context) and the data set itself.

The PRS consisted of selecting ten students to undertake qualitative interviews, and the transcription of the interviews was initiated shortly after each interview. The latter provided the possibility of having a general idea about what the data consisted of and particularly finding what is referred to as redundancy in participants’ answers (Patton, 2002). This is viewed as data saturation which refers to the stage where no new information is uncovered, indicating the presence of adequate data to develop a robust understanding of the phenomenon (Hennink and Kaiser, 2019). This was also apparent even during the comprehension phase, as codes share common aspects and similarities regarding participants’ stories. Ultimately, commonalities in participants’ answers throughout the interviews are viewed to corroborate the research instrument and the accuracy of responses (Stevenson and Mahmut, 2013). Therefore, selecting a small sample size is relevant and helpful because it allows researchers to decide whether that sample is enough or if it is necessary to extend the number accordingly (Patton, 2002).

Undertaking narrative research implicitly refers to the co-construction of meaning and the dialogical nature of the relationship between researchers and participants (Moen, 2008). Bakhtin (1986, p. 107) considers the human act “as a potential text ([...] not a physical action), only in the dialogic context of its time (as a rejoinder, as a semantic position and a system of

motives)”. That said, the researcher's bias has a relative effect on the quality of the inquiry, whether qualitative or quantitative, since they moderate the inquiry process.

Being aware of the bias the researcher brought to the study (Butina, 2015) is vital to recognise and clarify; for instance, the way being subjective has impacted the quality of the research or the manner this contributed to the significance of the study. In this, implementing a narrative approach can provide the potential to generate a picture regarding individuals’ stories and context. My eminent research bias lies in how I used my experience of transition to help participants make meaning for themselves, particularly during the interviewing process. It was not evident that all participants were ready to start sharing their stories of transition; instead, they needed more time, support, and reflection. Therefore, I attempted to start sharing my story first and then participants gained more confidence.

The option of initiating the story first was not helpful to some extent, as I realised that a few participants were building up their thoughts regarding my experience when they started talking. In the beginning, this impacted and undermined their spontaneity. However, attempting to negotiate the meaning they communicated with little ideas was quite helpful as we succeeded in engaging further with the subject.

In addition, from a constructivist standpoint, human learning and development materialise within a socially and culturally defined setting (Vygotsky et al., 1978), which to a certain extent this position implicitly aligns with Bakhtin’s (1986) concept of dialogue. In this way, any sociocultural context is shaped by how individuals interact and establish relationships using verbal and non-verbal language to communicate effectively and, therefore, develop acquisition skills from infancy. Vygotsky states that:

[...] human learning presupposes a specific social and nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them (1978, p. 88).

Similarly, this practice can also be viewed as empowering the participants in the research process, as they were still performing their roles (daily interaction and exchange) with the researcher, and it is highly likely qualitative inquirers share their perspectives and values to match what commonly participants experience and live within the sociocultural setting. It is a process of inclusion rather than exclusion and exploitation of participants and an opportunity to consider them as human beings rather than a source of information (Merrill and West, 2009).

One of the aspects which shaped the trustworthiness of this inquiry was how participants and I reached a mutual inter-subjective understanding of the narratives that occurred during the research (Moen, 2008). Ultimately, these aspects facilitated the understanding of data from the fieldwork stage and extended to the comprehensive phase, informed by diverse perspectives. Thus, although bias was present, data in this inquiry still reflects credibility because it is the product of negotiation and sharing.

Moreover, reporting transparent translation of data from the source language into the target language is a crucial aspect, which I considered for the trustworthiness of data in this study. This approach is viewed as contributing to research transparency and trustworthiness (Ho et al., 2019, p. 5). In contrast, most of the literature takes a conventional position that translating qualitative research data involving languages other than the original research language challenges the trustworthiness of the research as it can potentially result in losing meaning and raises issues of representation (Van Nes et al., 2010; Temple and Young, 2004). In this inquiry, however, translating data was necessary as most participants could not express themselves exclusively in English. The translation was also a strengthening element for the overall understanding of the data set because it allowed prolonged engagement with the materials.

Since translating data was among the initial procedures selected before undertaking the fieldwork, it was essential to decide on the types of translation methods to maximise the

accuracy of the translation process. Having no translation qualification or training did not pose significant challenges because, as a researcher, I could understand participants' discourse even when they attempted to borrow words and phrases from other languages. This is because Algeria is a multilingual context in which people are likely to use different forms of discourse. The purpose of not involving official translators in the process of data translation was strongly related to protecting participants' privacy and identity, which is a mandatory element in this research's ethical guidelines.

Before considering the translation process, I first attempted to get more explicit meaning from participants to understand their perspectives. This helped to smooth the process of translation as meaning was negotiated. The process of translation involved three main methods on several occasions: word-for-word, faithful and communicative translations. These three methods were used in order to maximise accuracy and mainly not to lose context. To illustrate, according to Newmark (1988), the first method consists of translating words from the source language by selecting their most common meanings in the target language. This did not work for all the transcripts because code-switching or language alternation (a linguistic phenomenon consisting of using two different languages in speech, such as Kabyle/French and Kabyle/Arabic) took place on several occasions. The multilingual dimension, which characterises the context of this research, brought linguistic richness through which words and expressions are borrowed to clearly explain some concepts and ideas, particularly when participants were asked to provide more clarification. The second method has to do with preserving the contextual meaning of SL regarding the grammatical structures of TL. The final method sustained the process of rendering the accurate contextual meaning of SL to make both information and language intelligible and acceptable for the reader (Newmark, 1988, 45-47). All three methods contribute to bringing a meaningful and intelligible translated narrative transcript.

The decision to implement a translation approach is threefold: participants' English mastery, not restricting the PRS for specific individuals and facilitating meaning making for participants. The first factor is related to students' English fluency, which most of the students have not developed and the fact that English, for some of them, stood either as their second foreign or as a fourth language. In addition, English is unlikely to be the language of instruction at university unless undertaking an English course.

The second element was a strategy for maximising participation and generating a general idea about what and how students from different disciplines experienced the transition phenomenon. The last factor was exclusively related to the initial one, and the aim was to offer participants a practical option to express themselves in a language, they felt comfortable using. Not considering these aspects would have resulted in exerting power, and a confined code of conduct might put participants in a stressful and uncomfortable situation. Also, this could undermine and lose substantial meanings and understandings of participants' experiences, which are the ultimate essence of narrative research. In this regard, Bakhtin, in his discussion of genres of speech, states:

[...], all characters and their speech are objects of an authorial attitude (and authorial speech). But the planes of the characters' speech and that of the authorial speech can intersect, that is, dialogic relations are possible between them (1986, p. 116).

Negotiating, sharing experiences and constructing meaning with participants has resulted in a dialogic connection in which both parties were exchanging, interpreting and making meaning of the implications of events using an intelligible code of speech. Ultimately, these factors contributed to the progress of the research and, subsequently, made the translation process more legitimate despite its pitfalls. In doing so, the aim was to establish a compatibility mode or a conceptual equivalence between the original text and the translated version, attempting to preserve the narrative meaning regarding the sociocultural context participants belonged.

Finally, thematic analysis, as a comprehensive technique of analysis of narrative, also shaped the trustworthiness criteria of this inquiry. Braun and Clarke (2006) provide a straightforward six-staged TA for analysing qualitative data; however, in this study, the process could have been more linear as prescribed, and the task was characterised by moving back and forth between stages. For instance, starting to assign preliminary concepts while transcribing data, reading transcripts thoroughly, coding and going back to data to review whether the initial codes fit before classifying them into categories and patterns. Subsequently, extended engagement offered the possibility of uncovering latent features, which helped establish a thorough understanding of the subject regarding the study objectives. Creswell (2018, p. 83) suggests that the whole research process, including research objectives, questions and research methods, is interconnected, shaping the study's cohesiveness rather than fragmenting its parts.

Qualitative studies investigate particularities, and the implementation of terminologies such as validity and reliability imply measurement and replicability. These two terms are unlikely to be used in qualitative research, specifically if the latter involves narratives and life experiences. Using quantitative concepts in qualitative research raises concerns regarding epistemological beliefs and ultimately makes the latter approach subject to the realist procedure. Qualitative research aims to understand individuals' experiences of phenomena from their perspectives. This paves the way for the emergence of multiple realities, which I consider my epistemological position towards conducting research within the social sciences.

Appendix 10: The teacher-student demographics and ratio from 1977 to 2019.

Year	Students Numbers	Teaching Staff
1977 / 1978	490	27
1978 / 1979	950	54
1979 / 1980	1411	218
1980 / 1981	2183	267
1981 / 1982	2500	385
1982 / 1983	4054	511
1983 / 1984	4631	572
1984 / 1985	4936	593
1985 / 1986	6043	640
1986 / 1987	8030	661
1987 / 1988	8953	670
1988 / 1989	9541	677
1989 / 1990	10,383	683
1990 / 1991	13,500	618
1991 / 1992	17,778	736
1992 / 1993	16,097	738
1993 / 1994	16,196	758
1994 / 1995	16,265	761
1995 / 1996	16,834	772
1996 / 1997	17,467	785
1997 / 1998	20,888	811
1998 / 1999	17,514	822
1999 / 2000	22,282	816

2000 / 2001	23,093	887
2001 / 2002	25,024	893
2002 / 2003	27,477	975
2003 / 2004	27,728	983
2004 / 2005	31,655	1 089
2005 / 2006	32,292	1194
2006 / 2007	35,537	1266
2007 / 2008	41,260	1346
2008 / 2009	45,024	1468
2009 / 2010	44,923	1514
2010 / 2011	45,671	1657
2011 / 2012	46,058	1812
2012 / 2013	46,992	1985
2013 / 2014	47,178	2003
2014 / 2015	48,150	2047
2015 / 2016	53,854	2126
2016 / 2017	55,226	2092
2017 / 2018	56,830	2053
2018 / 2019	57,842	2137
2000 / 2001	23,093	887
2001 / 2002	25,024	893
2002 / 2003	27,477	975
2003 / 2004	27,728	983
2004 / 2005	31,655	1 089
2005 / 2006	32,292	1194
2006 / 2007	35,537	1266

2007 / 2008	41,260	1346
2008 / 2009	45,024	1468
2009 / 2010	44,923	1514
2010 / 2011	45,671	1657
2011 / 2012	46,058	1812
2012 / 2013	46,992	1985
2013 / 2014	47,178	2003
2014 / 2015	48,150	2047
2015 / 2016	53,854	2126
2016 / 2017	55,226	2092
2017 / 2018	56,830	2053
2018 / 2019	57,842	2137

Appendix 11: Further statistics regarding Student enrolment at University X in the academic year 2018/2019.

1. Distribution of students according to the cycle and teaching system

Bachelor LMD	37 078
Master LMD	14 507
Graduation (classical system)	4 053
PhD LMD	731
PhD (classical system)	1 473
Total	57 842

2. Distribution of new students by faculty/department

Faculty / department	New enrollees	Rate %
Faculty of Economics, management and commercial	1481	13.66
Faculty of Agronomic and Biological Sciences	1264	11.66
Faculties of Letters and Languages	1560	14.39
Faculty of Law and Political Sciences	777	7.17
Faculty of Sciences	26	0.24
Faculty of Construction Engineering	186	1.72
Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering	0	0.00
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	1427	13.17
Department of Financial Sciences and Accounting	384	3.54

Department of Applied Sciences and Technology	2340	21.59
Department of Mathematics and Computer Science	743	6.85
Faculty of Medicine	651	6.01
Total	10 839	100.0

3. Distribution of new students by field

LMD System		
Field	New Enrollees	Rate %
Faculty of Economics, management and commercial	1 865	17.21
Natural and life sciences	1134	10.46
Earth and universe sciences	130	01.20
Foreign letters and languages	837	07.72
Arabic language and literature	299	02.76
Amazigh language and culture	424	03.91
Law and Political Science	777	07.17
Science of the matter	26	0.24
Science and technology	2340	21.59
Architecture, Urbanism planning and city professions	186	01.72
Mathematics and computer science	743	06.85
Humanities and Social Sciences	1427	13.17
Total LMD	10,188	93.99
Classical System		
Total Classical System (Medicine)	651	06.01

Grand Total	10,839	100
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4. Distribution of student numbers enrolled in graduation by Faculty and by year of study

LMD System								
Faculty / Departement	Bachelor LMD			Total Bachelor	Master LMD		Total Master	Total Graduation LMD
	Y1	Y2	Y3		M1	M2		
Faculty of Economics, Management and Commercial	3190	1669	1449	6308	1979	1253	3232	9 540
Faculty of Agricultural Sciences and Organic	2531	1373	1004	4908	618	498	1116	6 024
Faculties of Letters and Languages	2190	2030	1756	5976	1864	1087	2951	8 927
Faculty of Law and Sciences Policies	1391	633	591	2615	648	454	1102	3 717
Faculty of Sciences	227	795	479	1501	290	201	491	1 992
Faculty of Engineering Construction	259	942	1042	2243	846	572	1418	3 661
Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering	0	1413	1432	2845	1022	771	1793	4 638
Faculty of Human and Social Sciences	1808	1670	1580	5058	1321	849	2170	7 228
Department of Science financial and accounting	532	250	123	905	0	0	0	905
Department of Applied Sciences and technological	3358	299	239	3896	234	0	234	4 130
Department of Mathematics and IT	823	0	0	823	0	0	0	823

Total	16309	11074	9695	37078	8822	5685	14507	51 585
	37 078				14 507			
Classical System								
Faculty of Medicine	1st year	2 nd year	3rd year	4th year	5th year	6th year	7th year	Total
	783	697	749	646	489	440	249	4 053

5. Distribution of student numbers enrolled in Post-graduation by Faculty

Faculties/ departments	Doctoral students in the LMD system	Doctoral students in the classical system	Total
Faculty of Economic, Management and Commercial Sciences	55	104	159
Faculty of Agricultural and Biological Sciences	65	47	112
Faculties of Letters and Languages	186	187	373
Faculty of Law and Political Sciences	101	92	193
Faculty of Sciences	89	123	212
Faculty of Construction Engineering	29	52	81
Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering	83	184	267
Faculty of human and social Sciences	123	10	133
Faculty of Medicine	0	674	674

Department of Financial Sciences and Accounting	0	0	0
Department of Applied Sciences and Technology	0	0	0
Department of Mathematics and computer science	0	0	0
Total	731	1 473	2 204

Appendix 12: Examples related to University X's actions towards sustainability and some fieldwork/contextual challenges

University X's actions towards sustainability

Sustainability is also among the core objectives of the university. In 2021, the faculty of computer sciences and electrical engineering organised an online event around the theme “Research and development and emerging technologies to foster clean energy transition” (Mansouri and Ghenai, 2021). This event emphasised how the energy sector could be transformed into cleaner (decarbonisation), smart and intelligent by the digitalisation process, involving connected and decentralised energy systems. This event, therefore, aims to combine both new sources of sustainable energy with Artificial Intelligence in creating, for example, remote control and optimisation methods and strategies (Mansouri and Ghenai, 2021).

Fieldwork obstacles: An example from the fieldwork experience

In my personal fieldwork experience, the lack of available space for interviews due to the absence of an advance room booking option was particularly challenging. It is important to note that this fieldwork was conducted in 2019, and changes may have occurred since then. Although the rector of the university has declared, in an interview, that University X is still experiencing significant delays and challenges (Leslous, 2021), there is a sense that University X is moving towards better development and actively taking steps to sustain education.

Appendix 13: Glossary of terms

Anticipated transitions

These transitions include those normative “gains and losses or major alterations of roles that predictably occur in the course of the unfolding life cycle” (Pearlin and Lieberman, 1979, p. 220). For example, many young adults find that babysitting for nieces and nephews gives them at least some idea of what parenthood will be like (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 41).

Cultural capital

This concept refers to the social assets (backgrounds) of a person (e.g., education, ways of speaking and dressing, etc) that provides opportunities for social mobility in a stratified society (Harper-Scott and Samson, 2009).

Endings

According to Bridges (2004), Endings are events that we try to move beyond as quickly as possible because they begin with something wrong (p. 108)

Habitus

Habitus is a sociological concept developed by Pierre Bourdieu. It refers to the norms, structures, values, behaviours and attitudes of a particular social class/group.

Liminality or transitional space

This has been also referred to by Turner as “betwixt and between” (1967, p. 94) . Liminality is generally the phase in the transition process where individuals are neither detached from the old roles nor incorporated into the new. This stage is referred to as rites of the margin (Van Gennep and Kertzer, 2019, p. xviii). According to Winnicott’s work, a transitional space refers to that (intermediate area) space of experiencing, between the inner and outer worlds, in which primary creativity (illusion) exists and can develop (Winnicott, 1951).

Non-event transitions

These transitions “are those ones an individual had *expected* but that did not occur, thereby altering his or her life-the marriage that never occurred, the promotion that never materialized, the child who was never born, or the false-positive cancer diagnosis” (Anderson et al., 2012, p. 42).

Neutral Zone

Bridges (2004) views this transitional phase as bridging between the former (endings) and the final stage (new beginnings). Although it is a period of emptiness, it is a time when the real process of transition takes place (Bridges, 2004, p. 154).

New Beginnings

This phase of transition is the result of dismantling or deconstructing the old life’s structures and perspectives, allowing new processes of negotiating new meaning to fit in the new.

Slippery mindset

This concept has been developed in this research with reference to the fieldwork data (stories). Slippery mindset can be defined therefore as the inability to draw a satisfactory interpretation/meaning amid a new or challenging situations while experiencing transitions. The slippery mindset in this research parallels Bridges' (2004) *Neutral Zone* regarding how previous compositions persist in the new experience.

Social Capital

This refers to the shared values and resources which allow individuals to form and work in similar groups in order to achieve common objectives (Kenton, 2022).

Transitions

The overall outcome of students' transition experiences is characterised by three main components: experiencing a loss, negotiating challenges and recovery phase. Based on this, a potential definition of transitions can be suggested as follows:

Transitions are a set of experiential episodes, involving losses and gains, which form episodes in individuals' life histories. Transitions are generally full of challenges and uncertainty that require individuals to invest efforts in navigating hardship. Depending on the severity of events, individuals need to take a systematic approach to manage unsettled events. This includes, for example, taking stock of a range of resources both internal and external to negotiate different constraints and in order not to spend substantial time within the liminal phase. This renders transition as a process which requires active engagement with situations to develop the ability of moderating experiences efficiently both during the actual experience and future ones.

The Algerian *Hirak*

This is a mass protest movement over the period 2019-2021 – also referred to as the Revolution of Smiles. It entailed peaceful demonstration events across the Algerian territory. This was an attempt to claim a radical revision of the system and state structures.

Unanticipated transitions

These transitions encompass the “non-scheduled events” that are “not predictable.” These frequently “involve crises, eruptive circumstances, and other unexpected occurrences that are not the consequence of life cycles transitions” (Pearlin, 1980, p. 179; Anderson et al., 2012). “Divorce, separation ... premature death of a spouse ... illness ...” (p. 180) are few examples of unanticipated transitions.