

**Some pages of this thesis may have been removed for copyright restrictions.**

If you have discovered material in Aston Research Explorer which is unlawful e.g. breaches copyright, (either yours or that of a third party) or any other law, including but not limited to those relating to patent, trademark, confidentiality, data protection, obscenity, defamation, libel, then please read our [Takedown policy](#) and contact the service immediately (openaccess@aston.ac.uk)

**The Reluctant Customer: Case Study Research Exploring the  
Impact of Marketisation on Pedagogy and Practice at Three  
Universities in England**

**PAUL CHRISTOPHER GORMAN**

Doctor of Philosophy

**ASTON UNIVERSITY**

May 2019

**© Paul Christopher Gorman, 2019**

Paul Christopher Gorman asserts his moral right to be identified as the author of this  
thesis.

This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is  
understood to recognise that its copyright belongs to its author and that no quotation from  
the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without appropriate  
permission or acknowledgement.

# Contents

List of tables .....	5
List of figures.....	6
Acknowledgements .....	7
Glossary of abbreviations and acronyms.....	9
Thesis summary .....	10
1 Introduction .....	11
1.1.1 Why research the marketisation of Higher Education (HE)?.....	11
1.1.1 Gaps in knowledge.....	16
1.1.2 A summary of the research design and general findings .....	18
1.1.3 The thesis structure and summary of chapters.....	19
2 Marketisation of Higher Education (HE) – Literature review.....	22
2.1.1 Introduction .....	22
2.1.2 The rise of marketisation within UK HE .....	23
2.1.3 Reputation, quality monitoring, and attracting customers (students).....	31
2.1.4 Students as customers of HE .....	34
2.1.5 Customers, increasing expectations, and career-focussed HE.....	36
2.1.6 Critical pedagogy, Student-Centred Learning (SCL), and marketisation.....	40
2.1.7 Imparting knowledge or developing learners? .....	45
2.1.1 Filling gaps in research and knowledge.....	48
2.1.2 Conclusions .....	50
3 Research design and methods.....	51
3.1.1 Introduction .....	51
3.1.2 Summary of research methods .....	52
3.1.3 Mixed methods research.....	54
3.1.4 Mission statements .....	55
3.1.5 Collecting the data .....	56
3.1.6 Coding the data.....	58
3.1.7 Analysing the data.....	59
3.1.8 Case studies .....	61
3.1.9 Selection of cases.....	62
3.1.10 Interviews with senior university managers .....	64
3.1.11 Selection and recruitment.....	64
3.1.12 About the interviews with senior university managers .....	65
3.1.13 Gatekeepers for further research .....	67

3.1.14	Questionnaires for student participants .....	67
3.1.15	The questionnaire sample .....	68
3.1.16	The questionnaire .....	69
3.1.17	Questionnaire distribution.....	72
3.1.18	Incentives for participation.....	73
3.1.19	Analysis of questionnaire data.....	74
3.1.20	Interviews with undergraduates.....	75
3.1.21	The sample and recruitment for interviews with students .....	75
3.1.22	About the interviews.....	76
3.1.23	Analysing the student interview data .....	78
3.1.24	Interviews with lecturers .....	79
3.1.25	The sample and recruitment.....	79
3.1.26	About the interviews with lecturers .....	80
3.1.27	Analysing the interview data.....	81
3.1.28	Research ethics .....	82
3.1.29	Conclusions .....	84
4	The marketisation of Higher Education (HE) and customer culture.....	86
4.1.1	Introduction .....	86
4.1.2	Competition, and marketing the university to student-customers.....	89
4.1.3	Reputation, rankings, and student-customer choice .....	98
4.1.4	Increased student expectations and tuition fees .....	110
4.1.5	Transactional thinking and value for money .....	115
4.1.6	Instrumental learning and the increasing focus on employment .....	118
4.1.7	Acknowledging that students are customers of HE.....	124
4.1.8	The idealised view of HE and the reluctant customer .....	127
4.1.9	Conclusions .....	132
5	Student Centred Learning (SCL) in English HE .....	135
5.1.1	Introduction .....	135
5.1.2	Defining SCL for this study.....	137
5.1.3	The impartation of knowledge in a marketised HE sector .....	140
5.1.4	Marketing teacher-centred principles in favour of SCL .....	144
5.1.5	SCL impeded by distant relationships and large student cohorts.....	148
5.1.6	Students want learning to be more student-centred .....	153
5.1.7	Students want active learning and closer relationships with staff and fellow students	153
5.1.8	Students value the core principles of SCL.....	154

5.1.9	Audit culture, and the ineffectiveness of the student voice .....	161
5.1.10	Conclusions .....	164
6	Conclusions – Bringing it all together .....	166
6.1.1	Introduction .....	166
6.1.2	Overall conclusions and contributions to knowledge .....	167
6.1.3	Answering the research questions .....	172
6.1.4	Evaluation of the research approach.....	185
6.2	Further research.....	188
7	Final reflections .....	190
7.1.1	Introduction .....	190
7.1.2	From ‘reluctant customers’ to ‘producers’ of knowledge .....	191
7.1.3	From reluctance to resistance – emancipation and empowerment through critical research .....	195
	References.....	198
8	Appendices .....	207
8.1.1	Appendix A – A list of all inductive codes generated from the analysis of mission statements .....	207
8.1.2	Appendix B – A list of sample universities and mission statement URLs ..	217
8.1.3	Appendix C – Email sent to staff participants .....	222
8.1.4	Appendix D – Semi-structured interview prompts for staff .....	223
8.1.5	Appendix E – The online questionnaire content .....	224
8.1.6	Appendix F - Email sent to students about questionnaires .....	228
8.1.7	Appendix G – Email sent to students about interview participation.....	229
8.1.8	Appendix H – Consent form for research participants .....	230
8.1.9	Appendix I – Semi-structured interview prompts for students .....	231
8.1.10	Appendix J – Semi-structured interview prompts for staff .....	232
8.1.11	Appendix K – Ethics application for conducting fieldwork .....	233
8.2	Appendix L – Application to Ethics Committee .....	235
8.2.1	Appendix M: Tables showing Mann Whitney U Test data for students’ questionnaire answers about pedagogy – by university type .....	243
8.2.2	Appendix N – A list of all codes generated from the analysis of students’ answers regarding what they hope to obtain from university education (outcomes)	246
8.2.3	Appendix O: Tables showing Mann Whitney U Test data for students’ questionnaire answers about pedagogy – by type of course .....	247

## List of tables

<b>Table 4.1: Table showing the proportion of students by their reasons for applying to university .....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Table 4.2: Table showing the top 15 answers proportions provided by students regarding what they hope the outcomes of attending university would be .....</b>	<b>123</b>
<b>Table 5.1: Table showing student answers to questions about pedagogy .....</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Table 5.2: Table showing student opinions regarding Student-Centred Learning (SCL) and their experiences .....</b>	<b>157</b>
<b>Table 5.3: Table showing student opinions and experiences regarding Student-Centred Learning (SCL) by course type .....</b>	<b>159</b>
<b>Table 5.4: Table showing student opinions and experiences regarding Student-Centred Learning (SCL) by university type .....</b>	<b>160</b>

## List of figures

<b>Figure 3.1: Diagram showing the different levels of the research process for this study .....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Figure 4.1: Pie chart showing the proportions (%) of over-arching themes for the written content of 113 university mission statements in England.....</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>Figure 4.2: Pie chart showing the proportions (%) of over-arching themes for the written content of 18 Russell Group university mission statements in England.....</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Figure 4.3: Pie chart showing the proportions (%) of over-arching themes for the written content of 40 Pre-1992 university mission statements in England .....</b>	<b>94</b>
<b>Figure 4.4: Pie chart showing the proportions (%) of over-arching themes for the written content of 55 Post-1992 university mission statements in England .....</b>	<b>95</b>
<b>Figure 4.5: Bar chart showing the proportion (%) of mission statements that contained various codes that emerged from content analysis (Total N=113).....</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Figure 4.6: Bar chart showing the proportion (%) of Pre-1992 mission statements that contained various codes that emerged from content analysis (Total N=40) ...</b>	<b>106</b>
<b>Figure 4.7: Bar chart showing the proportion (%) of Russell Group mission statements that contained various codes that emerged from content analysis (Total N=18) .....</b>	<b>107</b>
<b>Figure 4.8: Bar chart showing the proportion (%) of Post-1992 mission statements that contained various codes that emerged from content analysis (Total N=55) ...</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Figure 4.9: Bar chart showing the proportion (%) of Pre-1992 mission statements that contained various codes that emerged from content analysis (Total N=40) ...</b>	<b>109</b>

## Acknowledgements

The successful completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the support of so many outstanding colleagues, friends, and family members. The long journey that a part-time doctoral student travels can be a difficult one, and these individuals not only helped me keep going in the right direction, but picked me up when I fell down, dusted me off, and showed patience that humbled and inspired me.

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge my supervisors, Professor Jonathan Tritter and Doctor Katie Tonkiss, who provided such superb help, guidance, and encouragement over the years. Your support will always be appreciated and remembered.

Secondly, I must thank and acknowledge the support of all the colleagues that provided me the help and access to research participants for this study. For reasons of confidentiality, none of these people can be specifically named, but this research would not have been possible without them.

I would also like to acknowledge my former colleagues at Aston University, many of whom helped me via their outstanding professionalism, understanding, and support. Whether listening to my ramblings about higher education policy, or agreeing my study leave, so many individuals positively impacted on me over the years I studied and worked there. There are far too many to name individually, but please know that you have my sincere gratitude.

To my friends, and especially my band mates, I would like to thank you for always being there to listen to me when times were tough, and the work was difficult. Your friendships meant I always had an outlet to have fun and unwind, something which certainly contributed towards me making it to the end of my studies.



I would like to thank and acknowledge my family for their unwavering support and belief in me during my work. Dad, Andrew, Judy, Stuart, Iain, and Jenny, your kind words and patient ears really helped many times over the years.

No other person is more responsible for me making it this far than my wife, Laura. She gave me strength during difficult professional and personal times, never losing her belief in me, or failing to be there when I needed someone to lean on. She helped me more than I can ever convey.

Lastly, I wish to dedicate this body of work to my late mother, Linda Gorman, who passed away in 2013. Her loss was not only too early, but was more challenging than anything that I have ever encountered in my life. During one of our final conversations, she made me promise that I would carry on with my studies, so I wish to end my acknowledgements by saying these final words – Mom, I did it.

## **Glossary of abbreviations and acronyms**

CRA	Consumer Rights Act (2015)
DfE	Department for Education
DLHE	Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education Survey
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	High Education Funding Council for England
HEI	Higher Education Institution
LEO	Longitudinal Education Outcomes
NSS	National Student Survey
OFS	The Office for Students
RQ	Research question/s
SCL	Student-Centred Learning
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
UK	United Kingdom
USS	Universities Superannuation Scheme

**Aston University**

**The Reluctant Customer: Case Study Research Exploring the Impact of  
Marketisation on Pedagogy and Practice at Three Universities in England**

**Paul Christopher Gorman**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**2019**

## **Thesis summary**

The marketisation of English Higher Education (HE) has become an important issue in recent years, yet little empirical research exists that explores the impact of marketisation on pedagogy and practice. This research aims to explore the relationship between marketisation and a customer culture in HE, whether the idea of a student-customer is internalised by staff and students, and if these factors shape student-centred learning (SCL). Through the lens of critical pedagogy, this study uses mixed methods to investigate macro, meso, and micro level processes. The analysis of 113 published university mission statements identified marketing-focussed statements as making up almost half of the content, showing that competition to bolster reputations and attract students is increasingly important as a result of marketisation. Case study research at three different English universities was the context for gathering quantitative and qualitative data. Questionnaire data obtained from 145 students, and interviews with 24 participants, which included senior university managers, lecturers and students, provided meso and micro level data. The findings show that the consequences of marketisation influences the opinions and behaviours of participants, leading to customer-focussed relationships between staff and students; an increased focus on instrumental learning; teaching being primarily focussed on imparting knowledge; and SCL principles being employed less than many students would like. Student opinions regarding the purpose and goals of HE were influenced by tuition fees, which created a focus on the financial elements of HE, and an acceptance that students are customers of HE. Despite this, both staff and students revealed a reluctance to fully internalise a student-customer concept, and were against the idea that knowledge should be imparted as part of a transactional experience. The study concludes that marketisation contributes to creating a customer culture and impedes SCL, but that there is growing resistance from staff and students against these consequences.

Key words: consumerist higher education, student-centred learning, critical pedagogy

# 1 Introduction

This chapter outlines a number of key factors that are important to establish in order to inform the reader of what to expect, both in terms of content and structure of this thesis. As such, not only does this chapter explain the motivations and reasoning behind the choice of subject matter for this research, but it also summarises how the thesis is structured; what is covered in each chapter; what the research questions are; the epistemological standpoint underpinning the work; and the research design.

Before moving forwards, it is important to note that this chapter, and the very final chapter, are the only ones within this thesis where the word 'I' will be used. At no other point during the thesis will I refer to myself in the first person, but this section, as well as the final section, describes various thought processes, reflections, and opinions. These help the reader to understand why and how I came to choose this research topic, as well as how my experiences contributed towards the development of my theoretical framework. These kinds of discussions and reflections cannot be communicated effectively in the third person, and are outlined in the following section.

## ***1.1.1 Why research the marketisation of Higher Education (HE)?***

For the last 15 years, I have found myself working very closely in the area that has commonly become known as 'The Student Experience'. I say the following with genuine sincerity, but this career path was not something that was made consciously, nor was it how I expected to put my skills to use after completing an MA in Social Research Methods in 2002. My intention was to apply for a position working on social research projects that I believed would benefit society as a whole, or change the lives of others. Before I had even submitted my MA dissertation, a graduate-level research assistant position became available at a local university. I applied with the intention of gaining interview experience, seeing as the job only required an undergraduate degree and focussed as much on

evaluation as it did research. However, the role sounded interesting, with opportunities for progression, and I was inspired by the enthusiasm of the staff on the interview panel, all of whom described the important work they did regarding enhancing the student experience. Through student-centred research and evaluation projects, the ultimate aim of the role was to make a difference for students and staff of the university, by enhancing learning and teaching. The role also provided opportunities to work on funded projects unrelated to the student experience, but, without being aware of it at the time, my decision to start that particular job was the catalyst for a career that would focus almost entirely on pedagogical research and evaluation.

My subsequent career path from that point also saw me teach educational research methods to lecturers studying for a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE), research personal tutoring, peer mentoring, active learning environments, and the benefits of project-based learning. Some years later, departmental restructures resulted in me being appointed as the representative for coordinating module feedback surveys, the National Student Survey (NSS), and various other internal student experience projects within my institution. The irony of this was that I was morally opposed to various aspects of standardised feedback mechanisms, and frequently found myself at odds with how the data was being used across the HE sector (especially the NSS data) as supposed indicators of quality. It seemed, at least from a practitioner's perspective, that there was an increasing focus on 'student experience' and 'student satisfaction', which were not necessarily beneficial to 'learning'. In many ways, I became a reluctant administrator in that I was responsible for making a success of evaluation processes that were deemed important, but that I felt could potentially be detrimental to pedagogy, and push students further towards a customer role. As well as being influenced by my own experiences and opinions within my own institution, dialogue with various colleagues from other institutions at conferences and special interest groups had further led me to believe that pedagogy and practice were increasingly influenced by complex political issues and

external pressures. These pressures seemed to be changing the nature of people's roles, and I believed were ultimately changing the way universities operated.

For some time, I had read and listened to comments that attributed many of these changes as a move towards the marketisation of HE. Marketisation refers to 'the attempt to put the provision of higher education on a market basis, where the demand and supply of student education, academic research and other university activities are balanced through the price mechanism' (Brown, 2015, p5). In other words, the HE sector was changing how universities were operating, and they were becoming more like businesses that compete for students and their tuition fees (Collini, 2012). The increased competition was something I had observed in my role coordinating the NSS, which I perceived to have become increasingly important over the years I had worked in HE. These changes, as well as various others, I saw as having the potential to contribute towards creating a customer-orientated approach to delivering education, something that immediately felt pertinent to my ideas and experience. From this point onwards, exploring how stakeholders felt HE should be working compared with how it was actually working became of great interest to me.

As a strong believer in critical pedagogy, and an advocate of Student-Centred Learning (SCL), I feared that a customer-orientated HE sector might be detracting from academic freedom, and potentially changing the power dynamic between student and lecturer/tutor. If academic staff and students internalised the customer-focussed rhetoric surrounding a marketised HE sector, what kind of impact would that have on pedagogy? It was questions such as this that I began to realise were also being asked and theorised about in the literature. However, what was also clear was that little empirical evidence existed that answered such questions. Many new ideas and criticisms were being written in journal articles and books, but not much materialised in the way of actual research, especially in terms of what staff and students thought and were experiencing. In addition, much of what was being said about customer rhetoric seemed to be opinion or theory.

This realisation laid the foundations for me thinking about conducting some meaningful and in-depth research in this area, and eventually led to a potential opportunity for me to explore some of these ideas via a part-time PhD.

Before the idea for this PhD was fully solidified, there were a number of personal and professional barriers that I faced, which stemmed from my position as a reluctant administrator. As someone that always considered myself to be a sociologist at heart, I first had to consider my researcher positionality, and the feasibility of conducting critical research at the same time as being responsible for coordinating student experience processes within a university environment. Indeed, within the critical research paradigm, researchers must question how their work will affect those studied, and what the findings might be used for (Lin, 2015). Furthermore, it is important when considering positionality for the researcher to reflect on how their beliefs, politics, and background are important variables that may affect the research process (Bourke, 2014). With these elements in mind, it was conceivable that, in many important ways, I was an insider researcher. This is defined as someone that shares 'common languages, themes and experiences with their participants' (Kim, 2012, p264). As a 'Student Experience Manager', I was in a privileged position to access and discuss key elements of university pedagogy and practice with stakeholders (especially staff). Not only was I in a good position to understand concepts and language pertinent to HE, but, as an employee of a university, I felt it could allow me to build rapport and trust with potential participants. Indeed, it is argued that insider researchers are at an advantage compared with outsider researchers (Gair, 2012), because they have detailed knowledge of context, which can be especially beneficial in qualitative research in terms of picking up on important cues and developing key issues that an outsider researcher could miss (Blackledge and Creese, 2010).

For researchers to consider their position as an insider or outsider is very important, especially when conducting potentially sensitive research (Manohar et al., 2017). This is because it is argued that 'both the researcher and the researched are subjects of knowing

and enter into a dialogue on equal footings' (Lin, 2015, p26), meaning that consideration of the status of the researcher compared with the participants is crucial to reflect on to ensure there is no abuse of power. As a staff member within a university, I had concerns that researching the opinions and experiences of students might make me an outsider. However, the fact that undertaking a PhD in this area would mean I would also become a student highlighted a potential strength of position in that I could be an insider researcher in the eyes of both staff and students. This would require me to declare my status as both a student and a staff member, but I viewed this as advantageous for the integrity of any research I planned to conduct. Overall, the idea of undertaking doctoral level research in this area was not only appealing to me, but also looking to be ethically and logistically viable.

Having reflected on my advantageous position as an administrative staff member, albeit a reluctant one, I began to plan how my background as a sociologist could help to develop and shape a theoretical framework that could be useful for researching my ideas via a PhD. During my own undergraduate studies between 1998 and 2001, I had felt both intrigued and enlightened by critical theories about education. For example, the idea that elitism still played a part in society and education was something I believed to be true, and, even during my undergraduate studies, it was argued that the UK HE system may have become 'mass in size but which remains elite in its values' (Wagner, 1995, p21). From this standpoint, I had realised that massification of HE did not necessarily denote equality of opportunity, and, coming from a very working class background and having a strong regional accent, I recall many comments from various people that expressed surprise or derisive comments about me 'making it' to university. Regardless of what I achieved, I realised that elitism and power relations were, not only theories I was reading about, but often aspects I experienced in my own life. I feel that these factors drove me to believe that education should not be elitist, that it should bring people together, and be emancipatory in terms of how it benefits individuals in general.



Reflecting on these early experiences of HE and how they shaped me as a person also influenced my role as a ‘Student Experience Manager’ many years later. I began to recognise that critical theories were still relevant as a potential framework for conducting new research into the impact of marketisation on HE stakeholders. More recent changes to the sector, such as the raising of tuition fees to £9,000, as well as government policies that identified students as having consumer rights, were making student feedback more important than ever. I witnessed this first-hand in my university position, and also began to read more about this in journal articles and conference proceedings. Despite working in a role that gave students such a strong voice, I still questioned even more the validity that standardised feedback mechanisms, such as the NSS, actually had for promoting student agency, and felt that a critical examination of HE in terms of power relations and the nature of pedagogy would be a valuable area to research for a PhD.

With a more concrete and focused idea about what I could possibly research, I took the opportunity provided by my employers to draft a proposal for a PhD project that would examine the impact of marketisation on pedagogy and practice. Upon establishing that there were research gaps in this area, and also that new research would be of immense value in terms of creating and adding to knowledge, the initial PhD idea was approved.

The next section of this chapter briefly summarises some of the arguments regarding knowledge gaps, and how this thesis seeks to address them.

### ***1.1.1 Gaps in knowledge***

Policy changes imposed by the UK government have led to significant shifts in HE over the last 30 years, and theories have emerged that explore implications and the potential impacts that these might have. The rhetoric and direction that these policy changes entailed meant that ‘marketisation’ was a concept frequently being used to describe what was happening to the HE sector. The literature that details and explains what this means is presented and discussed in the next chapter, but to capture the essence of what many

prominent writers were saying in 2012/13 (when this part-time PhD began), many theories centred on fears and concerns that hinged on the perceived impact of marketisation. For example, numerous scholars expressed reticence about marketisation, saying that students would become more like customers; that the focus of HE would shift towards satisfying the needs of said customers; that scholarship would become less important than employment; and that the relationships between staff and students would alter considerably (for example, Brown and Carasso, 2013, Collini, 2012, Marginson, 2011, Naidoo, 2005).

Despite such fears, the effects of marketisation on HE were, and still are, considered to be under-researched, under-analysed, and it is acknowledged that more research is needed to fully explore this area (Bishop, 2018, Brown, 2015, Newman and Jahdi, 2009). Although some empirical research exists that focuses on the impact of marketisation in the UK, it is often small scale, and there is still very little research that focuses on the lived experiences of staff and students in the midst of an increasingly marketised sector.

For many critical theorists, the marketised model of HE must be called into question, and there is further room for 'academic and professional discourse to consider and promote alternatives to the neo-liberal university' (Cleary, 2018, p2267). This PhD research aims to add to that discourse, generating new knowledge as well as furthering existing knowledge. The gaps that exist in the literature, and the lack of empirical research, provided a useful platform from which to generate relevant and focused research questions. As such, the following research questions were developed, and are rooted in the overarching aim of understanding the impact of marketisation on practice and pedagogy in English HE:

- RQ1 – Has marketisation contributed to creating a consumer culture in English higher education?
  - RQ1.1 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by senior management in English higher education institutions?

- RQ1.2 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by academic staff in English higher education institutions?
- RQ1.3 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by undergraduate students in English higher education institutions?
- RQ1.4 – Is student-customer rhetoric evident in the published missions, values and goals of English universities?
- RQ2 – How does marketisation shape the nature of student-centred learning in English higher education institutions?
  - RQ2.1 – To what extent do students in English higher education institutions value student-centred learning, and is it shaping their learning experiences?
  - RQ2.2 – To what extent do academic staff in English higher education institutions value student-centred learning, and is it shaping their teaching?
  - RQ2.3 – To what extent are the principles of student-centred learning advocated by senior university managers in English higher education institutions?

These research questions underpin every element of this research. The next section of this chapter provides a summary of the research design, findings, and the structure of the thesis.

### ***1.1.2 A summary of the research design and general findings***

Firstly, this research aims to explore the extent to which marketisation has contributed to creating a customer culture in English HE, what the impact of this entails for academic staff, students and senior university managers, and what it means for the sector as a whole. Secondly, the aim is to explore how marketisation is shaping SCL, and whether students, academic staff, and senior university managers value the principles of SCL.

Through the lens of critical pedagogy, this study uses mixed methods to investigate macro, meso, and micro level processes. The analysis of written data from 113 university mission statements identified marketing-focussed statements as making up almost half of all written content, showing that competition to attract students and impress potential stakeholders is extremely common. In addition, case study research at three different English universities within the same county provided the context for gathering quantitative and qualitative data: Questionnaire data from 145 students; and interviews with 24 participants, which included senior university managers, academic staff and students, provided meso and micro level data. This showed that marketisation is contributing to creating a customer culture in HE, but also that fully internalising the idea of a student-customer is resisted by both staff and students. The impact of students paying tuition fees is at the heart of customer culture and attitudes, and an over-focus on instrumental learning and poor staff to student ratios (i.e. large cohorts of students compared with staff levels) is impeding SCL in the classroom. However, there is a longing from the majority of the research participants to have closer relationships and to embrace many of the core principles of SCL, meaning that the impact of marketisation is causing concern among those that advocate this approach to learning.

The next section of this chapter outlines the structure of the thesis, and summarises the content that will make up each chapter.

### ***1.1.3 The thesis structure and summary of chapters***

The second chapter of this thesis is a review of the literature surrounding the marketisation of HE. What marketisation means as a concept and how this fits with neo-liberal agendas is discussed. In addition, literature that explains key theories about critical pedagogy and SCL are outlined, which are key aspects that form part of the theoretical framework for this research. Whilst highlighting and discussing the relevant theories and research that exists in this area, the chapter simultaneously reveals the current research

gaps; considers epistemological issues that underpin this work; and outlines the foci of the PhD topic, which sets the scene for the whole project.

The third chapter outlines the research design and explains the methods in detail. Justifications and evaluations of the appropriateness of the research tools used are explained, as are how they were utilised. The mixed methods approach is outlined, the content of questionnaires and interview schedules are explained, and what factors were included in the case studies are discussed. In addition, the composition of the research sample, how the research questions were explored, what ethical considerations were addressed, and how the data were analysed and interpreted are all explained.

In chapter four, research findings are discussed that show how marketisation has led to creating a customer culture in HE. In a marketised HE sector, this occurred because of the increasing importance of competition; how universities are attracting and marketing themselves to potential students; how marketisation has infiltrated the opinions, thoughts and actions of the majority of students, academic staff and senior university managers; and how quality monitoring and reputation have become more important for the sector. These factors, as well as the fact that students have an uneasy relationship with paying tuition fees, contribute strongly to the internalisation of customer roles. The chapter also discusses how students are now more demanding, with higher expectations, and an increased focus on the importance of employability, but also how staff and students are resisting the customer analogy. Both staff and student participants showed a reluctance to fully internalise the idea of a customer-orientated relationship between them, and a collective yearning to avoid pedagogy being the mere impartation of knowledge was observed as a common theme.

In chapter five, SCL is shown to be utilised less than expected, and certainly less than students would like to see. Teacher-centred education is more commonplace, and championing teaching quality is more important than promoting SCL principles.

Marketisation is shown to hinder SCL, in that pressures exist to teach in ways that are not conducive to SCL, and that larger cohorts and external pressures to satisfy students (both of which are exacerbated by marketisation), are barriers to a more student-centred classroom. SCL is further impeded by an audit culture that has contributed to reducing the effectiveness of student feedback mechanisms. It is argued that the drive to obtain student feedback has become more superficial and aimed at capturing satisfaction levels, rather than empowering students to shape their learning experiences. As such, students feel like their learning happens to them, more than they feel a part of creating it.

In chapter six, the research findings are considered as a whole in order to draw overarching conclusions; who the findings are relevant to; what the implications for the sector might be; the extent to which the research has achieved its goals; and what future research could follow on from this project.

The final chapter of the thesis presents some final reflections and suggests that students should be re-framed as 'producers'. It is argued that this would not only address some of the issues that exacerbate customer-orientated pedagogy and practice, but also supports many of the key principles of SCL and critical pedagogy. In addition, the chapter outlines and discusses key reflections on how the research has impacted my own understanding of HE; how the research has influenced my thought processes regarding marketisation and its consequences; how I might influence change in HE; and details my reflections regarding my position as a reluctant administrator/academic.

## **2 Marketisation of Higher Education (HE) – Literature review**

### ***2.1.1 Introduction***

This chapter reviews the literature on the marketisation of HE with a view to identifying critical gaps in knowledge. It begins by exploring what marketisation is, and what the indicators of it are; how it developed over time; how competition between universities underlies all elements of marketisation; how students may or may not be customers of HE as a result of marketisation; how government policies form aspects of the marketisation of HE; how marketisation might be impacting on pedagogy and practice (especially in terms of SCL); and what the specific research gaps are.

Little empirical research currently exists regarding the impact of marketisation on pedagogy and practice, and much of the scholarship on the potential effects of marketisation is theoretical, or rooted in the opinions and philosophies of scholars. In 2018, it is still accepted that there remains very little empirical research that examines the impact of changes brought on by the marketisation of HE, especially in terms of the student experience, and while the notion of the student-consumer is frequently theorised about, it is not analysed empirically (Nixon et al., 2018a).

For this research, marketisation is considered through the lens of critical pedagogy. The literature covers theories, ideas and research findings from scholars writing from this perspective, but related works from critical theorists are also explored. Particular attention is given to how the effects of marketisation may restrict pedagogy and principles that are considered paramount to SCL.

Marketisation connects and penetrates all elements of this study, therefore, this literature review chapter is organised into general themes, but also reveals connections between

the various theories and opinions, creating common themes and a narrative about the potential indicators and impact of marketisation on pedagogy and practice in English HE Institutions.

### ***2.1.2 The rise of marketisation within UK HE***

According to John and Fanghanel (2016), it should be no surprise to those concerned with the study of HE that marketisation and neo-liberal principles have taken hold in the UK over the last three decades. For them, the UK government has been seduced by the idea that free markets and competition can solve public funding problems for education (Ibid). The concept of marketisation pertains to the idea that goods and services are transferred from the public realm and into the realm of a market economy (Dicken, 2011). In short, marketisation means that the provision of HE falls more in line with market forces, where supply and demand dictates how university education functions, and is funded less through public spending and more by the individual beneficiaries of HE services (Brown, 2015). In such a system, neo-liberalism is the dominant force, in that a value system has increasingly taken hold that views economic development as more valuable than intellectual and political development, and the competitive individual predominates the collective (Phipps and Young, 2015).

As a concept, neo-liberalism is complex and definitions are widely debated amongst scholars (Venugopal, 2015). However, there are some crucial factors that make up an agreed understanding of the key fundamentals of the concept, which are adhered to in this study. Neo-liberalism in a UK HE context is seen as a combination of hierarchical control and free markets, in which the structures, process and values of management in the private sector are imposed on the public sector (Radice, 2013). In this sense, it is argued that there is an increased focus on performance, that is measured by targets (quantitative), and the increased use of financial incentives to drive the processes and its stakeholders (Ibid). In addition, the purpose of university education is seen to have altered



from the education of people and the professions, to the provision of skills and research outputs that are marketable to the knowledge economy (Ibid). These factors mean that neo-liberalist ideologies encourage open markets, free enterprise, the cutting of public spending, the importance of individual responsibility, and serving private needs more than public needs (Martinez and Garcia, 1997). Within this framework, HE has been instrumentalised and reconceptualised as a source of supplying skills, with universities as servants of the economy, whereby learning is overshadowed by an increasing concern with economic outcomes (Brady, 2012).

From these standpoints, neo-liberalism is tied in with theories about marketisation. According to Naidoo and Williams (2015), marketisation has enabled a restructuring of HE according to neo-liberal market principles, making students into consumers, which has in turn altered the purpose, nature, and values of HE. From this perspective, universities are seen to offer goods and services to potential students in a marketised sector (Brown and Carasso, 2013). The HE offer for students is now frequently seen as a tradable service, and one that operates based on laws of supply and demand, with universities being the providers and students the consumers (Maringe *et al.*, 2010). Government policies in the UK are argued to have caused a move from a collective idea that critical and independent thought is valued in HE, to one whereby universities are expected to work for marketplace values, and to serve the economy (Evans, 2004). These are the fundamentals of what defines a marketised HE sector, which is dominated by neo-liberal principles and increasingly operates in line with business ideals.

Until recently in the UK, the government had encouraged HE expansion and increased participation with an aim to creating a more educated workforce (Molesworth *et al.*, 2011), but this expansion led to increased competition between HEIs, with students being positioned increasingly as consumers and universities having to work harder to meet consumer demands (Ibid). In the midst of further government funding cuts in the UK, the outlook for English HE institutions is now one that is modelled on business, with

institutions forced to reconsider the way they promote and manage their activities in order to ensure maximum sales, profits and efficiency (Ibid).

For Marginson (2011), as the vast majority of the benefits of HE are defined in terms of private economic enrichment, the vision of HE as a public good diminishes, and so does the justification for public funding to support it. The next step is that the practices of HE follows this dominant ideology, and universities that are viewed by the public as factories that produce private status goods and private knowledge goods, focus mainly on such functions (Ibid). Eagle and Brennan (2007) also argue that the growing convention has been to see HE activities as less public goods and more the provision of private goods, and that the perceived benefits of HE to the individual justifies the move to make graduates pay more for their own education. Such a move is frequently viewed as part of a convenient justification for a further shift towards a more neo-liberal society (Cowden and Singh, 2013), whereby our desires are shaped to accept that everything in society, including sectors such as health and education, should be run as a business with an underlying aim to grow the national economy (Fisher, 2009). The implication here is that if something does not have market value, then this is problematic for society as a whole. It is argued that economic problems in the UK have also helped the ruling elite to gain consent for the continuation and development of neoliberal strategies (Cowden and Singh, 2013). Such strategies reinforce the idea that HE serves the individual more than society, and places the responsibility for HE on the shoulders of those that choose to pursue it (James, 2008). Within a neoliberal society, this shift towards individual responsibility is also labelled as responsabilisation, which describes 'self-care' as the objective of an autonomous, civilised, rational, and law-governed society (Amsler and Shore, 2017). It is also claimed that neoliberal societies see that responsabilisation, as a behaviour, is expected by government, society, institutions, and the public (Ibid), and is how aspects like education and welfare have successfully shifted towards being the responsibility of the individual and away from the state (Peters, 2017). In short, the marketisation of UK HE is

seen to be enabled because of a shift in priorities that link to responsabilisation, within a neoliberal society.

The transition towards a marketised HE system in the UK was not something that happened overnight, and can be traced back over a long period of time. There are a number of key points in history that stand out as important developments towards creating a more marketised HE system (Brown and Carasso, 2013). In this sense, marketisation began as political and financial changes imposed on the sector by successive governments. In 1979, the government announced that, from the following year, overseas students would no longer receive a subsidy for fees; in 1990 top-up loans for student support were introduced; In 1992 the binary line separating universities and polytechnics was removed; in 1998 top-up fees of £1,000 were introduced; and in 2006 variable fees of £3,000 were introduced (Ibid).

Beyond these early transitions that Brown and Carasso (2013) highlight as important, the most significant changes to emerge from sector reforms were that the university income generated from tuition fees more than doubled in the space of a decade, from around £3 billion in 2000–01 to over £8 billion by 2010–1 (Universities UK, 2013); simultaneously, state subsidies for HE were cut significantly, and the HEFCE teaching grants fell significantly between 2011 and 2015 (Brown and Carasso, 2013). In short, universities began to work with increasingly restricted and shrinking budgets, with students paying significantly more to study at university than ever before. From 2012 onwards, universities were able to charge up to a maximum of £9,000 per year for undergraduate study, making students more responsible for financing their own education than had ever previously been seen in the UK (Ibid). These reforms to HE financing were associated with an extensive neo-liberal discourse and governance that was underpinned by more student friendly quality assurance processes, and a desire to provide more information about universities, and what they can offer students (Ibid). This contributed to creating competition between universities in the HE marketplace (Ibid). It is these myriad factors

that are said to have contributed significantly towards developing a marketised HE system in the UK.

However, when the UK government announced the introduction of the £9,000 tuition fees there was condemnation from many students across the country, and, in 2010, numerous organised protests took place in various cities (Cammaerts, 2013). This initial resistance was well organised, and students 'twittered, set-up Facebook pages, mobilized, protested, occupied, and outsmarted police tactics' (Ibid, p7). However, although these protests were initially considered to be full of energy, enthusiasm, and fury, the protests were short-lived, failed to reverse the plans for tuition fees, and the UK government ultimately did not listen (Myers, 2017). After this initial revolt was over, organised protests fizzled out and the government forged ahead with their plans (Ibid, 2017). The UK government even began to position their reforms to the HE sector as being of benefit to students and the sector as a whole. Indeed, not long after the initial student revolt was effectively over, the government published the white paper 'Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System' (DBIS, 2011), which set out proposals to place students in the driving seat of HE, as they described it, and to make the sector more accountable to students. In making universities more accountable to students, the intention was to empower them as HE customers, who had more choices and information upon which to make their decisions (Ibid). As a result, the last thirty years has seen HE in the UK shift further towards a competitive market, where students are not only increasingly responsible for financing their own university education, but are also seen to be empowered as consumers (Brown and Carasso, 2013). As such, an era of vast change has occurred, with government intervention in UK HE policy increasingly having a significant impact on the way the sector functions (Collini, 2012).

The rhetoric of UK government policy-makers became entrenched in notions that reforms would increase competition and, ultimately, improve the quality of teaching and provision through student choice (Collini, 2012). In addition, Williams (1995) argued that the

rationale for the marketisation of HE assumed that such moves would increase economic efficiency, and that the burden of cost should, therefore, move further towards private sources as enrolment increased. Similarly, Tooley (2003) argues that competition in education can lead to innovation and also contends that the privatisation of education can also lead to economic efficiency, with less money being wasted. Brown (2013) echoes many of these points when summarising the main arguments that are used to support the marketisation of HE. In summary, he suggests that a marketised HE sector could increase efficiency of resource usage, and help to ensure that public money is used effectively; ensure universities would be more responsive and attentive to stakeholder needs; and that universities could be more innovative and entrepreneurial (Ibid). Consequently, these kinds of changes have forced institutions into competing against each other for resources and funding (Furedi, 2011).

Universities have always been in competition in one form or another, but, in this new era of marketisation, what is different and potentially troubling is the attempt to reshape the relationship between academic and student to one of provider and customer (Furedi, 2011). In this way, marketisation is as much an ideological process as it is economic, with governments often promoting policies that indicate this shift (Ibid). For example, a policy that is now propelling HE even further into the realm of marketisation is the Consumer Rights Act of 2015 (CRA), which clearly positions universities in the role of traders that supply HE services for students under contracts (Neary, 2016a). According to The Office for Students (OFS), the CRA 'will apply in most cases to the relationship between a student and their university because there is a contract between the university (the trader) and a student (who will in most cases be a consumer) for the university to supply services' (2018, p1).

This unprecedented change is leading the sector into unknown territory, because there is now the potential for university students to experience a breach of contract with a university and be entitled to claim damages for 'any losses (including consequential

losses) that are caused by the breach of contract, that were reasonably foreseeable at the time the contract was entered into, and that could not have been avoided by the student taking reasonable steps to mitigate their losses' (OFS, 2018, p3). How losses and breaches of contract can be determined remains to be seen, but this advice was published in response to academic staff conducting mass industrial action, which was in reaction to financial issues associated with Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) (Ibid). With such drastic change, universities have been, and are being, thrust further towards marketisation and consumerism.

Moving forwards, the UK government is promoting an even more marketised HE system (Cowden and Singh, 2013), and government statements have become more explicit in acknowledging a deliberate push towards the marketisation of HE. They are promoting an increasingly competitive market that is argued to be, not only positive, but a mechanism for raising standards, producing better quality products, lower costs, and greater choice for students:

*Competition between providers in any market incentivises them to raise their game, offering consumers a greater choice of more innovative and better quality products and services at lower cost. Higher education is no exception... There is no compelling reason for incumbents to be protected from high quality competition.... There are strong arguments to encourage greater competition between high quality new and existing providers in the HE sector. Graduates are central to our prosperity and success as a knowledge economy, and higher education is a key export sector (DBIS, 2016, p8).*

Competition in the HE market is central to all literature that underpins discussions about marketisation, and increased competition is one of the key indicators that marketisation has taken hold in the sector (Brown and Carasso, 2013, Collini, 2012). Universities fiercely compete for students, spend significant resources on marketing, build structures and buildings to be aesthetically pleasing, and exhibit a strong desire to expand student numbers (Adams and Smith, 2014).

Growing competition in the UK HE sector has exacerbated the need to attract students to choose a given institution, and research has shown that staff are under increased internal

pressure to recruit more and more students in order to keep their programmes financially viable. Despite this, many universities have poor staff to student ratios, often employing too few academics to teach students, which results in larger class sizes (Court, 2012). In addition, there is evidence that, in some cases, students without the required academic standards are being recruited in order to make up the numbers (Jabbar et al., 2018). Although such decisions are being made at senior management levels, these factors show the pressure to attract students is being felt on the ground by staff, and is a further indicator that competition is intensifying.

In other sectors where competition to attract customers exists, marketing is key to attracting potential customers and important for conveying a brand that is appealing in order to generate consumer trust (Chiang and Jang, 2007). In this way, institutions in the HE sector now market themselves in order to appeal to stakeholders. Such practices are increasingly used by universities as a form of reputation management, whereby they set out to understand what a given stakeholder is interested in and then communicate these elements in order to appeal to them (Ressler and Abratt, 2009). Newman and Jahdi (2009) note that the importance of universities marketing themselves to students has indeed increased as a result of marketisation, and that the focus of HE marketing is now more related to the product, price, people, processes and physical environment. However, they also argue that it is important not to market the acquisition of knowledge to potential students as a commodity or package that can merely be bought like any other product (Ibid). In other words, what they are contending is that the HE sector must not convey consumer rhetoric that implies that students must merely take on the financial responsibility of going to university in order to get a degree, like buying a product on the high street. Marketing that is directed towards stakeholders in this way runs the risk of creating an expectation of students *having* something (i.e. a product) from university education, rather than *being* something whilst at university (i.e. a learning experience) (Molesworth et al., 2009). However, it is now commonplace for universities to use their

mission statements to articulate their qualities and reputation (Furedi, 2011), which again indicates how the HE sector is further entrenched in aspects associated with competition in the marketplace, and how marketing has even penetrated the articulation of the goals and missions of HEIs.

Having established that universities are increasingly competing within one another, the following section examines the different ways in which universities have been found to compete with one another to attract students in the HE marketplace.

### ***2.1.3 Reputation, quality monitoring, and attracting customers (students)***

Within the HE marketplace, competition has been shown to be growing, so it is hardly surprising that surveys, feedback, and university rankings have become more prominent (Ressler and Abratt, 2009). The marketisation of HE has resulted in an increased consideration of quality control, auditing procedures, and a heightened focus on university rankings (Furedi, 2011). The increased prominence of the idea of students as consumers/customers, alongside a more expanded and differentiated higher education system, has meant that quality assurance processes have become more dependent on engagement with students (Bishop, 2018). It is the increased prominence of quality assurance, student satisfaction, and rankings that are also useful indicators of marketisation, which are considered in more detail below.

A crucial aspect of the move towards a competitive HE marketplace is the increased importance placed on The National Student Survey (NSS) (Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2010). Where there is a competitive marketplace, there are also metrics that assist the public and potential customers to evaluate and be informed. Indicators such as those adopted in the NSS and in league tables are increasingly referred to by the student consumer as part of their assessment of quality of an individual HE institution (Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2011). The NSS, for example, is a questionnaire that first appeared in 2005, and was part of a push by the government to enhance the quality of teaching



provision in the HE sector, and included a range of measures of student satisfaction at the national level (Bell and Brooks, 2017). Completed by final year undergraduates in the UK, the resulting feedback was intended to help inform policy decisions and increase accountability across the sector (Ibid). However, as marketisation and competition increased, the scope and importance placed on the NSS also has increased substantially over the years since its introduction (Brown and Carasso, 2013). NSS data now informs some of the key metrics used to create national university rankings, and shape the opinions and perceptions of students and other stakeholders regarding the quality of individual universities (Hazelkorn, 2015).

In a HE sector driven towards marketisation, university rankings form an important part of the external reputation of universities, and it is the reputation of any given university that is one of the most important factors that shape student decisions about their HE destination (Parry et al., 2012, Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2015). However, critics have warned that rankings and NSS data should be considered with caution, as many believe it is problematic to assume that the quality of HE is mainly related to consumer satisfaction levels that are captured by the NSS, rather than the intrinsic value of HE, and the transformative nature of the student experience (Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2011). Despite such misgivings, a competitive marketplace relies on indicators that consumers can base their choices on, and there are now numerous university ranking systems and league tables that exist in the UK, and also at the global level (Macfarlane, 2016). Universities strive for a prestigious reputation that will appeal to the student market at a global, national, and regional level via such mechanisms (Ibid).

In the UK, league tables are used increasingly as the primary tools for assessing quality for the benefit of students, who are now customers (Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2010). These tables rank universities against one another as part of an increasing tendency to respond to an audit culture, where measurable outputs are given greater importance than the idea that the university is a space for free thinking (Evans, 2004). Others suggest that

the NSS has very little to do with truly engaging with students' experiences, and is more about capturing consumer satisfaction levels (Gibbs, 2010). Whether such viewpoints are accepted or not, government policies have certainly led to an increased reliance and emphasis on student satisfaction, that has created a scenario whereby universities are more responsive to students as individuals, but also to students as a collective (Streeting and Wise, 2009b). In this way, the university journey and experience has shifted towards being conceptualised as synonymous with output models, which is evident in the increasing prevalence of student surveys, such as the NSS, and the resulting university league tables that rely on such metrics (Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2010). Because of this, universities are now enhancing customer satisfaction as a major part of their overall strategy (Carey, 2013a).

However, league tables and student satisfaction metrics are only part of the growing audit culture, and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which was introduced in 2017, has been another attempt by the UK government to raise the status and quality of teaching in UK HE (Hubble et al., 2016). Within the TEF, teaching excellence is measured via metrics that include student satisfaction scores, retention rates, employability figures, and learning gains (Neary, 2016b). This process contributes further towards distinguishing universities and informing student choice, as part of a competitive HE sector (Ibid). However, the kinds of metrics being used to measure teaching and learning quality have been extensively criticised across the sector, and are often seen as not fit for purpose (Holyroyd and Saul, 2016). For example, it has been suggested that the TEF focuses too heavily on creating a market in HE and not enough on enhancing teaching quality, and that it fails to reflect the wider and intrinsic benefits of university education (Forstenzer, 2016). Despite such criticisms, the TEF is yet another example of a process that creates increased accountability within a marketised HE sector, through the use of standardised metrics.

Because of the growing prevalence of quality monitoring, rankings, and student satisfaction data, Universities UK (2012) contend that HE in the UK is undergoing a period of significant change, where senior managers must now focus on short-term strategies and transition planning, despite the potential for long-term consequences that could alter the very nature of HE across the whole sector. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged in the field of HE scholarship and research that the purpose and role of HE in the UK is being remodelled through the effects of marketisation (Nixon et al., 2018a), and that there are increasing demands and pressures for universities to perform well according to the various metrics that inform rankings (Macfarlane, 2016). Within any economic market it is paramount that consumers and producers can access reliable information about costs, quality, and availability, yet, in the HE sector, students are the main creators of metrics that generate this information (Brown, 2015). Neary (2016a) argues that there have been numerous attempts to involve students in the enhancement of their university experience, which are partly due to an increased expectation by external bodies like the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Indeed the QAA specify that universities are required to allow students to participate in quality assurance and quality enhancement within the institution (Bishop, 2018). However, such requirements by agencies that regulate HE are seen by some to have the potential to encourage consumer approaches and a culture of listening to the demands of students, rather than enhancing pedagogy (Neary, 2016a).

The perceived contributions that marketisation is making towards placing HE students in a customer role are crucial to this discussion, but the concept of the 'student customer' is complex and requires further consideration in terms of how it manifests, is understood, and how it fits with the marketisation of universities in the HE sector.

#### **2.1.4 *Students as customers of HE***

The idea of a student-consumer has become popular in the news media, university management discourse, and government policy (Nixon et al., 2018a). With students now

paying for their own university education, they are increasingly referred to as customers in a marketised system (Eagle and Brennan, 2007, Maringe et al., 2010), especially by the UK government, who clearly and explicitly refer to them as such (Bunce et al., 2017). Marketisation and the introduction of students paying fees has led some to argue that a sense of entitlement has been created for students, whereby they feel that they are buying a good degree and bargaining power in the employment market (Naidoo and Jamieson, 2005). Some argue that this has been further exacerbated by a lack of pedagogic focus within government policies, and led students to frequently focus on value for money and the fact that going to university is a financial transaction (Gourlay and Stevenson, 2017). In other words, that students attach importance to the fact that they have paid for their education is believed to contribute directly to opinions that reflect a customer ideology (Maringe et al., 2010).

Students are a source of income for universities and so are often seen as customers in those terms (Carey, 2013a), which is one reason that university managers may fail to resist the idea of the student customer (Little and Williams, 2010). Values that are customer or consumer focussed are frequently seen as an intrinsic aspect of a transactional relationship that students enter into when they have chosen a university, and are also linked with raising student expectations regarding the value they place on HE (Tomlinson, 2017). These raised expectations, it is argued, result from paying tuition fees, which lead to higher student expectations regarding the quality of their HE experience, a focus on value for money, and desire for transparency regarding resource expenditure that tuition fee revenue generates (Ibid).

However, the customer-focused conceptualisation of HE students is argued to be loosely applied and to lack clarity of meaning, as well being unclear about who students are customers of, and what exactly the product is that they are purchasing (Maringe et al., 2010). As a result, the terminology regarding students as customers in HE is neither straightforward nor completely understood in the HE environment (Ibid), with little tangible

empirical evidence available to illustrate how students behave like customers (Macfarlane, 2016). The extent that HE students display behaviour that is customer-like is mostly notional, and does not necessarily mean that such behaviours are linked or inform attitudes towards the role of HE (Tomlinson, 2017). How students feel, think, and what it actually means to be a customer of HE has not been explored or researched in any great detail (Ibid), but there are some behaviours that are regarded as indicators of customer-focussed behaviours and opinions.

### ***2.1.5 Customers, increasing expectations, and career-focussed HE***

Despite the uncertainty regarding a student-customer terminology, and lack of research in the area, one of the key elements that is considered in the literature relates to the argument that customer-orientated students display increasingly high expectations about what they should get from their university experience (Wong and Chiu, 2017). In addition to these higher expectations, students as customers also, it is argued, increasingly recognise and consider the importance of value for money (Brown, 2015, Woodall et al., 2014), to display an instrumental focus towards the purpose of HE, and are primarily concerned with how HE will benefit them in the long term (Maringe et al., 2010). Similarly, they are also said to display an increasing focus on satisfaction levels (Nixon et al., 2018b), and opinions and/or behaviours that are indicative of the demand and supply aspects of university education (Maringe et al., 2010).

Scholars have argued that the introduction of tuition fees has meant that expectations of academic and pastoral support, teaching quality, and the responsiveness of staff to the feedback students provide have increased (Wong and Chiu, 2017). Indeed, in qualitative research conducted in the UK by Wong and Chiu (Ibid), it was found that many lecturers feel they are more like service providers, and even that they must entertain university students through their teaching. Research also shows that academics at one UK university reported that they teach more hours than previously, but feel they have less

time for quality teaching, as well as being expected to support students on demand (Jabbar et al., 2018). These apparent changes in student expectations are presented as strong indicators of an increased orientation towards customer-like thinking (Scullion and Molesworth, 2016).

In addition, qualitative research with 22 Business School academics at three UK universities showed evidence that academics saw the introduction of student tuition fees to have led to their students displaying customer-like behaviour, and that their students viewed a degree as part of a paid for service (Jabbar et al., 2018). As such, the student-consumer is likely to have and display unrealistic expectations of their HE experiences and attainment (Nixon et al., 2018a). This may extend to the expectations students place on staff, particularly regarding their working hours and flexibility, with HE staff now being placed under increasing pressure because of higher student expectations (UCU, 2010). Student expectations are continuing to rise as a result of the tuition fee structure and the customer position this puts students in (Tomlinson, 2017). But, such claims regarding the prominence of the student-consumer are often without a clear definition of what this means, what exactly constitutes high expectations, and how these manifest in practice.

Such uncertainties have not gone unnoticed, and it has been suggested that government policies and policy framework imposed and enforced on the HE sector over the last decade have had unknown effects (Raaper, 2018). Some commentators fear that pushing students towards a consumer role could lead to students being passive recipients of university education, rather than being actively involved in their learning (Bishop, 2018). One core example of this within a marketised HE sector is the belief that student customers are now placing an instrumental value on university education, above all other potential values (Maringe et al., 2010). The key issue here is the idea that an increasingly career-focussed student is, to a large extent, considered a product of marketisation (Molesworth et al., 2009).

HE is often associated with improving the prospects of graduates developing a career. Studies have frequently shown that choosing to pursue a particular course at university is rooted in career-related reasoning (Parry et al., 2012, NUS, 2011). Other factors, such as being interested in the subject matter, are also important (Parry et al., 2012), but evidence suggests that the most important outcome of HE for most students is finding employment after they graduate (DBIS, 2016). Qualitative research with 150 students at 16 UK HEIs found that getting a good career is the dominant way in which students understand the purpose of HE (Kandiko and Mawer, 2013).

However, there is a perception that instrumental motivations are intensifying, and a shift in student priorities towards a career-focussed agenda is a factor linked to the concept of marketisation and consumer-orientated attitudes towards HE (Bunce et al., 2017). In this sense, students, as customers, are buying a product, and universities are meeting that demand (Lawson et al., 2015).

These observations are given further credence by the continued popularisation of employability metrics that are now favoured by the UK government, as part of indicators of the perceived quality of a degree course. For example, the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data brings together information obtained by the Department for Education (DfE), which in turn helps inform student decisions regarding their university choice, and is based on tax records showing the earnings of graduates by discipline area and university (Hammonds, 2017). In a recent report, the DfE (2017) state that this experimental approach attempts to involve stakeholders and users in their development and improve how data is used as a source of useful information. In addition, the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) surveys, which are managed by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), have become a popular approach to research on destinations and earnings of graduates across the UK (Macmillan et al., 2015). However, critics argue that the focus on employability in HE is folly, and promotes an increased focus on outcomes (via employment) and is, ironically, contributing to

creating graduates that do not have the dispositions that employers want (Frankham, 2017). The performative culture currently present in HE is encouraged by metrics that claim to indicate quality, but do not necessarily prepare students for the workplace (Ibid). Although such reforms have been put in place in an attempt to increase accountability and the quality of HE for the majority of students, many scholars feel that marketisation threatens the purpose and values of university education (Boden and Epstein, 2006, Lynch, 2006, Marginson, 1997, Naidoo and Williams, 2015).

Authors adopting a critical pedagogy stance suggest that a university structure driven by market forces leads to a commodification of learning, and that governments and educationalists are increasingly promoting a consumerist model of HE (Cowden and Singh, 2013). Such claims are supported by research conducted by Askehave (2007), who critically analysed the language used in international prospectuses from universities in Scotland, Finland, Australia and Japan. Askehave (2007) found that, particularly within Scottish prospectuses, the language reinforced service-based promises, offering a great experience, with good support for demanding students. Although conducted on HE sectors outside of England, where this doctoral research is based, the research by Askehave shows that such trends exist in neo-liberal societies.

Critical pedagogy scholars are concerned that students seem to have internalised consumerist attitudes and accepted their consumer identity in education, as well as their place in society (Cowden and Singh, 2013). Despite this, the potentially devastating impact of marketisation on pedagogy remains under-analysed (Nixon et al., 2018a), and there is some concern that the customer/consumer culture exacerbated by marketisation allows student choice to determine what and how universities teach, and, in some cases, whether a university exists at all (Collini, 2012). What Collini contends is that universities need to compete for students in order to survive, therefore, it is inevitable that universities will shape their activities to satisfy students, leading to experiences being led by student preferences as indicated by satisfaction surveys. This type of approach is not dissimilar to



the way businesses operate in order to satisfy customer demand, and there is concern that such approaches could not only distort the relationship between teachers and students, but also have negative effects on course content and pedagogy (Naidoo, 2005).

For critical pedagogy scholars, and other critical theorists, such concerns, if proven to be founded, fundamentally threaten the nature of UK HE. To re-shape pedagogy and practice to fit with market values, customer needs and/or desires, and neo-liberal principles, is to go against many of the basic tenets that drive critical thinking. Critical pedagogy and SCL do place learners as central to how learning develops, but reject that this should be based on marketised principles.

The following section explores some of the key literature discussing critical pedagogy and SCL, both of which are key factors that shape this research. In addition, how marketisation has placed students in a position of power as customers, rather than as partners in the learning process, is also explored.

### ***2.1.6 Critical pedagogy, Student-Centred Learning (SCL), and marketisation***

Many authors suggest that John Dewey was one of the earliest influences on the eventual conceptualisation of critical pedagogy, and on progressive educators interested in advancing democratic ideals (Darder et al., 2009). Dewey, who is often presented as the father of progressive education (Burbules and Berk, 1999), wrote much of his work in the early 1900s and argued that education must engage experience, and that students must be free to interact with their environments in the practice of constructing knowledge (Dewey, 1916).

This concept highlights one of the most important issues in critical pedagogy, which is that a critical educator should 'raise ambitions, desires, and real hope for those who wish to take seriously the issue of educational struggle and social justice' (Giroux, 1988, p177). This echoes the work of Paulo Freire (1970b), who suggested that education can either

act as the means by which people can be integrated into a system of conformity, or it can give freedom to people to think critically and creatively to transform their world; the latter is preferred in critical pedagogy. Freire (1970b) rejected the notion that students are like empty bank accounts, ready to be filled with knowledge by teachers. Instead, he advocated an approach that unifies teachers and learners, by accepting that we are all incomplete. Through his scholarship, Freire raised important pedagogical questions relating to social agency, voice and democratic participation – questions that still resonate within critical pedagogy (Darder et al., 2009).

Although Freire was writing over forty years ago, the underlying message of his work remains relevant today, and scholars have noted that his work was not intended to be transferred to different contexts, rather it was to be used to guide educators and other political workers in their struggles for freedom (Weiner, 2007). Another aspect that remains pertinent for critical pedagogy is the belief that the relationship between teachers and students should be equal (Freire, 1970b). In other words, the teacher should never act as an oppressor over student learning, but rather a partner or facilitator of the learning process.

These core ideas are present in the principles of SCL. In a learning environment that is student-centered, the role of the educator is to help and encourage students to develop skills, but still provide information, knowledge, and advice (Jones, 2007). SCL allows students to exercise greater autonomy and control over the choice and content of their learning, the learning methods, and also the pace of their studies (Gibbs, 1992). This means that implicit within SCL is the principle that students should be consulted regarding the learning and teaching process, so that their experience is student-centred as opposed to teacher-centred (Biggs, 1999). Lea *et al.* (2003) also suggest that the fundamentals of SCL frequently tend to focus on the following:

*... a reliance upon active rather than passive learning; an emphasis on deep learning and understanding; increased responsibility and accountability on the*

*part of the student; an increased sense of autonomy in the learner; an interdependence between teacher and learner; mutual respect within the learner–teacher relationship; and a reflexive approach to the learning and teaching process on the part of both teacher and learner (p322).*

Definitions of SCL may vary, but some of the consistent and core elements regarding learning and teaching are that students are actively engaged in: curriculum design; the development and design of pedagogy; assessment and feedback processes; activities in the classroom; research activities; feedback on teaching; and decisions made about the structure and delivery of the course (Brandes and Ginnis, 1996). These attributes are in keeping with many of the principles of critical pedagogy, and scholars maintain that equality within education is paramount.

Achieving these elements requires collaboration between educator and learner, and Horton and Friere (1990) compare teachers to artists, and suggest that they help shape their students, but that it is key for teachers to allow students to find and become themselves. In this sense, educators must rethink and redefine what a student is, and it should be possible for an undergraduate student to be able to collaborate with teachers/educators in order for their work to have academic value and social importance (Neary and Winn, 2009).

Other terminologies exist that capture the collaborative ideals of SCL, and, according to McCulloch (2009), students being seen as co-producers means that they are viewed as being engaged in a cooperative enterprise that focusses on the production, dissemination and application of knowledge, and on learner development (rather than mere skills training). Again, this highlights the importance of active rather than passive learning, and exemplifies one of the core arguments of co-production, which is that students should not just be trained to learn and reproduce certain skills in the classroom, but active in all aspects of knowledge creation (Bovill et al., 2011). There is no one agreed definition or terminology for the concept of students as co-producers, with some describing students as partners (Freeman et al., 2013), co-creators (Bovill et al., 2011), or, simply students as

producers (University of Lincoln, 2014). However, regarding aspects to do with learning and teaching, all definitions share a common ideal that students should not only be trained to learn and reproduce certain skills in the classroom, but also be active in all aspects of knowledge creation (Bovill et al., 2011).

With these concepts explained, it becomes evident that some of the discussions regarding marketisation and the push to make students customers may threaten the principles of critical pedagogy and hinder SCL. Indeed, critical pedagogy rejects deterministic education that focusses merely on transmitting technical knowledge and theories of application (Freire, 1970b). For Freire (Ibid), human activity is best understood through reflection, dialogue and action – namely praxis. Praxis is where a theory is acted, practiced and realised as part of a process where the learner is engaged with the object of study. Praxis should be self-creating and self-generating as free human activity and provides people with a better understanding of the world as it exists and also as it might be (Ibid). In other words, students should not merely have knowledge imparted to them.

Scholars suggest that marketisation has the potential to undermine these core values. Active, deep, and cooperative learning may still be possible, but marketisation is seen to have the potential to distort pedagogy in ways that are in opposition to such thinking. For example, marketised HE has been described by some as being like a satellite navigation culture, whereby staff assist students in navigating their way through university towards a single goal, whilst lacking academic freedom to help them think critically and grow as individuals (Cowden and Singh, 2013). This type of learning moves away from student-centred principles, and undermines the values of critical pedagogy.

Many advocates of SCL argue that the main contrasting approach to student-centred principles is teacher-centred education (Kember, 1997). Teacher-centred education means that the learning process is determined externally from student involvement, and imposed on learners (Elen et al., 2007). This form of teaching usually means that students

follow instructions and precise guidelines much more (Ibid). They are passive recipients of pre-defined bodies of course content and knowledge, and are presented information by teachers (Kember, 1997). There are other theories and terminologies that are often discussed in the literature, but SCL and teacher-centred concepts are frequently identified as different extremes in terms of pedagogy (Elen et al., 2007). However, it is important to note that SCL and teacher-centred need not be completely exclusive, and can co-exist (Yuen and Hau, 2006). Research has shown that students often value both approaches, depending on the learning situation and task at hand, and that barriers to SCL can often be incorrect assumptions that adopting the principles of SCL means that teacher-centred approaches must be completely abandoned altogether (Ibid).

However, research has found that teacher-centred approaches led to knowledge being transferred efficiently and quickly, but that this did not necessarily lead to better learning, or that students would remember what was taught (Yuen and Hau, 2006). It is argued teacher-centred approaches could have advantages in certain situations, as lots of course material was observed to be covered in a shorter time frame than SCL would have allowed (Yuen and Hau, 2006, Kember, 1997). However, for advocates of SCL, teacher-centred education is often recognised as a more traditional form of instruction, and less likely to lead to deeper and more engaged learning (Elen et al., 2007). Similarly, teacher-centred education is argued to be more likely to encourage superficial, surface learning (Gow and Kember, 1993). Because of this, champions of SCL argue that learning environments require a transition away from more teacher-centred and further towards SCL (Prosser and Trigwell, 1999).

While little empirical evidence currently exists that considers how marketisation fits into this process, or what the impact on pedagogy will be, the marketisation theories considered so far point towards the exacerbation of more passive forms of learning, something which is explored in the next section of this chapter.

### **2.1.7 *Imparting knowledge or developing learners?***

In a marketised HE system, universities are presented as frequently delivering education according to approaches that generate greater student satisfaction, and critics reiterate that this conception threatens to damage the very role and purpose of the university (Grafton, 2010). If universities only support what students want to study now, in the short term, then the future of HE is lost (Ibid). Grafton (2010) elaborates by saying that slow scholarship – like slow food – is nourishing compared to fast food. In other words, he maintains that good scholarship cannot be standardised, and there must be autonomy and freedom for learning to be created without rigid standards being placed on what is taught and how it needs to be taught (Ibid). Naidoo (2005) also suggests that shaping the operation of HE in a similar way to that of the commercial sector could compromise the relationships between students and tutors, and, ultimately, pedagogy. In addition, she also suggests that packaging programmes with the primary intent of generating market value has the effect of sealing programmes, so that they are increasingly difficult to adjust or update in the light of contemporary research findings (Ibid). Such claims indicate the potential challenges that can be faced if trying to realise SCL principles that requires freedom, not further restrictions. Frameworks and systems that are too rigid can hinder progress and must be re-considered and even radicalised if SCL is to thrive in HE (Carey, 2013b). Small scale research conducted in the UK using focus groups with students concludes that they value a flexible curriculum that considers the experience of the students involved just as much as one that is relevant for the real world (Hill et al., 2003).

Much of the recent literature on the impact of marketisation on pedagogy is highly theoretical or is grounded in literature alone, rather than the lived experiences of students and educators. However, a case study of student engagement in curriculum design was conducted by Carey (2013a), who researched student experiences of curriculum design in, what he referred to as, a marketised system. In his research, pre-registration nursing students were invited to stakeholder events, curriculum meetings, and also the final

validation event in order to contribute to decisions made about the curriculum. Using data obtained from semi-structured interviews and focus groups with the students involved, Carey concluded that the students had not fully understood the purpose of the meetings; that their input centred on complaints rather than constructive input; and that students felt the power balance swung in the favour of the teachers, rather than the students. In short, the findings seem to indicate that the students saw curriculum as a straightforward entity that 'happened' to them, rather than something they were involved in (Ibid). In conclusion, he contended that engagement is not to do with having systems and procedures in isolation; rather, an engagement culture needs to happen inside, as well as outside, the classroom (Ibid).

One of the main concerns of contemporary authors of critical pedagogy, and one which would challenge such claims, is that marketisation, and the resulting shifts in stakeholder perceptions, are challenging the relationship between students and their universities (Carey, 2013a). This shift is also resulting in rhetoric that sees students as demanding customers, rather than active and willing learners (Ibid). However, far from accepting that such changes are universal or should be accepted, critical pedagogy scholars propose that researchers and progressive educators can help students and teachers resist the domination of normative practices and behavioural standards (McLaren and Kincheloe, 2007). Such claims are not new, and the struggle to emancipate individuals and disenfranchised groups from oppressive and dehumanising education has emerged from decades of critical debate (Burbules and Berk, 1999).

Such arguments are present in the work of other critical scholars, such as Neary and Winn (2009), who, while discussing the future of HE, suggest that educators need to redefine the idea of what it is to be a student:

*The point of this re-arrangement would be to reconstruct the student as producer: undergraduate students working in collaboration with academics to create work of social importance that is full of academic content and value, while at the same*

*time reinvigorating the university beyond the logic of market economics* (Neary and Winn, 2009,p 193).

This example shows how important it is for scholars of critical pedagogy that the relationship between educator and student be as equal as possible. Indeed, critical pedagogy is regarded as an effort to work within educational institutions to raise questions about inequalities of power, about false myths of apparent opportunity, and about the way belief systems become internalised to the point that individuals feel they cannot make meaningful changes (Burbules and Berk, 1999). Indeed, some have argued that the actual extent to which students have the power to affect decisions that could impact on their learning experience is usually limited, and most students are just consulted, rather than having any genuine voice or agency (Bovill et al., 2016).

Carey (2013a) suggests that students actively engaging in shaping their learning experience must become more consistently included within the student experience. SCL requires engaged and active students within the learning process, and scholars of critical pedagogy contend that if students are to do more than just obtain information, then there needs to be an exchange between people (Cowden and Singh, 2013). Marketisation presents further challenges in this regard, as qualitative research conducted with students at a UK university found that market ideology is so strongly entrenched that the relationships between staff and students were affected, with many students showing narcissistic, aggressive, and self-interested attitudes when talking about their satisfaction, or dissatisfaction, with their HE experience (Nixon et al., 2018a). Although Nixon *et al.* maintain that this is not the fault of the students, or displayed universally, such findings, however small scale, are indicative of the fears shared by critical theorists regarding the impact of marketisation, and the creation of a customer culture.

The next section explores the gaps in the literature revealed during the course of this literature review.



### **2.1.1 *Filling gaps in research and knowledge***

The micro-level views and experiences of staff and students in relation to marketisation and the creation of the student-customer have not been subject to substantial empirical research. While some existing research has engaged with these themes, it has mainly been small scale, or is outdated. For example, qualitative research conducted in the UK found that some students do actually resist the idea that they are customers, preferring instead to focus on the intrinsic benefits of learning, rather than focussing on what they obtain for their money (tuition fees) (Tomlinson, 2017). There is also little research that explores staff opinions in this area. However, qualitative research conducted in 2007 at a UK university found that academic staff are resistant to the notion that students are customers (Lomas, 2007), but this research was small scale and took place 12 years ago. This leaves substantial questions unanswered regarding the micro-level impact of marketisation within the HE sector. Based on a review of the literature, there are number of key areas that stand out as under-researched. These areas were used to formulate the research questions for this study, and also ensure that this research generates useful contributions to knowledge by filling gaps.

The key gaps in knowledge that were identified covered numerous aspects, often to do with micro-level factors and the day to day experiences of key stakeholders. However, there were also some meso and macro elements that were deemed as important to explore further. The following points highlight the main gaps in knowledge that were used to inform the direction of this project:

- It is unclear if and how marketisation is contributing to creating a consumer culture in English higher education
- There is little empirical research that explores whether senior university managers and academic staff internalise the idea that students are customers of English higher education institutions

- Little research has been conducted that explores if and how students see themselves as customers of English HE institutions, especially across multiple universities
- It is unclear if student-customer rhetoric is evident as part of the missions, values and goals of English universities
- If and how marketisation is shaping the nature of student-centred learning in English HE institutions is unclear
- There is little empirical research that looks at extent to which students in English HE institutions value SCL, or even if it is present in their learning experiences
- Whether academic staff in English HE institutions value SCL, and if it shapes their teaching is under-researched
- Finally, whether SCL is advocated by senior university managers in English HE institutions is largely unknown

In the midst of so much change in the sector there is a great deal of uncertainty in these areas, and how exactly government policies will impact on HE remains to be seen. As Brown and Carasso (2013) describe, the UK is currently in a real time experiment, whereby we do not know exactly how institutions, students and staff will respond to reforms made to the sector. As has been suggested, such opinions are still being expressed many years on (Bishop, 2018), and there exists a unique opportunity for case study research to be conducted, particularly in the UK. A critical examination of the power relations between students and staff, and the role HE institutions play in the formation of these aspects, will provide useful insights that can be used to explore if and how the marketisation of HE is impacting on pedagogy and practice, as outlined above.

The final section summarises what has been covered in this chapter, and leads into the next chapter, which explores the research methods used for this research project.

### **2.1.2 Conclusions**

The aim of this chapter was to review the current literature regarding marketisation and SCL, and, in doing so, establish what gaps in knowledge exist in order that they could be addressed.

The chapter began by defining marketisation and what it means, plus what are considered to be the indicators that the concept exists. How marketisation has developed over time in the English HE sector was also explored, as well as how competition between universities underlies all elements of marketisation. Related to these points, how students might possibly be considered customers of HEIs as a result of marketisation was explored. Furthermore, how government policies contribute to the marketisation of HE were also discussed in the literature, as well as how marketisation might be re-shaping pedagogy and practice, particularly in terms of instrumental learning and career-focussed curricula. The impact that marketisation might have on SCL was a particular focus, as well as how critical pedagogy provides a useful framework to research and these important areas.

Reviewing these elements in the literature led to the establishment of numerous key gaps in knowledge, which were used to formulate research questions and the direction of this research project. These gaps in knowledge often pointed to under-researched areas at a micro level, whereby the impact of marketisation on pedagogy and practice has not been adequately explored in terms of the lived experiences of staff and students. In addition, how universities are positioning themselves in a marketised sector, and how this might be shaping SCL for staff and students was unclear from the literature.

The following chapter explains the research design used to answer the research questions; how these key factors were researched; why the research was conducted in that way; and the ethical issues that were considered for this project.

## 3 Research design and methods

### 3.1.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the research design, and provides a detailed overview of the methods used to answer the following research questions, which stem from the gaps in the literature identified in the previous chapter:

- RQ1 – Has marketisation contributed to creating a consumer culture in English higher education?
  - RQ1.1 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by senior management in English higher education institutions?
  - RQ1.2 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by academic staff in English higher education institutions?
  - RQ1.3 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by undergraduate students in English higher education institutions?
  - RQ1.4 – Is student-customer rhetoric evident in the published missions, values and goals of English universities?
- RQ2 – How does marketisation shape the nature of student-centred learning in English higher education institutions?
  - RQ2.1 – To what extent do students in English higher education institutions value student-centred learning, and is it shaping their learning experiences?
  - RQ2.2 – To what extent do academic staff in English higher education institutions value student-centred learning, and is it shaping their teaching?
  - RQ2.3 – To what extent are the principles of student-centred learning advocated by senior university managers in English higher education institutions?

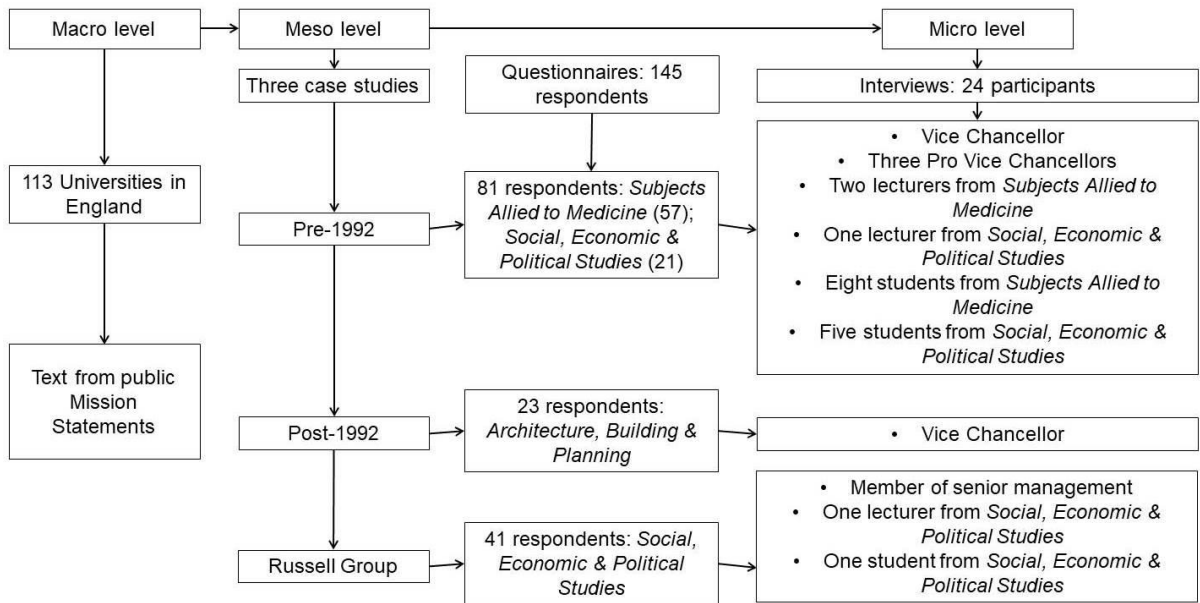
In the sections that follow, the research design is outlined in more detail, covering the research methods employed, the sample used, how the data was analysed, the rationale for why the research was conducted in this way, and what ethical considerations were explored and addressed. Furthermore, some of the challenges faced whilst conducting the fieldwork, and how adaptations to the design were made in order to explore the relevant areas of research are highlighted.

The next section provides an initial summary of the research methods and the subsequent sections explain each part in detail.

### **3.1.2 *Summary of research methods***

The following diagram (Figure 3.1) provides a summary of how mixed methods were employed in this research, outlining where case studies were utilised, how qualitative and quantitative techniques were included, who and what was included in the sample, plus how each stage contributes to exploring macro, meso, and micro level aspects.

**Figure 3.1: Diagram showing the different levels of the research process for this study**



The first stage, as outlined in Figure 3.1, was obtaining and analysing all published university mission statements in England. Overall, 113 mission statements were analysed, which provided a national picture of how universities position themselves within the HE sector. The aim of the second stage was to move from the macro towards the meso, and micro levels. Three different types of university were selected: a Pre-1992, a Post-1992, and a Russell Group university, all in the same county in England. To briefly define these categories, it is important to look back before 1992 when the UK HE sector had a binary system, where governance and funding arrangements were different for universities and polytechnics (Raffe and Croxford, 2015). In 1992, the binary system was abolished and funding was unified, with former polytechnics becoming universities, which saw the Post-1992 and Pre-1992 categories emerge (Ibid). The third category of Russell Group universities refers to universities that self-identify as research-intensive, and who established themselves as members of a collective called the ‘Russell Group’ (Boliver, 2015, Raffe and Croxford, 2015). Each university for this research represented a university within each of these categories, and each served as an individual case study, providing meso and micro-level research opportunities. Within these institutions, 145

students responded to a questionnaire; 14 students participated in semi-structured interviews; and 10 members of university staff were also interviewed. This mixed methods approach provided both quantitative and qualitative data on how students, academic staff (lecturers), and senior university managers experience HE, and captured their individual opinions, which in turn provided an overall picture in terms of common and contrasting themes.

The next section explains how mixed methods were used and provides justifications for choosing this approach.

### **3.1.3 *Mixed methods research***

Obtaining relevant data to explore concepts at macro, meso, and micro levels was imperative for this project in order to explore the wider context, as well as uncover personal experiences of informants. Mixed methods are often viewed as a means to increase the accuracy of research findings and the confidence we can place in them (Kelle, 2001), whilst generating knowledge through synthesising different approaches (Foss and Ellefsen, 2002). Using a mixed methods approach, and including numerous sites and samples, provided a rich and detailed dataset from which to work.

Over time, there has been a tendency for many researchers to lean towards either rich, deep and observable data (qualitative), or hard and generalizable data (quantitative) (Sieber, 1973), whereas others believe that a mixed methods approach is entirely possible and legitimate (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (Ibid) also contend that there is often a confusion between epistemology and methodology, and that different epistemological standpoints need not dictate that mixed methods cannot be used. Indeed, the research questions for this study could not easily be answered by restricting one's approach to only macro or micro level techniques, such as only distributing a largescale questionnaire, or only conducting interviews and focus groups. In order to research the sites and samples outlined in the previous sub section, it was

important to design research methods that considered the nature of what needed to be examined, then decide the research methods that would be the most appropriate to describe, explain or understand what was being examined (Kelle, 2005). Given the multiple elements that had been set out to explore in this research, careful consideration of how best to employ quantitative and/or qualitative methods was crucial, and how to ensure coherent analysis could take place between the different data sources.

In order to accommodate macro, meso, and micro level research, including both inductive and deductive approaches, mixed methods were utilised in order to effectively collect data. A mixed approach can accommodate both inductive and deductive data collection and analysis (Grix, 2010). In addition, it also helps broaden the dimensions and scope of research and obtain a clearer picture of human experiences and behaviour (Morse et al., 2002), something that was important in order to answer the research questions for this project. It is also important not to adhere to any false notions that a researcher must either use quantitative or qualitative methods (Grix, 2001). Critical theorists and radical educators need not be tied to either qualitative or quantitative research methods; and all tools of research are available to be utilised, as long as they are suitable for the research (Harvey, 1990). Indeed, for this study, the research questions were deemed to be best answered using mixed methods.

The following sections outline the methods utilised to analyse written documents, conduct interviews, and administer questionnaires, and how case study research fits into the overall research approach.

#### **3.1.4 *Mission statements***

In a 2010 Times Higher Education article, it was argued that university mission statements form a fundamental part of how institutions present themselves and also how management view their institution (Reisz, 2010). It was also suggested that it is commonplace for universities to define their purpose, aspirations, and values in their



mission statements (Ibid), meaning that these public documents can act as indicators of the strategic intent and vision of university managers (Ayoubi and Massoud, 2007). These documents are ideal for informing macro-level research regarding how universities are being positioned in England, and answering RQ1.4, which asks if student-customer rhetoric is evident in the published missions, values and goals of English universities. This is not to claim that mission statements were the only source that could have been used for answering the research question, but the fact that they are publicly available documents meant that they acted as consistent source of information across the sector. In addition, the documents are accessible by anyone that chooses to view them, meaning they are endorsed by the institutions in the sample, rather than being the views of a single person that takes part in an interview. A questionnaire that attempted to discover how a given university is positioned in the marketplace could also have been developed, but it would have been prescriptive in terms of themes included. As such, a strategy was developed in order to obtain data from mission statements in a consistent and replicable manner, which could be used to answer the research question.

### ***3.1.5 Collecting the data***

Mission statements from English Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) were obtained from official websites. The purpose of this was to allow the text to be examined and analysed to provide a national picture of what English universities publicly state is the purpose, strategy, and/or the values of those who collectively shape the direction that the university takes.

In October 2014, a full list of English universities was obtained from the website of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). Institutions that receive HEFCE funding but do not hold the official title of university were excluded. This created a possible sample of 133 English universities from which mission statements could be obtained, meaning that this research covered 85% (113) of English universities.

In order to locate mission statements, all official websites for each university were found using Google, then the words 'mission statement' were typed into the university website search tool. If this failed to locate the required section of the website then the website navigation menus were used. If this approach also failed to reveal the required pages, then the name of the university and the words 'mission statement' were typed into Google. If none of these approaches were successful, then it was noted that no mission statement could be found for that institution.

The vast majority of university websites contained a section that was called 'mission statement', but this was not always the case. Numerous universities had variations of this terminology, which included: 'mission and values'; 'our mission'; 'our values and goals'; and 'the university strategy'. The key methodological decision made when choosing the page for analysis was ensuring that the text covered the purpose, mission, values, and/or goals of the university, and that these were publicly available to view.

Once all the text from mission statements had been extracted and copied into Microsoft Word documents, the next phase was to conduct content analysis in order to look for trends, and synthesise the data. Content analysis is especially well suited for analysing vast amounts of written data, and, if conducted in a systematic fashion, can be used successfully to quantify the data (Cohen et al., 2007). Content Analysis allows replicable and rule-governed analysis to take place, leaving the researcher with codes and themes that can summarise data and also test theories (Idib).

The next phase of this process was to decide the units of analysis, in other words, what constitutes the data. In terms of the content of the mission statements, it soon became apparent that there was so much contextually unique information being outlined in the mission statements that it would be reductive to merely seek out the information that was deemed pertinent to the research. The content of the mission statements presented an opportunity to understand the direction that universities in England are steering towards.

In short, just looking for data that fit within a narrow framework had the potential to exclude data and themes that may have been unexpected. For this reason, the data was examined and coded inductively.

### **3.1.6 Coding the data**

Rather than begin the analysis with a rigid coding framework, every sentence of all the mission statements was read carefully, then re-read again with the plan to inductively code all the data. Inductive coding starts with very close reading of the sample text in order to establish what is meaningful, then the researcher creates a label (or code) in order to link, group, and re-code into categories (Thomas, 2006). For example, if a mission statement contained a sentence that outlined the importance of conducting research, then the code 'conduct research' was noted. Another example could be if equality and diversity feature as an important factor within the mission of the university. In this instance, 'equality' and 'diversity' were recorded as separate codes. However, it is important to highlight that if a mission statement repeated something again, even if using slightly different wording, then it was not noted a second time. This was due to the fact that the codes would later form the basis of comparison, both quantitatively and qualitatively, between universities. If, through repetition, a university mission statement covers the very same topic numerous times then this would have skewed the quantitative analysis.

Codes are in a constant state of revision and re-organisation in order to make sense of the collective data (Thomas, 2006), so for this research a spreadsheet was developed that listed all the codes as they were established, plus listed all the universities in the sample (see Appendix A for a list of all inductive codes generated, and Appendix B for a list of all universities used in the sample). These universities were grouped according to the category they belonged to i.e. Pre-1992, Post-1992, or Russell Group. These categories were determined by the year that each institution was founded, or whether they were

Russell Group members. These groupings were important factors to consider when comparing data, in that these different types of universities have traditionally been viewed as having varying priorities, which will be explained in section [3.1.9](#). From this point, each time a code was found in the text it was either noted as a new code on a spreadsheet, or checked off on the spreadsheet as being present for a given university. As such, both creating and tallying codes took place concurrently.

### ***3.1.7 Analysing the data***

Once every mission statement had been inductively coded and the results tallied, it was possible to view every occurrence of the code by university, and university category i.e. Pre-1992, Post-1992, or Russell Group. Using Excel, descriptive statistics were calculated to reveal the strength of the codes across all universities, and by university category. The tally of codes themselves indicate the most and least common codes in the sample, but percentages were also calculated as indicators of prominence, plus to allow an idea of proportional values (how this was done is covered below).

Stage one: For the whole sample, a list of every code that was inductively developed was listed against each university. Then, a tally was created depending on whether a specific code was found with a given mission statement or not. For example, if a particular university discussed details that meant a specific code was observed, then it would be marked as such. This continued until a full tally was plotted against all the universities in the sample. From this point, it was possible to divide the number of universities that covered a specific code by the total number of universities in the sample, and then multiply the figure by 100. This provided a percentage score that indicated the proportion of universities that covered a topic/code.

Stage two: To further assist with the above process, the next stage of the mission statement analysis involved re-coding the data into broad and overarching themes. Using the full list of codes that were inductively generated, content analysis allows researchers

to count and tally codes, but it is also important to reanalyse the data and put the codes into groups (Cohen, 2007). Vast numbers of unique codes must be translated and broken down in useful pieces in order to assist the research. Therefore, when conducting further analysis, it was important that the analysis be framed by the research questions.

As published documents, the content of the mission statements was used to answer the research questions, and subsidiary questions relating to whether marketisation has contributed to creating a consumer culture in English HE, and if marketisation is shaping the nature of student-centred learning in English HE.

To answer these questions, the re-coded data was analysed for evidence of consumer-focussed statements (i.e. marketing); student-focussed statements; plus other, inductively established themes. Individually, these examples provided evidence for both RQ1 and RQ2. A more detailed explanation of the analysis for each element is provided below:

- **Student-focussed statements** – These are data that indicate that students are the focus of a statement made within the document. Claims made within a statement that a university has excellent student facilities is a marketing claim, whereas claiming that student learning is important within an institution is student-focussed. This distinction determines whether data is actually focussed *on* students, rather than *at* students.
- **Marketing-focussed statements** – These are data that indicate a marketing focus, which includes customer-orientated foci. In the same way that a hotel claims to have only the highest quality facilities and the best reviews, data within a mission statement that inflates the status, achievements, or is generally intended to compliment the university, falls under this category.
- **Other statements (inductive)** – This data is anything that does not fall under the above categories. Once all the relevant codes had been placed into the above

categories, inductive re-coding was done in order to consider unexpected data and provide further context.

Once the re-coding was completed, the analysis considered how many of the initial inductive codes fell into the new categories, and then calculated percentages to indicate the strength of the codes across the sector. To achieve this, the number of occurrences of a given code was divided by the total number of codes found across the sample, then multiplied by 100. This percentage score provided an indicator of how prominent a particular code/theme was in the research, which then enabled interpretations to be made in order to begin to answer the research questions. Furthermore, by drawing on direct examples of verbatim text from the mission statements, the final phase was, not only to explain exactly how these overarching themes had been established, but also to provide qualitative examples to inform interpretation.

As the process moved away from this macro approach and towards the micro, the data obtained from the mission statements provided both context and comparative opportunities. In other words, exploring how the experiences, opinions, and perceptions of staff and students support or confound the national-level data outlined by the mission statement analysis.

### **3.1.8 Case studies**

Now that data had been collected to explore macro-level elements, more data was needed to look at the meso and micro-level. In order to be able to focus on multiple aspects in this way, case studies were deemed well-suited as an approach. A case study is concerned with the nature and complexities of the case in question and allows for detailed and intensive analysis (Bryman, 2001, Hays, 2004). This benefited this research in permitting the exploration of experiences, opinions, relationships and structures within the context of each institution. Using multiple cases allowed a comparative element to be introduced to the research, as the same approach and method was employed in each

case study, allowing contrasts and comparisons to be made, leading to a better understanding of the social phenomena (Bryman, 2001). Each case was relevant for exploring trends within a given university, and between the participants within each case, but the combination of case study locations allowed comparisons to be made, differences to be observed, and common themes to be outlined from the data, which added depth to the analysis.

Case study research meant that the research plan was achievable and realistic given the scope of this research, which required an in-depth perspective and rich data that explored personal experiences, something that was not possible to obtain from across the entire sector. Therefore, it was extremely important to select appropriate cases that acted as suitable sources of information for answering the research questions.

### **3.1.9 Selection of cases**

The most common way for universities to be categorised in the UK is according to whether they are Pre-1992, Post-1992, or Russell Group. Older, Pre-1992 universities are often seen to have greater research activity, are more selective of students, have more economic resources, and a different mix of students, compared with Post-1992 universities, which are often perceived as being teaching-focussed (Boliver, 2015). In contrast, Russell Group universities are considered to be even more research-focussed (Ibid). These three pre-established categories led to the decision to select three case study universities, one from each university type. Without this approach, one could easily suggest that research findings could be based entirely on the specific focus and dynamics within one type of institution.

Unlike the mission statements data, which was based on the population sample and publicly available, gaining access to three different universities to conduct case study research on a potentially sensitive topic presents issues regarding access and cooperation. However, purposive sampling, which is where a sample is chosen based on

a known characteristic (May, 2001), was used in order to ensure Pre-1992, Post-1992, and Russell Group universities were included. It was also important that the universities be located in close proximity. This allowed the research analysis to compare data from institutions that may compete for students within the same locality, and optimise the chances that different types of students, from varying backgrounds, could be included.

With this sampling in place, the key was to find three institutions that had staff that were willing to allow access to both teachers and students. By utilising contacts in the sector, and the contacts of the PhD supervision team, a number of possible sites were outlined as potentially suitable for the research. However, the identity of the institutions was always going to remain confidential for this research, due to the sensitivity of the topic. In many instances, and where it is deemed appropriate, the anonymity of research participants can be paramount (Grinyer, 2002, Kaiser, 2009), and it could be argued strongly that investigating marketisation and pedagogy from a critical perspective may not only impact on the willingness of gatekeepers to grant access, but also, for senior staff, lecturers and students to openly talk about their perceptions and experiences. If views could be considered controversial, then it was deemed crucial that the identity of all participants remained confidential. Malta (2009) noted that in her research the additional anonymity that telephone interviews provided, for example, meant that sensitive topics were easier to discuss. Therefore, this research aimed to provide freedom of discussion via strict confidentiality, and by all identifying factors being anonymised in the thesis write up. This meant that even the names and locations of the case study sites remain unnamed throughout, something that was communicated clearly to all research participants.

Numerous institutions in England were contacted about the proposed research, and three different types of university within the same geographical location eventually replied to written correspondence and agreed to grant access to discuss the research with their Vice Chancellors. These individuals acted then as initial gatekeepers to further research.



### ***3.1.10 Interviews with senior university managers***

With the case study sites selected, it was essential to the research to interview staff at the highest level. This included Vice Chancellors and Pro Vice Chancellors, as they are ideal sources of advice on matters pertaining to university policy, and the direction the institution is being taken in terms of shaping their collective identity. Not only do these individuals serve the highest level of university policy making, but they are also ideally placed to either grant or deny further access to additional participants within their institutions.

### ***3.1.11 Selection and recruitment***

Vice Chancellors were contacted at the three case study universities, inviting them to take part in a semi-structured interview (see Appendix C). Confidentiality was assured, and a brief explanation of the project was provided. Out of the three universities, the Vice Chancellor at the Pre-1992 university (Case A), and the Post-1992 university (Case B) agreed to be interviewed, and the Russell Group university (Case C) nominated a member of the executive board to be interviewed. This individual was responsible for key decision making within the University. The reason given for not being able to interview their Vice Chancellor was that they believed the senior executive would be in a better position to discuss the research area in question, plus they had more availability. In addition, Case A allowed access to numerous Pro Vice Chancellors for interview, as well as the Vice Chancellor. As a result of this, three Pro Vice Chancellors were interviewed at Case A, meaning that a total of six senior university managers were interviewed across the sample institutions.

Vice Chancellors asked to view an outline of what would be discussed in the interview before officially agreeing to meet, which was provided via email (see Appendix D). This action, combined with the assurance of confidentiality, eased any concerns about being asked potentially sensitive questions by an outside researcher that would ultimately be

published in a thesis. Not all of the senior members of staff asked to see the interview in advance, and some were satisfied to receive a brief summary of the research via email.

### ***3.1.12 About the interviews with senior university managers***

The Vice Chancellors and senior university managers were interviewed at a time, date, and location of their choice. All interviews took place between June and August 2014. Case A and Case B participants chose to be interviewed within their own institutions, and the Case C senior executive chose to be interviewed via telephone. All agreed to being recorded for the purposes of transcribing the conversations. Confidentiality was assured, and participants were advised that all data would be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998).

The interviews were semi-structured in order to allow key areas linked to the research questions to be explored, but also to allow for the interviewee to cover areas they felt were relevant, and for unexpected topics to be followed up. Interviews are suitable for discussing perceptions and personal experiences in that they are appropriate for discussing complex topics and collecting in-depth information (Kumar, 1999). Furthermore, they can generate rich data through detailed accounts of a persons' knowledge, feelings, and understanding of a given topic (Yates, 2003).

The full interview schedule used in this research can be viewed in Appendix D, which shows the topics covered and the prompts designed to steer the interview. However, the overall aims of the interviews were to tease out pertinent data relating to the research questions by capturing their opinions and experiences regarding:

- the direction, mission, values and goals they push forwards at their institution;
- perceptions regarding the role of the student;
- and perceptions regarding the purpose of higher education;

All interviews were fully transcribed from audio recordings. This allowed verbatim comments to be read and re-read in order to fully consider the implications of what was said. What was discussed by the participants constitutes the data, and thematic analysis was conducted in order to explore the content, compare the findings with other data within the project, and to facilitate the interpretation of what the findings might mean for the wider project.

In terms of what constitutes pertinent data for the research, the same focussed analytical framework used in the analysis of mission statements was applied. However, because the data is different to the content of publicly available documents, the analysis focussed on opinions and experiences in the following related ways:

- evidence of student-focussed opinions, activities, or policies;
- consumer-focussed statements opinions, activities, or policies;
- marketing-focussed statements, opinions, activities, or policies;
- other opinions, activities, or policies. (inductive).

These focussed areas of analysis were aimed at answering the research questions from the perspective of senior university managers.

By gauging the opinions and experiences of senior university managers on these key issues, one can begin to understand key areas from a top-down position and consider how a given university may be influenced by the opinions and ideals of key policy-makers within their institutions.

Thematic analysis was used to look for examples that fit within the above framework, and examples of relevant text were extracted, coded, and grouped, where appropriate. This qualitative data added depth and further insight into the broad issues outlined in the macro level research.

### ***3.1.13 Gatekeepers for further research***

As well as discussing the research areas of the project themselves, the senior university managers were invited to nominate a particular course within their institution that they would be willing to allow staff and students to become involved as part of the case study. Allowing them to nominate a course of their choice ensured important aspects required for a successful project were covered, namely that: the project was approved by a senior manager within the institution, making access easier; and the choice of course for each case study was determined by a key figure within the institution, rather than the researcher.

Appropriate staff were identified to act as key contacts on the chosen courses by the senior university managers, which provided a legitimate access point at a meso level. After contacting the nominated staff members within each institution the next phase of the research was to send a questionnaire to all the undergraduate students on the chosen courses, which the nominated staff members agreed to support in terms of contacting students and promoting the research.

### ***3.1.14 Questionnaires for student participants***

A questionnaire was designed to explore themes surrounding the research questions and to allow open-ended responses, where appropriate (see Appendix E). The first draft of the questionnaire was printed on paper and piloted within the researcher's own institution, after permission was granted within the PhD supervision team to distribute the questionnaire at the start of their research methods class. Due to the fact that these particular students are required to design questionnaires as part of their research methods course, they were invited to look through the questionnaire and critique it. Piloting questionnaires can help identify problems with wording, interpretation of questions, and ultimately inform the final design (Adams and Cox, 2008). The comments obtained from the students in the pilot phase were written on the questionnaire itself, which resulted in

72 students providing useful feedback regarding the questions, the structure, and the length. As a result of this pilot, the final questionnaire was shortened, questions that were highlighted as repetitive removed, and numerous wording of statements clarified based on feedback.

The purpose of creating a questionnaire to inform the research was due to their usefulness for obtaining data from a large sample, which can not only be used to observe patterns and trends in their own right, but also add useful data within a mixed methods approach, whereby qualitative data is also providing context (McGuirk and O'Neill, 2016).

The next stage was to distribute the questionnaires to the required sample as effectively as possible.

### **3.1.15 The questionnaire sample**

As determined by the senior university managers, the courses of study used as part of each case study were as follows: Case A undergraduates were studying a course within the subject group *Subjects Allied to Medicine, and Social, Economic & Political*; Case B undergraduates were studying a course within *Architecture, Building & Planning*; and Case C undergraduates were studying a course within the subject group *Social, Economic & Political Studies*. The above subject group descriptions are in line with those used by The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and are being used in order to avoid identifying institutions by revealing the actual names of each course, which can often be unique on a national or regional level.

The next sub-section will discuss the content of the questionnaire and how it relates to the research questions.

### **3.1.16 The questionnaire**

The standardised questionnaire was designed in order to capture students' views on various issues pertaining to the research questions. The use of a standardised questionnaire in research means that participants are all asked the same questions, and data can be uniformly recorded (Boynton and Greenhalgh, 2004). Being consistent with questions in this way means that results are suitably comparable, plus this approach helps to improve reliability that the results reveal different opinions between participants, rather than revealing different interpretations of inconsistent questions (Ibid).

The standardised questionnaire consisted of single-answer questions to obtain demographic and contextual information, as well as open-ended questions to give the research more scope and depth in responses. These contextual questions aimed to reveal the following:

- Age
- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Disability status
- Domicile
- Reasons for attending university
- Educational attainment to date
- Amount of tuition fees paid
- Plans after graduation
- Open-ended answers were coded in order to provide comparable, uniform data for analysis.

It should be noted that the demographic data was obtained in order to consider if the sample was representative, rather than as key indicators of differing opinions. This was not to say that these elements are unimportant, but what was more important for this study was the type of university and the courses that students chose.

In addition to these contextual questions, statements were written and a five-point Likert agreement scale was developed. Although other scales exist, Likert scales have long been the most frequently used format in research questionnaires (Cook et al., 1981). Both seven and nine-point scales exist, but five-point scales adequately provide intervals on a scale, with a mid-point that can be used as a neutral response (Hinkin, 1998). For this research, the five agreement intervals was described as follows:

- 5 = strongly agree;
- 4 = agree;
- 3 = neither agree nor disagree;
- 2 = disagree;
- 1 = strongly disagree.

A 'not applicable' option was also added, but had no numeric value attached to it in order to preserve the integrity of the five-point scale.

The questionnaire design aimed to obtain data that could be used to answer all research questions. For example, regarding RQ1, the questionnaire focussed on areas that might indicate whether elements that can be linked to customer culture were being reflected in students' opinions, plus whether there was evidence that the nature of SCL is being shaped by marketisation (RQ2). The main indicators for these were implemented via in the following statements, which respondents could agree or disagree with on the aforementioned Likert-scale:

- I consider myself a customer of higher education
- University students obtain knowledge, they do not contribute to producing it
- University education should be less academic and more about getting a job
- Students at University should not be treated as customers

- University education is good value for money
- I consider myself a co-producer of new knowledge
- My university experience is more important to me than the quality of the job I get at the end

Regarding RQ2 and the subsidiary questions, which ask if the nature of SCL is being shaped by marketisation, and if it is valued by stakeholders, the questionnaire requested students to consider their ideal views of learning and teaching with regards to the following aspects:

- Designing the curriculum/course content
- Deciding the learning activities to be undertaken in class
- Deciding the format of assessments (e.g. essay, exam etc.)
- Designing assessment criteria for the course/programme
- Teaching on the course/programme
- Generating new ideas to add to knowledge
- Discussing new ideas in class
- Assessing/marking students' work
- Evaluating the quality of the teaching

These areas were aimed to help answer the questions by acting as key indicators of SCL.

For each aspect, respondents were asked to indicate one of three answers:

- students should contribute to this process;



- only tutors/lecturers should do this;
- I do not know

After obtaining their views on what should ideally occur regarding the above aspects, they were then provided the same list again and asked to indicate what actually occurs as part of their learning experience at university (see options below):

- students can/do contribute to this process;
- only tutors/lecturers do this;
- I do not know.

The comparison between what students ideally wanted to see happen in these areas with what actually happens was a way to avoid researcher bias. It was important not to assume that students either did or did not want to experience these aspects in their learning.

### ***3.1.17 Questionnaire distribution***

The online questionnaire links were distributed by staff contacts within each institution via email (see Appendix F), and reminders were sent by them at the beginning and middle of December 2014, and the start of January 2016, as suggested by the staff members themselves. This timing was necessary due to the National Student Survey (NSS), which begins in early January each year. Once the NSS had begun, no further reminders were sent to students in order to avoid interfering with the NSS process, which goes out to all final year undergraduates. This approach helped minimise the impact of survey fatigue, which can lead to lower response rates, particularly if they occur simultaneously with others (Porter et al., 2004). The questionnaires remained open until the end of May 2015, and closed after responses had eventually stopped coming in.

Online questionnaires were chosen over paper alternatives due to their speed and efficiency, but also because they did not require lecturers to take up their teaching time by handing out paper questionnaires. Ethically, it was important that this research did not impact of students' learning, as much as was possible.

### **3.1.18 Incentives for participation**

In order to ensure response rates were as high as possible, online surveys included an incentive for taking part. Evidence suggests that offering incentives for taking part in paper and online questionnaires can help increase the chances that people will take part (Brown et al., 2016, Brennan et al., 1992). Confidentiality was assured, but students were invited to enter a prize draw to win an 'Amazon Fire Tablet'. A further three runner-up prizes of £10 Amazon vouchers were also included in the prize draw. Participants were assured that entering the draw would not be linked to completion of the questionnaire, ensuring that the answers they provided in the questionnaire would not be tied to their identity. Furthermore, participants were advised that identities would not be revealed to anyone, and that details regarding their course of study and their institution would be described in general terms e.g. students studying a *Subject Allied to Medicine* at a *Post-1992 university*. This was to ensure that students felt comfortable to be honest with their answers, minimising the potential for them feeling that their views could impact on public perceptions of their institution, course, or lecturers. The prize draw terms and conditions stated that the winners would be chosen at random, and contacted via email by the end of May 2015. Prizes were sent to students via Royal Mail Tracked, and no prizes went unclaimed.

The following sub-section discusses how the data obtained from the questionnaires was analysed.

### **3.1.19 Analysis of questionnaire data**

As a means to collect numerical data, the questionnaire phase of the research is quantitative in nature, which provides a more deductive approach and is aimed at linking theory with the research (Bryman, 2001). The focussed and consistent nature of the approach means that comparing data both within and between cases was possible, and useful for exploring patterns, relationships, and answering the research questions.

Descriptive statistics are useful for summarising measurable characteristics, including percentages, averages, and frequencies, for example (Wyllys, 1978). These measures were used to analyse contextual data from the questionnaire, as well as demographic data. Inferential statistics are useful for inferring characteristics of the population, and are especially useful for examining whether differences between variables are down to chance (Ibid). However, it is important to choose the correct methods of statistical analysis and testing when dealing with different types of numerical data (Cohen et al., 2007, Bryman, 2001). For instance, the scale data obtained from the questionnaire, although consistently structured, requires careful consideration in terms of how it can be used. For example, there is disagreement regarding whether Likert scales can be treated as ordinal or interval data, which impacted on how the data was analysed. Whereas some scholars maintain that Likert scale data is ordinal (Sullivan and Artino Jr, 2013), others contend that it can be treated as interval data (Boone and Boone, 2012). Indeed, one could argue that the distance between agreement scale points cannot be assumed to have equal intervals between each point (which would make it ordinal rather than interval), yet the addition of numeric indicators in the value descriptions could be argued to provide equal intervals for the reader, making the data interval in nature.

For this research, however, the Likert scale data is assumed to be ordinal in nature, therefore, non-parametric tests were used to compare samples and test for significant differences. For example Mann–Whitney U tests were used to compare data between

universities and subjects/disciplines. This test is also nonparametric, and suitable for comparing two samples at one time, when the data is ordinal (MacFarland and Yates, 2016).

By combining both descriptive statistics to summarise the data and using non-parametric statistical test to compare independent samples, this research was able to consider how different the data was and the probability that such differences were down to chance.

As part of the questionnaire, participants were also asked if they would be willing to take part in interviews or focus groups to discuss these issues further. Those that indicated they would be happy to do so in the future were invited to provide an email address that they would be happy to be contacted on by the researcher.

The next section explains how interviews were organised and conducted with student participants.

### ***3.1.20 Interviews with undergraduates***

In the aforementioned questionnaires, students had been invited to take part in either focus groups or one-to-one interviews as part of further research. Very few students indicated that they wanted to volunteer and those that did all failed to reply to emails inviting them to take part in one-to-one interviews at a time, date, and location of their choice. This unsuccessful attempt to recruit students to take part in qualitative research led to a different strategy the following academic year, which is explained in the next subsection.

### ***3.1.21 The sample and recruitment for interviews with students***

In May 2016, each key contact (lecturer) at the case study universities was asked to email their first, second, and final year undergraduates inviting them to take part in the research (see Appendix G). This time, each student was promised £10 in cash as an incentive for

giving up their time. They were promised that confidentiality would continue to be maintained, that this project was approved by senior staff within their institutions, and that the interviews would not last any longer than one hour. With ethical considerations taken into account and no ethical criteria being breached for studying human subjects, incentives are rarely seen as problematic to obtaining robust data, and are merely an aid to attract participants (Grant and Sugarman, 2004). For this study, participants had to volunteer and were fully informed about the nature of the research, and provided their consent (in writing). They were also paid before the interviews started, and advised they could still withdraw at any time, meaning that participation in discussions was not tied to incentives.

The above strategy was mixed in terms of success, with no students from the Case B agreeing to take part, and only one student from Case C volunteering. However, due to strong support being exhibited by lecturers within Case A, a total of 13 students were interviewed.

### ***3.1.22 About the interviews***

All students were interviewed during May 2016 in rooms booked by the contacts at each university, or conducted directly via telephone. Students were offered the opportunity to choose their own date and time for the interviews, plus whether they met in person or talked on the phone, in order to increase the likelihood that they would feel empowered to take part, and also to make the process more convenient for the participants. Six out of the 13 interviews were via telephone, the remainder were conducted in person.

All participants were fully briefed regarding the purpose and focus of the project, and reminded that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. Participants were also assured that no interview would last any longer than one hour and that their payment for taking part would be given after the interview concluded via cash, bank transfer, or PayPal. Participants signed a form to confirm they gave their consent

and that they were happy for the interviews to be recorded, as long as the recordings were only used for transcription purposes and the recordings stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA), 1998 (see Appendix H). Another form was signed by the participants to confirm they received their payment, which was also guaranteed to remain confidential and stored in accordance with data protection regulations. These forms simply stated that 'I confirm I have received £10 for taking part in this research', and had open sections for their signature and the date.

One-to-one interviews were semi-structured in nature, and the participants were encouraged as much as possible to discuss issues they felt were important regarding their higher education experience. However, the interviews were designed to cover some key themes, all of which could potentially answers elements of all the research questions (see Appendix I). The key areas outlined in the interview schedules were as follows:

- Reasons for going to university
- Reasons for choosing their course
- Expectations about university
- Degree to which these expectations were met/not met
- The role of the university student
- The perceived role of the tutor/lecturer
- The learning process – How does it work?
- Elements that the student would like to change about their university
- The purpose of higher education
- Plans beyond university

Although the above statements are broad in nature, it was important to avoid leading the participants, or putting words into their mouths that they may not have chosen to discuss without being pushed. By discussing broad themes surrounding the purpose of higher education; what it means to be a student; how they see their learning; and the role of their tutors/lecturers play, one could allow a balance of both inductive and deductive research.

Although focus groups provide interesting and rich data via interactions and discussions between participants (Kitzinger, 1995), interviews were chosen for this research because they still provide rich data on a one-to-one basis, but also because interest from potential participants to take part had proven to be an issue. In short, it was feared that there would not be sufficient interest that would lead to enough students being available at the same time, which would be necessary in order for a focus group to be useful and effective. By allowing students the absolute freedom to select their own date, time, and location for an interview was deemed the most appropriate and effective approach for this research.

The next sub-section explains how the qualitative data obtained was analysed.

### ***3.1.23 Analysing the student interview data***

Unlike the mission statements data, which was large-scale (macro), this micro-level data was conducted with a smaller and more focussed sample. Therefore, content analysis was not considered a suitable means by which to analyse the data. Instead, thematic analysis was used to explore and summarise the data. Thematic analysis is a research method that is used often within social research in order to identify, analyse, and report patterns within written data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Although there is often disagreement about what exactly constitutes thematic analysis, or how to do it, the key to successfully employing this technique is to be systematic and consistent when analysing data (Aronson, 1995). For this research, transcriptions of the interviews were produced, and the text was read and re-read so that coding could be done. The text was inductively

coded initially, then common themes established that were useful for answering the research questions. As such, analysis focussed on the following:

- **Student-focussed examples** – These are data that indicate that students are the focus, or are placed at the centre of learning, decision-making, or shaping their experience.
- **Market-focussed examples** – These are data that indicate a consumer, customer, or marketised focus.

Once the data has been coded, re-coded, then put into themes, verbatim examples of relevant text were used to exemplify trends and allow comparisons between cases.

The following section explains how staff interviews were organised and conducted.

#### ***3.1.24 Interviews with lecturers***

Lecturers on the courses of each case study are in a prime position to discuss university policy, course-level policy, learning and teaching, and engagement with students. Their insights allow for comparisons to be made between them as teachers, senior university managers, and students as the key stakeholders in the learning and teaching process.

#### ***3.1.25 The sample and recruitment***

Key contacts on each of the courses within the case study institutions had already been put forward as gate keepers by senior university managers, but the overall aim was to speak with all lecturers involved with each course, in order to ensure that all viewpoints had been considered. Therefore, each of the key contacts were asked to inform their colleagues about this research project and invite them to take part in a one-to-one interview at their convenience (the key contacts were already invited). In all cases, invitations were sent via an email that introduced the project and requested volunteers to



self-select. In total, four lecturers agreed to take part in interviews: three from Case A, and one from Case C. Nobody from Case B volunteered to take part, including the key contact that had previously agreed to invite students to take part in the study.

### ***3.1.26 About the interviews with lecturers***

All staff participants from Case A were interviewed in their chosen location (on campus) at a time and date of their choosing. The staff participant from Case C chose to be interviewed via telephone.

All participants were fully aware of the purpose and foci of the project, and aware that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time. As with previous participants, they signed a form to confirm they gave their consent and that they were happy for the interviews to be recorded, as long as the recordings were only used for transcription purposes and the recordings stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA), 1998.

Interviews were semi-structured in nature, and the participants were encouraged as much as possible to discuss issues they felt were important regarding their higher education experience. However, the interviews were designed to cover some key themes, all of which were linked to the student themes, but from the teacher/staff perspective (see Appendix J). This provided consistency within the project, and maximised the opportunities for comparisons to be made. The key areas outlined in the interview schedules were as follows:

- Reasons for becoming a lecturer/tutor
- Reasons for choosing their discipline
- If and how university education has changed during their career
- The role of the tutor/lecturer

- The perceived role of the university student
- The learning process – How does it work?
- Elements that they would like to change about university education
- The purpose of higher education

As with the student participants, it was important to avoid leading questions, or putting words into their mouths. By discussing broad themes surrounding the purpose of higher education; learning and teaching; plus what they would like to see change about higher education, it was possible to explore the research questions from the perspective of lecturers.

The next sub-section will explain how the data was analysed.

### ***3.1.27 Analysing the interview data***

Like with the student data, thematic analysis was used to explore and summarise data.

Transcriptions of the interviews were coded and re-coded, and then common themes established to answer the research questions. Again, analysis focussed on the student-focussed evidence, market-focussed elements, and 'other', inductive elements. Finally, verbatim examples of relevant comments were used to reveal trends and allow comparisons between participants.

The research methods outlined in the above sections provided explanations and justifications for their use, and, where appropriate, specific ethical considerations were discussed in context. However, it is pertinent to discuss overriding considerations about research ethics, and how they were carefully considered for this research project.

### **3.1.28 Research ethics**

It is generally considered that there are two types of ethical considerations in social research: one is the procedural side of ethics (approval from committees etc.), and the other is concerned with issues surrounding ethical fieldwork (research in practice) (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). For this research, official approval had to be obtained from Aston University, as the sponsors of the research. Two types of ethics applications had to be written and submitted, one which considered the ethics of conducting fieldwork (see Appendix K), and the other that discussed philosophical and practical ethics (see Appendix L). In both instances, ethical approval was granted by the university.

The development of ethical guidelines and the consideration of ethical issues is not only important for maintaining public confidence (and the confidence of participants), but also to ensure that the proposed work is legitimate and worthwhile (May, 2001). Once ethical elements have been considered, it is much easier to decide if and how the work is of value, and to whom.

Any consideration of research ethics must ignore what is correct or useful for the research, and always focus on what is right and just, not only for the research participants, but also the research sponsors (May, 2001). An integral part of ensuring this, and an integral part of any social research, is the concept of informed consent (Ibid). Informed consent means that participants must fully understand what is being researched, what the aims and objectives of the research are, what will happen to the data they provide, whether their identity will be known or not, and how the research will be disseminated (Ibid). The rights of participants always outweighs the importance of the research (Bulmer, 1982), and it is vital for the success of any research undertaken, and for the care of the participants, that they feel they can answer questions safely, honestly, and without feeling exploited (Yates, 2003). Where appropriate, achieving this this can include assurances of anonymity and confidentiality (Ibid). All of these elements were carefully considered and

put into practice during all phases of the fieldwork, something which has been discussed in earlier sections about the research design, and can also be viewed in the appendices (see [Appendices A](#) and [B](#)).

Participants should always have the option to withdraw from research (Ibid), something that was clearly articulated to participants at all stages of this research. This was not possible for questionnaire answers, because students were completely anonymous when completing them, but their anonymity was assured in the consent and information section at the beginning of the questionnaire.

As well as designing and planning ethical research, it is vital to be reflexive and adaptable during any project, as no committee's seal of approval for a research project can prepare a researcher for the unexpected, or guard a participant against unforeseen issues or problems that can occur in real time, especially within qualitative research (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). Not only is this reflexivity ethically important, but evidencing that these factors were accommodated in research ensures rigour and trust in the resulting work (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004).

It is also important that social researchers consider the impact that various lines of questioning and interview topics might have on participants, especially if potentially sensitive questions are being asked, or if possible answers that participants provide could impact on their lives or wellbeing (Kumar, 1999). Any researcher has a specific duty to ensure that people are respected, and particular care and attention must be given when designing research, particularly if qualitative research is taking place, which can often delve much deeper into topics than quantitative methods (Grix, 2010).

When undertaking qualitative research, posing introductory questions that are relatively open-ended and quite general in context can put a participant at ease, as they are less intrusive (Castillo-Montoya, 2016). Taking the same due care and attention to be sensitive to the participants' wellbeing, moving forward into transitional questions that get closer to

the heart of the subject can feel more comfortable for people to discuss once introductory questions have put them at ease (Ibid). For this research, as interview topics become more focussed beyond the introductory phases, topics were kept very open-ended. For example, one could argue that the discussion of tuition fees for funding HE could potentially lead to stressful conversations about finances. Instead, participants would be asked to discuss how they felt about financial elements associated with university education. Further prompts would be used if clarification was required, but the non-invasive and open-ended nature of the discussions allowed students the freedom and safety to discuss finances openly, and without any signs of distress.

At all stages of this research, the safety and wellbeing of the participants was put before the value of the data they could potentially provide. Informed consent was always obtained, freedom to withdraw was always clearly presented as an option for participants; confidentiality was always assured; freedom of choice regarding the location, format, and length of interviews were always in the hands of the participants; and questioning via interviews and questionnaires were carefully constructed in order to ensure that all of these important ethical considerations were not in danger of being jeopardised.

### **3.1.29 Conclusions**

The aim of this chapter was to explain and describe the research design for this study; how it would answer the research questions; provide justifications for methodological choices; explain the theoretical framework that underpins the research; and address ethical considerations.

To summarise this chapter, it was established that this research study employed mixed methods in order to investigate macro, meso, and micro level processes in the English HE sector. The analysis of 113 published university mission statements provided the context for answering research questions about the wider impact of marketisation on English HE. In addition, case study research was conducted at three different English universities

(Russell Group, Pre-1992, and Post-1992), and both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed. Overall, questionnaire data obtained from 145 students, and interviews with 24 participants, which included senior university managers, lecturers and students, provided meso and micro level data.

Ethical considerations were explored in terms of confidentiality, access to participants, data storage, and informed consent. Each of these aspects was addressed and ethical approval was obtained from a panel of peers at Aston University. An important ethical point for this research was the decision not to name any university, course title, job title, or participant. It is argued that this led to more open discussions on a sensitive topic, and meant that being granted access to universities, and their staff and students, was easier under these conditions.

This chapter also justified and explained that the research was conducted through the lens of critical pedagogy, which provides a useful framework for exploring aspects of marketisation and its impact on practice and pedagogy. Critical pedagogy was shown to link well with SCL principles, as many of the core values that underpin critical pedagogy and SCL are the same.

In the next two chapters, the research findings are outlined and discussed in detail, starting first with 'the marketisation of Higher Education (HE)'.

## 4 The marketisation of Higher Education (HE) and customer culture

### 4.1.1 Introduction

The aims of this research are, first, to explore the impact of marketisation on pedagogy and practice, with particular attention given to the extent to whether a customer culture has been created in HE institutions, and secondly to examine how marketisation is shaping the nature of SCL. This chapter will focus on customer culture, and aims to answer the following research questions:

- RQ1 – Has marketisation contributed to creating a consumer culture in English higher education?
  - RQ1.1 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by senior management in English higher education institutions?
  - RQ1.2 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by academic staff in English higher education institutions?
  - RQ1.3 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by undergraduate students in English higher education institutions?
  - RQ1.4 – Is student-customer rhetoric evident in the published missions, values and goals of English universities?

Drawing on data from mixed methods research, this chapter argues that marketisation has contributed towards creating a customer culture in English HE institutions, but also that there is resistance from both staff and students towards fully internalising the concept of the student-customer.

This chapter will show that competition between universities has meant that they are shaping their missions, goals and values in ways that appeal to students and other

stakeholders, as any business would try to appeal to their customer base. In this sense, universities are focussing increasingly on marketing their attributes in ways that will appeal to, and attract, potential students (or customers).

This chapter argues that universities in England consistently aim to bolster their reputation using published mission statements, which exemplifies how universities market themselves to stakeholders. Senior university managers recognise that, within a competitive market, they need to communicate the value to potential students of choosing their institution, and that marketing the university effectively to achieve this is increasingly important in a competitive market. 'Reputation' was the main factor that influences students to choose to go to a particular university, and the importance that university rankings and student feedback scores (such as the NSS) have for this were acknowledged by students, academic staff, and senior university managers. In short, the perceived quality of HE institutions is increasingly tied to rankings, and, like customers, students base their choices (i.e. university destination) mainly on their perceptions of the quality of the institution.

One of the most important findings presented in this chapter is that paying tuition fees has influenced the opinions students have about university education, creating a transactional way of thinking. Having to pay fees was seen by student participants as a big commitment, and the financial underpinning of this experience meant that they placed greater importance on getting a good quality degree, and getting a good job after graduating. The 'good degree', and subsequent job after graduation, was essentially the 'product' that students saw that they were buying with their money, and their opinions regarding academic staff showed that they expected quality teaching and support, that frequently related to their thinking about paying for their education. As a result, the instrumental benefits of HE dominated any consideration of the intrinsic benefits of university education.



However, this chapter also argues that students, academic staff, and senior university managers are resisting the idea of the student-customer. The financial and transactional nature of HE is inescapable, in that the tuition fee system is not optional in England, and students inevitably held views that were customer-orientated. But, the financial situation in HE, being out their control, did not mean that they embraced the concept of being a customer of a university. This research shows that students were uneasy and uncertain regarding how they felt about being labelled as customers. Instead, it is argued that the majority of students preferred an idealised view of HE that fosters close relationships with academic staff and students, the wider benefits that HE has for society, and how HE provides more benefits than just employment. This is despite the evidence to suggest that the HE experience has become entrenched in financial and transactional thinking. This point summarises how marketisation has contributed to shaping a customer culture, in that external factors are at the core of shaping opinions.

This chapter argues that senior university managers and academic staff also resisted the concept of the student-customer, in that they rejected the idea that students buy a degree, as if it were a product. Instead, the learning experience and educational journey was viewed as more important than the degree or job that follows by staff and students alike, and there was a collective yearning for closer relationships between staff and students inherent in discussions with participants.

There were few differences between the opinions and experiences of staff and students from Russell Group, Pre-1992, and Post-1992 universities. Nor were there significant contrasts based on whether courses of study were vocational or non-vocational. Overall, the research findings were consistent across the samples used in this research, which provided additional validity.

This chapter structures the research findings into specific themes, which cover the following areas:

- Competition, and marketing the university to student-customers
- Reputation, rankings, and student-customer choice
- Increased student expectations and tuition fees
- Transactional thinking and value for money
- Instrumental learning and the increasing focus on employment
- Acknowledging that students are customers of HE
- The idealised view of HE and the reluctant customer

Each section explores arguments in more detail, providing supporting data and considerations for how the findings answer the research questions, how the research findings add to knowledge, and provide context in terms of how the findings fit with current theories and research. The final part of this chapter provides some conclusions regarding key messages that can be taken from this study.

The next section discusses findings relating to competition, and how marketing has become increasingly important to universities for attracting student-customers.

#### ***4.1.2 Competition, and marketing the university to student-customers***

Increased competition between universities in the higher education marketplace is one of the main consequences of marketisation (Brown and Carasso, 2013, Collini, 2012), and the findings of this research show that it is increased competition between English universities that has contributed to a culture of institutional self-adulation in the public domain, which is articulated with the aim of appealing to potential student-customers. Universities are working increasingly hard to understand the needs and desires of students, and then market themselves in order to be more appealing and attractive to them. In addition, universities are attempting to simultaneously distinguish themselves in the marketplace, whilst also keeping up with popular trends that are important to various stakeholders. These claims will be discussed in more detail, and evidence provided that

supports them, but the over-arching argument is that marketisation has pushed universities further towards competing with each other, leading to them positioning and marketing themselves as quality service providers, ready to meet the needs of student-customers. In turn, this is contributing to creating a customer culture in HE.

Evidence to support these claims was observed in the analysis of 113 mission statement documents of English universities, which proved to be ideal examples of marketing tools, aimed at impressing prospective students (customers), rather than as documents that set out the missions, goals and values of individual institutions. In this way, mission statements were highly marketing-focussed and designed to impress the reader in terms of their various qualities and attributes. For example, some universities claimed to be distinctive in their excellence: 'we will be one of the best universities in the world, renowned for the excellence, impact and distinctiveness both of its research and its research-led learning and teaching' (University of Sheffield, 2014). In another example, one institution highlighted their award-winning graduate employability and entrepreneurship, stating that 'we offer high quality teaching and an impressive record for graduate employment and enterprise. In fact we became the Times Higher Education Entrepreneurial University of the Year in 2012, and in 2013 we received two coveted Queen's Awards for Enterprise' (University of Huddersfield, 2014). Another excerpt from mission statements exemplifies how some documentation was written to champion globally recognised research, a good student experience, and the aesthetic beauty of the campus, all in the same sentence. It was stated that as 'a leading international university, we undertake groundbreaking research and deliver a world-class student experience in a campus environment of outstanding natural beauty' (University of Exeter, 2014). In this final example, the key element to focus on is that an institution can indeed make it their mission to provide a good student experience, but to frame this aspect as occurring within 'a campus of outstanding natural beauty' exemplifies how there is a marketing focus within

the statement, that is aimed to impress the reader and promote the appeal of the university.

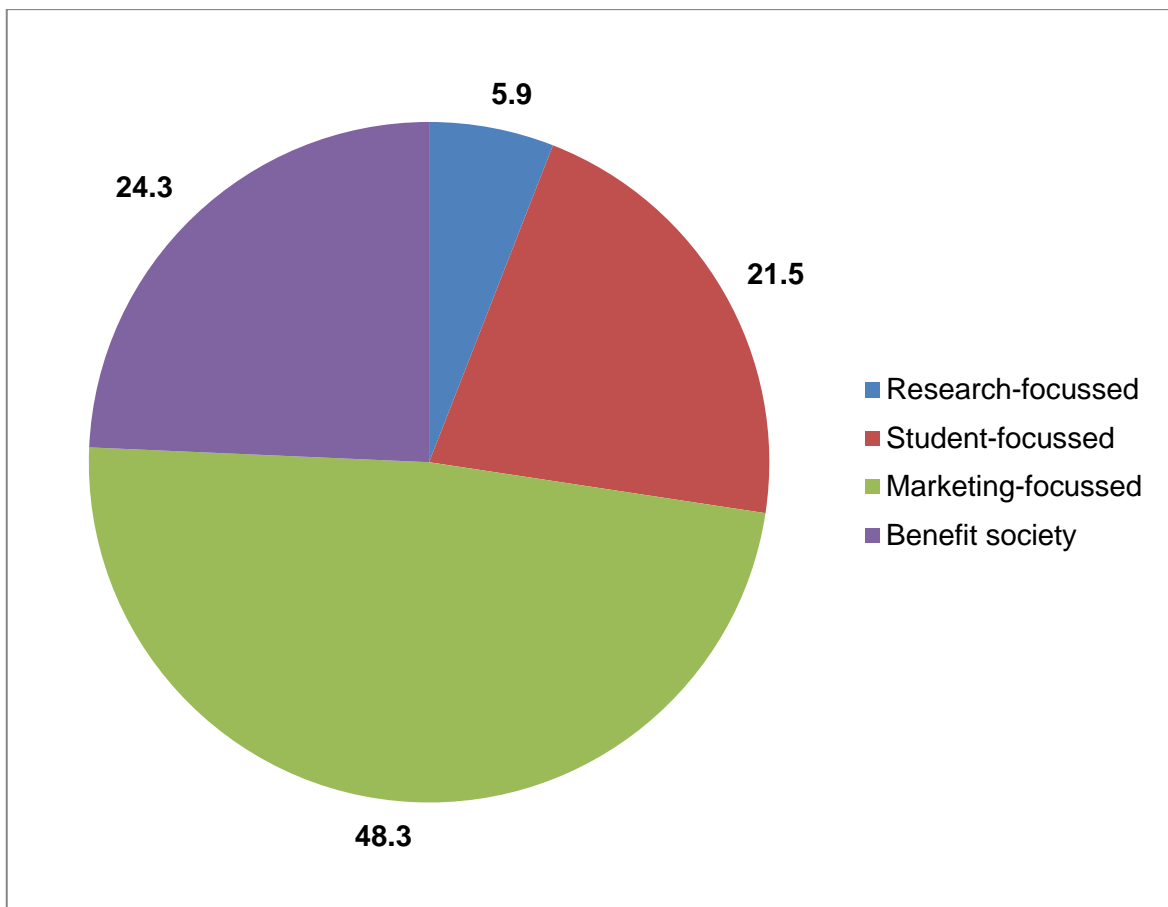
These are just some examples that are useful for highlighting the types of marketing-focussed claims that are made within university mission statements. Many more could be provided that reveal varied, but consistent, approaches to self-adulation, but these examples exhibit the key aspect of the argument being made. However, in order to substantiate this argument with further evidence, content analysis of the written text from all the mission statements was conducted and revealed that almost half of the content was 'marketing-focussed' (see Figure 4.1). This finding was established using inductive coding of all the mission statements text. Each time a new theme or concept was discussed in a document, a code was generated that represented it. In total, 487 unique codes were generated, each of which indicated the nature of what was being articulated in the documents (see Appendix A). For example, when the University of Exeter claimed to 'deliver a world-class student experience' (University of Exeter, 2014), this was coded as 'good student experience'. Once a code had been generated, it was added to a cumulative list and tallied as occurring for that given institution. As the coding developed, if another university covered the same topic, then it was tallied again, in order to build a picture of the most common topics of discussion within all the mission statements. A tally for any given code was only made once per university, in order to avoid skewing data if an institution covered the same theme multiple times. By the end of the process, the 487 different codes were tallied a total of 2917 times across the whole sample, which meant that quantitative analysis could provide an indicator of how common particular codes were in the form of a percentage score. I.e. the tally for a given code was divided by the total tally for all codes (2917), and then this number was multiplied by 100 in order to provide a percentage.

Once all of the specific, inductive codes were generated, each one was then re-analysed and assigned to an over-arching theme that represented the broader scope and rhetoric of

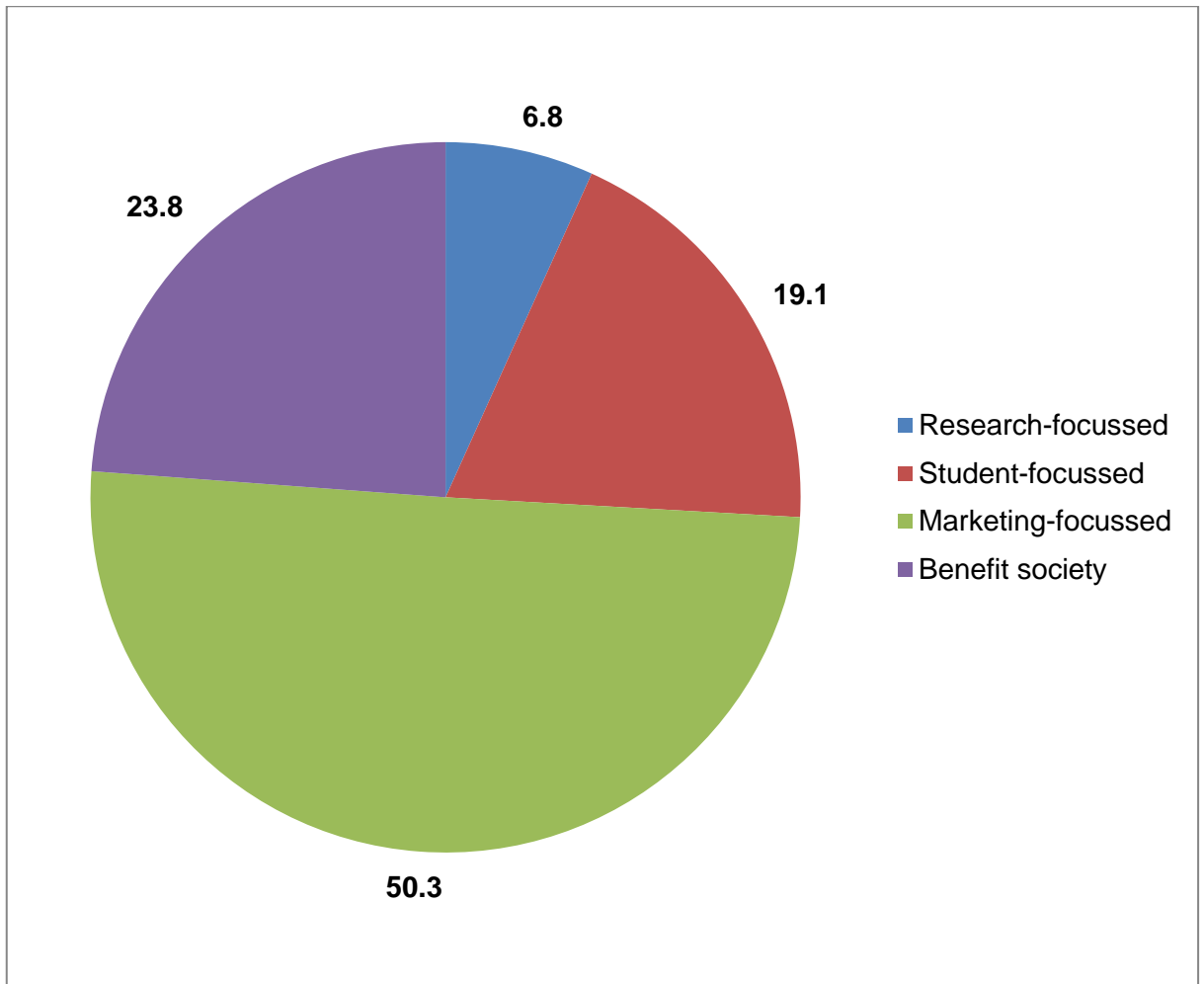
what was being articulated in the mission statements. The approach was again inductive, and four over-arching themes were defined that classified the codes as one of the following: marketing-focused, student-focussed, research-focussed, or focussed on benefiting society. Each of the 487 inductive codes were assigned to one of these over-arching themes, meaning that the same method could be used to calculate the percentage score for how prominent each theme was within the text. This was how the research established that almost half of the text was marketing-focussed.

These findings were extremely consistent by type of university, with around half of the written content also being marketing-focussed for Russell Group, Pre-1992, and Post-1992 universities (see Figures 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, respectively).

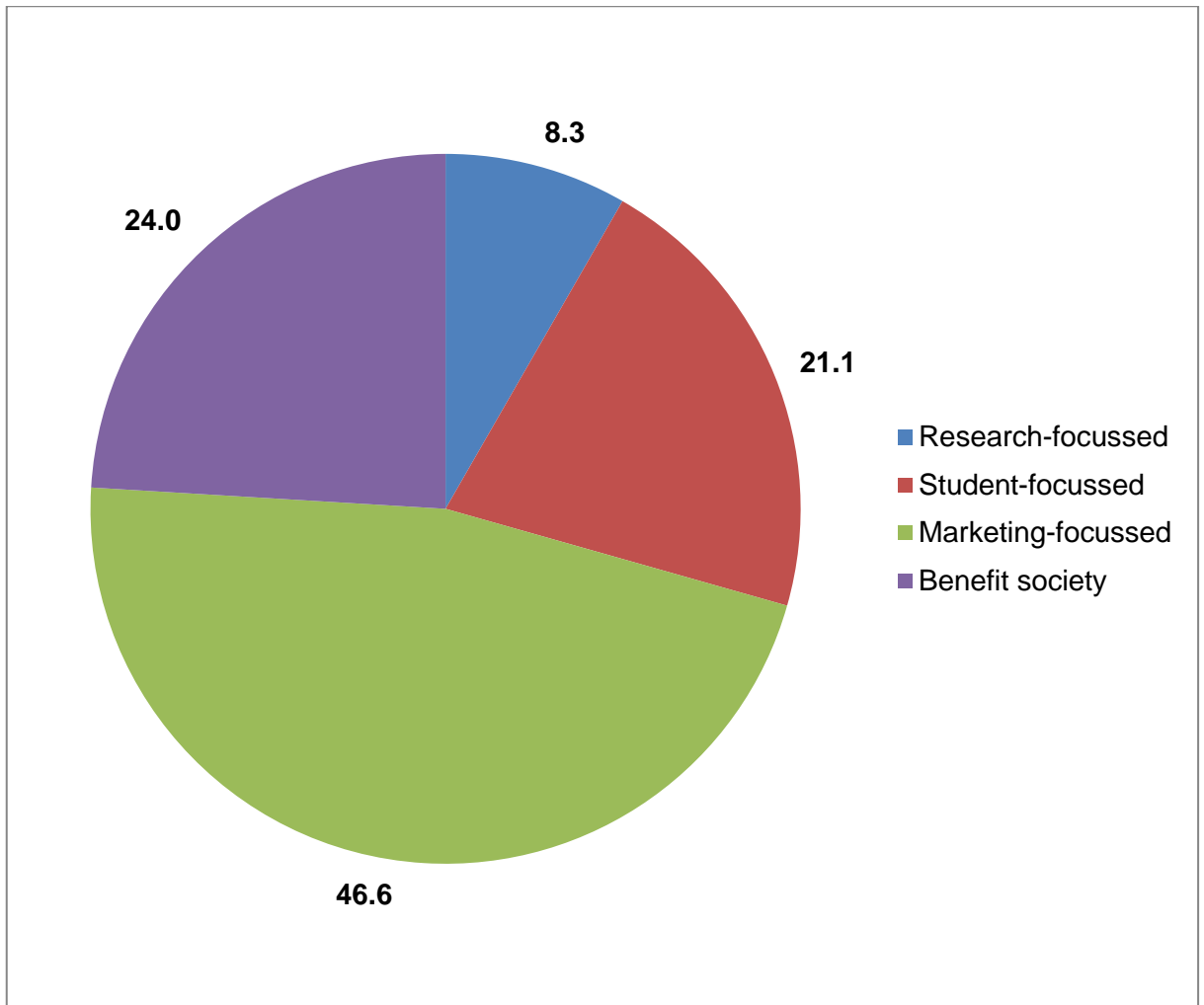
**Figure 4.1: Pie chart showing the proportions (%) of over-arching themes for the written content of 113 university mission statements in England**



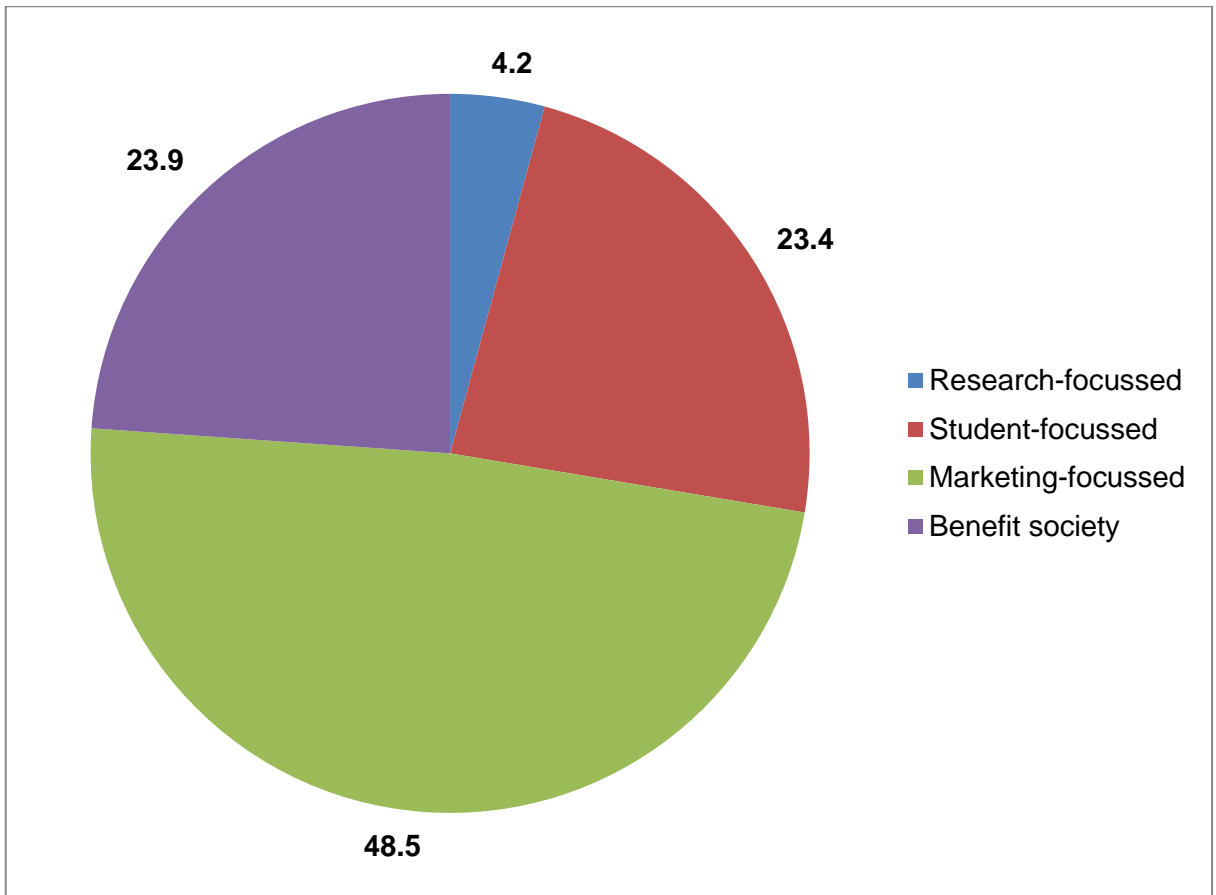
**Figure 4.2: Pie chart showing the proportions (%) of over-arching themes for the written content of 18 Russell Group university mission statements in England**



**Figure 4.3: Pie chart showing the proportions (%) of over-arching themes for the written content of 40 Pre-1992 university mission statements in England**



**Figure 4.4: Pie chart showing the proportions (%) of over-arching themes for the written content of 55 Post-1992 university mission statements in England**



This chapter is not claiming that mission statements are solely aimed at student-customers, but when one considers that mission statements are published documents that are supposed to be aimed at articulating the purpose, values and aspirations of the institution (Reisz, 2010), then the fact that almost half of the content is focussed on self-promotion provides strong evidence that universities are using this mechanism to bolster their reputations and impress stakeholders. This supports claims made by Furedi (2011) who suggested that universities frequently use mission statements to communicate their good qualities and reputations. Whether the stakeholders that read this information are students, funding bodies, or industry, the evidence shows that universities are positioning themselves as quality providers of products and services. Whether the product or service consists of 'a wide range of high quality programmes responsive to the needs of students' (Liverpool Hope University, 2014), or a student experience that is 'second to none'



(University of East Anglia, 2014), or even to 'provide students with excellent learning experiences through outstanding learning and teaching support' (University of Gloucestershire, 2014), universities across the sector are utilising their mission statements to market themselves as a quality choice to stakeholders. It is this dynamic that indicates that universities play a significant role in terms of exacerbating and maintaining a customer culture in HE. These findings support some of the conclusions of previous research examining the linguistic properties of university mission statements (Morris and Saunstone, 2010), which found that mission statements are dominated by neo-liberal discourse and are used to formulate a brand that creates an appealing corporate image of the university, positioning students as consumers (Ibid). Although mission statements are only one element that provide a glimpse into how universities position themselves, the fact that they are now almost universally implanted across the sector (Morrish and Sauntson, 2010) means that they provided a consistent body of data that could be rigorously analysed for this research project.

To further support the argument that universities in England are contributing to towards a customer culture, interviews with senior university managers provided evidence that marketisation has pushed universities further towards competing to attract students in ways that resemble businesses competing for customers. Universities are increasingly researching what students want in order to ensure they market themselves effectively in order to appeal to them, and to distinguish themselves in the marketplace. For example, when discussing how university education has changed in recent years, all three senior university managers interviewed highlighted how changes in the HE market have led to the need to attract students with good marketing and branding, which is achieved via the promise of an exceptional student experience, quality education, and by trying to establish an identity amongst the masses of options available to students. As one university manager explains:

*For the competitive environment, we are now spending a lot more on marketing than we were seven years ago.... That's because we are carving out a niche for ourselves, we have a strapline that says \*\*\*\*, we're trying to say that's something we're really focused on as a university, something that differentiates us from quite a few other institutions. We also push very hard a message about how much we care about our students... (Senior University Manager #1, Case A).*

Another senior university manager also touched on how market research helps them to understand the students and make relevant claims that appeal to them: 'then of course we push quality, the quality of the teaching and the student satisfaction.... Employability, and quality of teaching, and the student experience are at the top. It's market research to find out what are the students' motivations are (Senior University Manager #2, Case A). A final example from another senior university manager further highlights the importance of distinguishing oneself from other institutions in the marketplace: 'because my view is that in this kind of marketplace, which we have to admit we're part of, you've got to have something that distinguishes you from the rest. Our graduates are going out into a very busy marketplace...So what do we equip them with in order to stand out? We have to do quite a lot on that' (Senior University Manager, Case B). Together, these examples illustrate how these senior university managers recognised the competitive nature of the university market, and how they are working hard in order to effectively appeal to, and attract, students. This strengthens the argument that universities are providers of a product and/or services that requires students to choose, in the same way any customer chooses a product or service.

The content of the mission statements and the opinions of senior university managers support existing theories that consumerist behaviour is altering the nature of HE and how universities operate (Naidoo and Williams, 2015). Marketing universities as quality providers of products and services has been argued to be a consequence of marketisation (Brown and Carasso, 2013), and these research findings support such claims with much needed empirical evidence, as little research has been conducted into the impact of marketisation, especially regarding the experiences of stakeholders and whether customer language is used (Nixon et al., 2018a).

These research findings also support claims that universities increasingly market themselves in ways that appeal to students (Ressler and Abratt, 2009), and that marketisation has led to universities striving more and more to establish prestige in order to attract students nationally, and even globally (Macfarlane, 2016).

The findings outlined so far also support claims that the 'product' being marketed by universities has become much more important in a highly competitive environment (Newman and Jahdi, 2009), and also adds weight to existing research that found that the language and content of Scottish university prospectuses, which are also published documents, reinforced service-based statements, with frequent promises that students would have great experiences and good support if they chose a given university (Askehave, 2007).

The next section will argue that a consequence of marketisation has been that university rankings are now more crucial than ever, with student-customers placing a great deal of importance on their value for determining their choice of destination. This competitive consequence of marketisation places students further in the role of empowered customers, and universities are working harder than ever to enhance their internal and external reputations.

#### ***4.1.3 Reputation, rankings, and student-customer choice***

This section of the chapter argues that marketisation has established a competitive environment that means universities are striving more than ever to enhance their internal and external reputations in order to both impress their current students, and also attract potential students. Part of this endeavour means that the importance of university rankings and student feedback mechanisms, like the NSS, have increased. Like customers in a marketplace, this chapter argues that students are placing more value on university rankings in order to inform decisions about their university choice, and universities are positioning themselves in order to accommodate this. A customer culture

is exacerbated by marketisation in that student feedback informs university rankings in the first instance, and then potential students (customers) also use this information to decide which university to choose. This dynamic empowers both current and potential students of any given university, and means that universities shape their activities in ways that will bolster their reputations. Even beyond the crude nature of rankings and NSS scores, universities in England put a great deal of effort into establishing and communicating that they have a good reputation, and make it their mission to enhance it even further. On the student-customer side of this dynamic, evidence shows that they seek out and value the reputation of universities when making their consumer choice to pick an institution.

In order to support these arguments with evidence, interviews with student participants in this research revealed that they consistently cited the importance of reputation when deciding on which university to choose, students typically linked reputation to the university ranking and/or student feedback results. In this sense, the research data shows that universities are indeed vying for the attention of student-customers, who regard the perceived quality and reputation of a given university to be extremely important.

During interviews with students they were asked why they chose their particular institution, and, although other reasons were provided, such as location, and convenience, the perceived reputation and quality of the institution was cited by all interviewees. In one example, a student could not quite recall how they found the information, but said that the quality of teaching and the reputation of the university was what they searched for when making their decision: 'I thought reputation was important, but mostly because I wanted the quality of the teaching, and most of the quality I was going to get would be higher, because the reputation was higher...' (Student A, Case C). Similarly, another student said that they looked at league tables before deciding where to go, and the results were important to them: 'I looked at the league tables and things, I did see that it was still quite good...' (Student C, Case A). Finally, in another example, a student explained that they had not even heard of the university they ended up choosing, and based their decision to

go there purely on league tables: '\*\*\*\* is a good uni, I saw it on the league tables it was doing really well, but I'd never even heard of it before, I'd never even visited it, I spontaneously decided I'd go after it' (Student E, Case A).

All students interviewed articulated this justification for choosing their institution, showing that the perceived reputation of any individual university is indeed paramount, and this reputation is increasingly viewed in terms of league tabling and is informed, in part, by student feedback mechanisms (Ressler and Abratt, 2009). These findings are supportive of arguments that suggest marketisation has led to students behaving increasingly like empowered customers, with universities being held to account more than ever before as a result (Brown and Carasso, 2013, Collini, 2012), especially via league tables and NSS results (Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2010).

Relating to this point, one student even showed an awareness of the pressure universities are under to do well in the NSS and have a good ranking and reputation, stating that they believe the university 'has been pressuring them (staff) to get a better ranking and make the students happier' (Student G, Case A). Although this kind of statement was only made by one student, when this is considered with the previous findings that demonstrated the importance of reputation and rankings by all participants, the fact that there is an awareness of the pressures that university staff are under is both telling and poignant. How the student came to this conclusion about such pressures was not clearly articulated by them, but they were resolute in their belief that staff are under pressure to please students and improve rankings.

The combination of the evidence presented so far supports theories and claims made in the literature that argue that marketisation is promoting the importance of league tables and the NSS further to the fore (Jones-Devitt and Samiei, 2010), and that, as a result, students refer to these mechanisms more than ever before (Ibid). In this sense, the findings bolster claims made that 'reputation' informs the choice of university destination

more and more (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2015, Parry et al., 2012), something that universities are responding to.

Evidence obtained from interviews with academic staff echoed the viewpoints of the student participants, further highlighting the importance of reputation building, ranking, and especially the NSS. A common theme to emerge was the idea that academic staff feel governed by the NSS, and this is considered extremely important within their institution: 'I think in some ways we do feel that we are maybe governed a little bit by things like the National Students Survey more and more. The National Students Survey very much seems to be the be all, and the big thing that we teach to... We've worked very hard on feedback, on building feedback' (Lecturer F, Case A). In another example, another academic staff member notes that university management have focussed closely on student feedback, including the NSS, which are now viewed as performance indicators: 'what's happened is the management at the university have focussed much more on student satisfaction, an module evaluation scores, NSS student surveys, and using that as indicators of performance' (Lecturer A, Case C). Finally, another example links the importance of the NSS and university rankings, stating that there is now more pressure to do well in these areas and keep students happy in order to assist with this: 'I think there's more pressure under the department to have a higher ranking, with the National Student's Survey... So, I think they know they have to basically please the students more... (Lecturer C, Case A). These findings establish a common link between student perceptions and those of the academic staff, which identified the importance of reputation for attracting student-customers from both perspectives. This indicates a supply and demand relationship as part of a customer culture, whereby marketisation is influencing the perceptions and behaviours of staff and students.

These findings support arguments made by Furedi (2011), who claims that marketisation is shifting HE further towards being increasingly concerned with quality control, auditing culture, and university rankings. In addition, they also support the argument that

marketisation has led to universities striving for better rankings (Macfarlane, 2016), and that universities are now placing more importance on student satisfaction, as well as becoming more responsive to students (Streetering and Wise, 2009a).

The increased importance of the NSS, student surveys, and rankings was also expressed by senior university managers during interviews. Some of the participants presented similar views to that of the students, and one suggested that recent changes in HE have been seen to increase in the importance of rankings and reputation, even suggesting that the rankings were as important as funding: 'I suppose there is also reputation and ranking, so just as you might chase the money you also chase the rankings' (Senior University Manager #2, Case A). In a similar statement, another senior university manager argued that they are under pressure to do well in the NSS, because it feeds into league tables: 'obviously we are under pressure in terms of the teaching because of the National Student Survey, which also is a major league table factor' (Senior University Manager #1, Case C). In this example, it was not clear where the pressure was coming from exactly, but the topic came up during discussions about how things may or may not have changed in HE over the years, and doing well in these areas was deemed to be more important than in previous years. In addition, the assertion made in case 'A' explicitly described a chase for funding and good rankings. This supports the customer culture argument in that students are being understood, in part, for the financial value they bring, and that they are chased by the university.

These factors provide consistent, empirical evidence that senior university managers, academic staff, and students are internalising certain elements of a customer culture in HE, with each playing their roles as part of a customer and provider dynamic. In addition, they support theories that have argued that because students provide income, they are inevitably going to be viewed as customers (Carey, 2013b), something that senior university managers demonstrated in this study.

To further support arguments made about the increasing importance of reputation in a marketised sector, universities acknowledging the importance of having a good reputation was also observed sector-wide, and was one of the most common themes to emerge from the analysis of the university mission statements. For example, one university stated that it is their aim to continually enhance their global reputation and 'build on the University's reputation as a world-leader in arts, design and communication education' (University of the Arts London, 2014). In another example, a university also highlights how vital it is for them to 'enhance our reputation as a university which educates citizens for lives of consequence' (Oxford Brookes University, 2014). In a final example, a university states that it is their mission to have 'a worldwide reputation for excellence in learning, research and discovery' (University of Sussex, 2014). Some institutions even acknowledge the competitive nature of the HE sector and the need to establish themselves within the marketplace. For example, one mission statement reveals that the university aims to 'build global reputation, market position and revenue streams' (Northumbria University, 2014), with another referring to their aim to have a good reputation within 'the student market' (City University London, 2014).

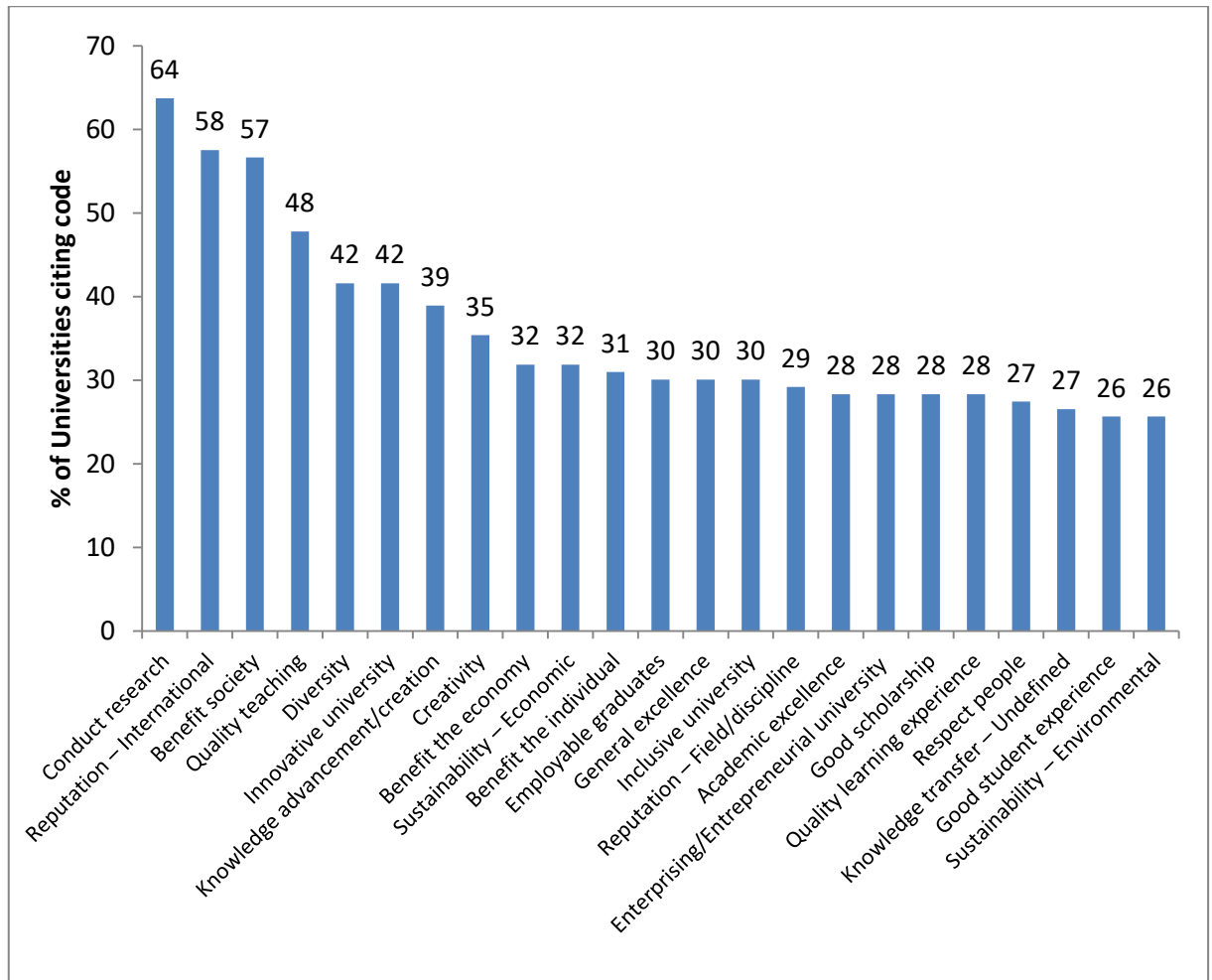
Various elements, like good teaching, support, and research, often make up the context of what universities consider in terms of a good reputation, but the main argument here is not about these finer details, but more on the fact that universities consistently communicate that they have 'a good reputation'. Often without context, universities frequently stress that their reputations are both nationally and internationally regarded. In one example, it is stated that part of the university's mission is to 'to further strengthen our sense of community and increase engagement with our stakeholders in order to enhance the University's reputation in the UK and overseas' (University of Warwick, 2014). In this example, community and engagement with stakeholders is presented as leading to an enhanced reputation. In another example, their excellence is said to be measured by, amongst other things, their 'regional, national and international reputation and impact'



(University of Lancaster, 2014). In this instance, the perceived reputation and impact that the university has is seen as a measure of excellence in itself. In a final example, another university states that they aim to 'enhance research, scholarship, creative work and professional practice throughout the University and maintain a national and international reputation in particular areas' (Canterbury Christ Church University, 2014). The national reputation is again mentioned in this example, but this research shows that 'international reputation' is far more commonplace in the mission statements than any other form of reputation. Examples of regional and national reputation were commonplace, but the following quantitative data shows the extent to which international prestige is communicated via mission statements.

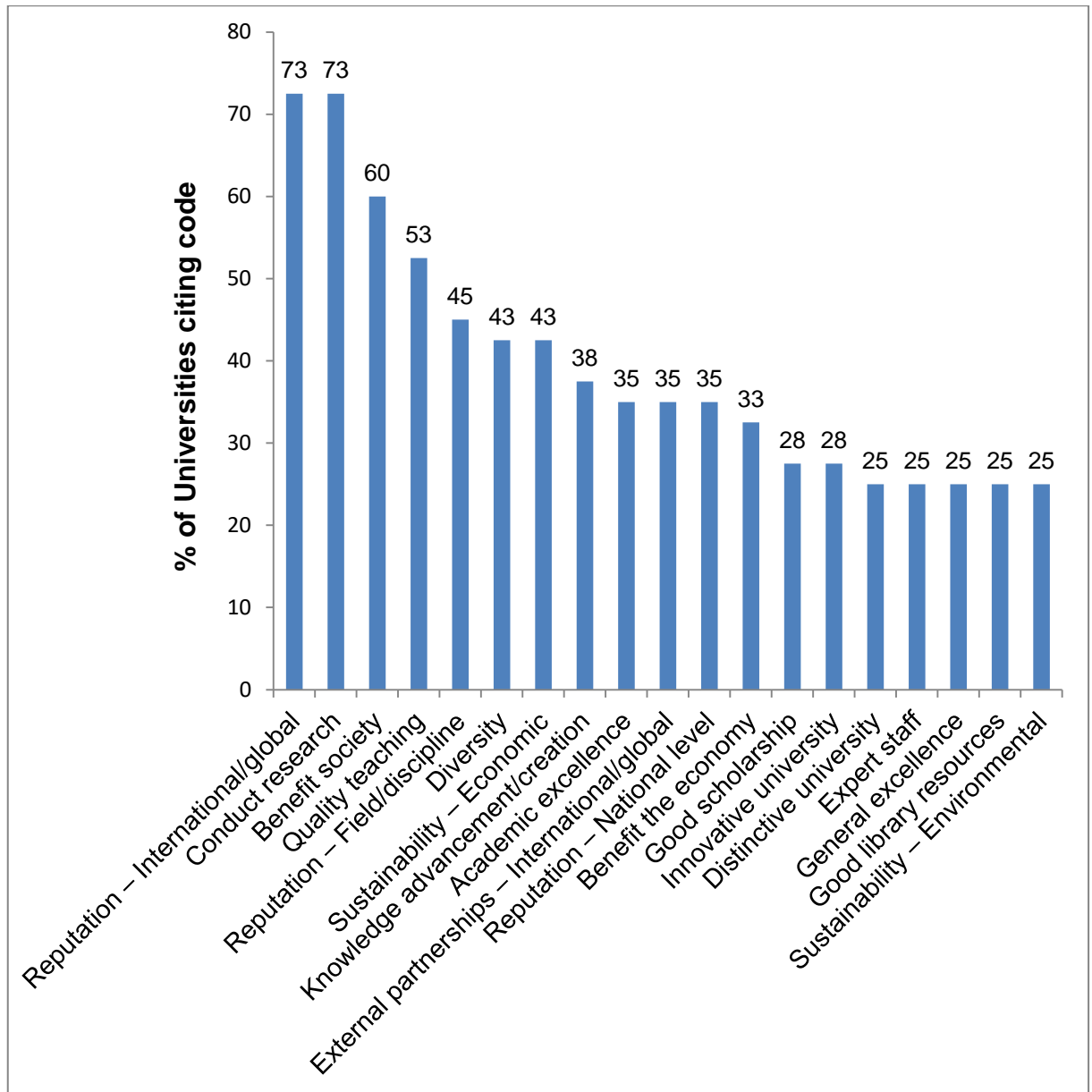
As seen figure 4.5, content analysis demonstrates that over half of the 113 universities in the sample discussed the importance of having an international reputation. This code was the second most prominent within the sample. Around a third of universities also discussed the importance of having a good reputation in their field/discipline, but this was far less common across the sample than international reputation.

**Figure 4.5: Bar chart showing the proportion (%) of mission statements that contained various codes that emerged from content analysis (Total N=113)**



When focussing on different types of university, the analysis shows that international reputation was also the most common theme to emerge for Pre-1992 universities, with around two-thirds of the universities including this aspect in their mission statements (see Figure 4.6). For this category of university, the importance of a good reputation within their field/discipline was also apparent, but far less so, with just under half of universities covering this element. In addition, having a good reputation on a national level was also observed in around a third of the mission statements.

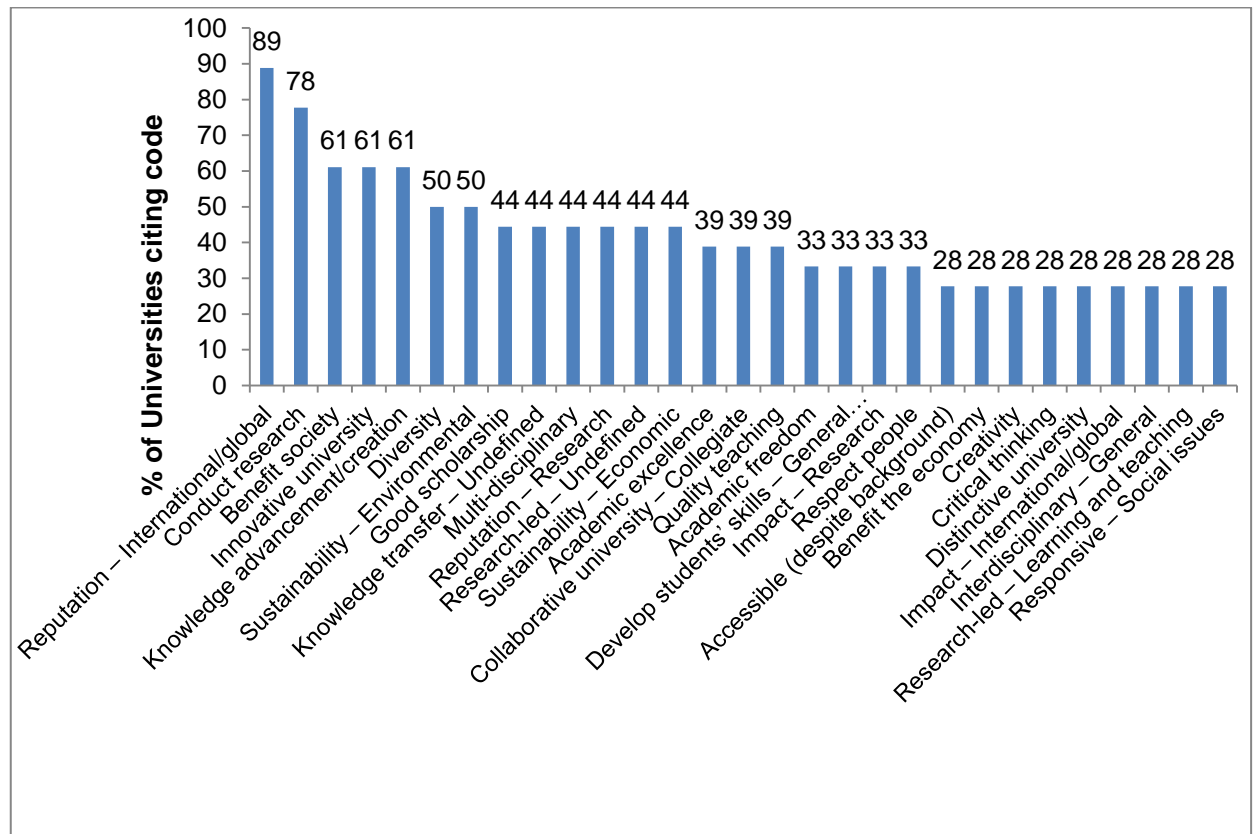
**Figure 4.6: Bar chart showing the proportion (%) of Pre-1992 mission statements that contained various codes that emerged from content analysis (Total N=40)**



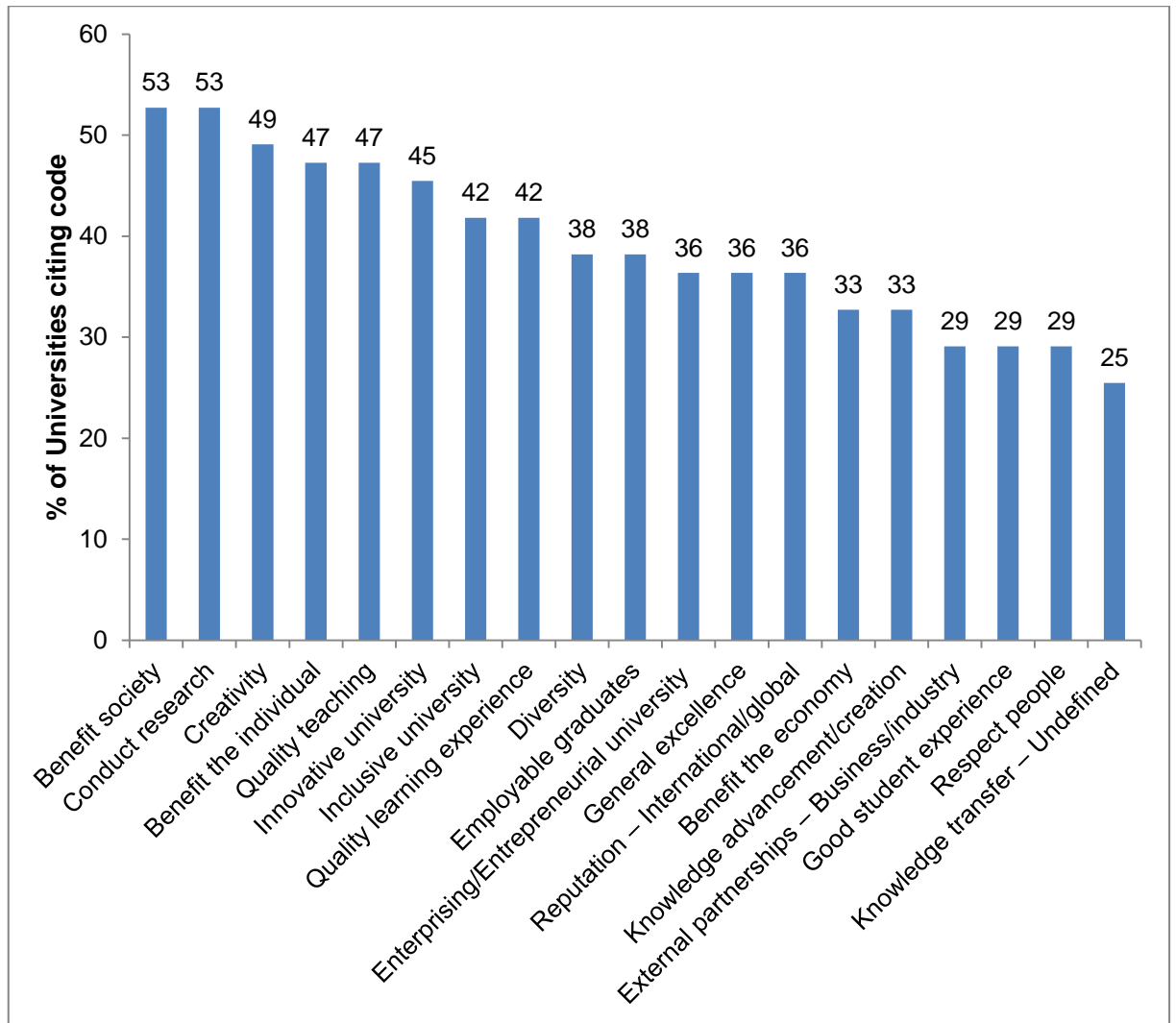
As with Pre-1992 universities, mission statements of Russell Group institutions also revealed that international reputation was the most common feature, with the vast majority (89%) including assertions about this (see Figure 4.7). In addition, the importance of having a reputation for research was observed in just under half of Russell Group universities, and, although this was far less prominent than the international reputation code, research reputation was much more common for Russell Group universities than Post-1992 and Pre-1992 and universities (see Figures 4.8 and 4.9, respectively). In

addition, although around a third of Post-1992 mission statements discussed having an international reputation, it was less prominent for this category of university (see Figure 4.8).

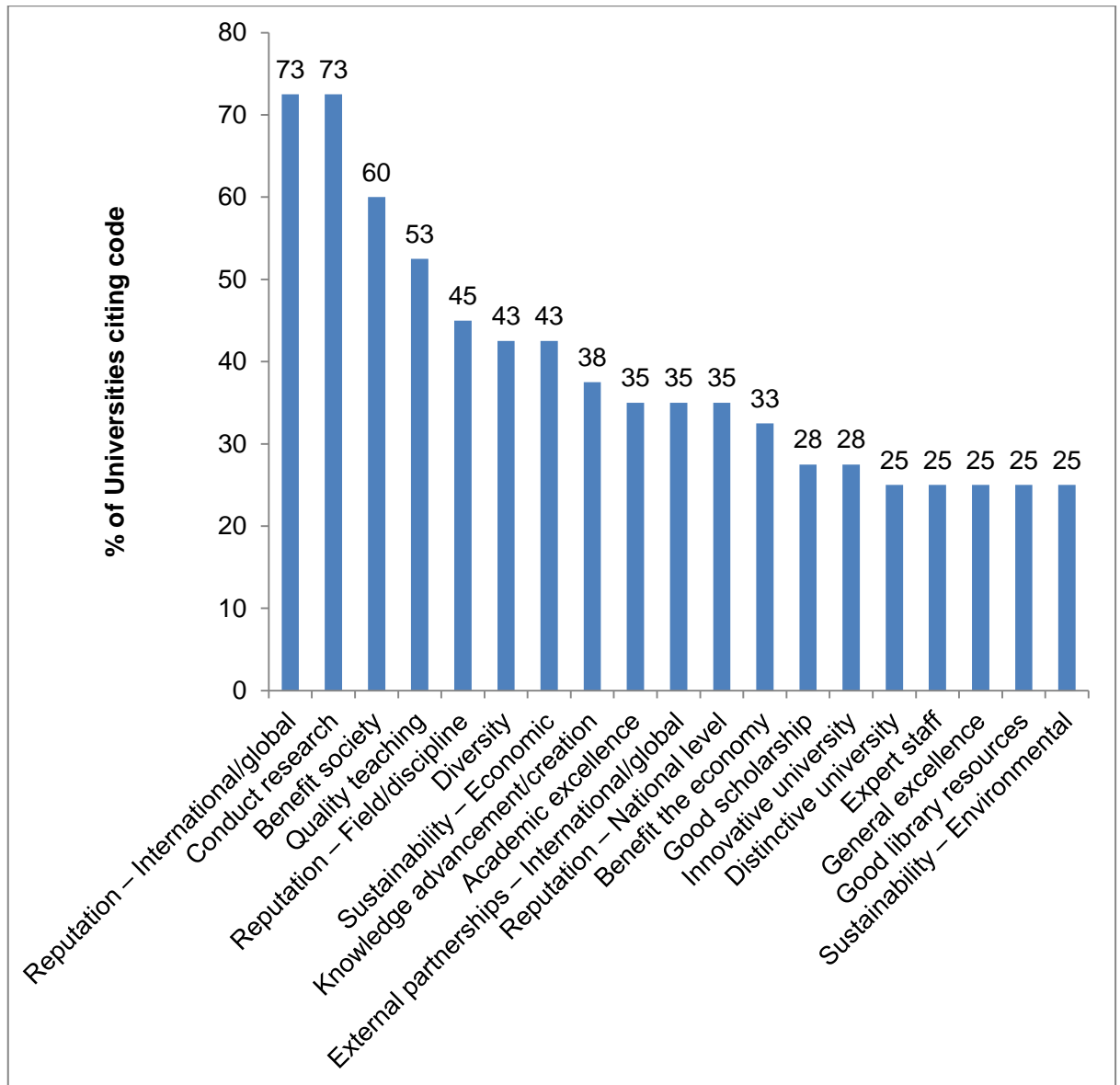
**Figure 4.7: Bar chart showing the proportion (%) of Russell Group mission statements that contained various codes that emerged from content analysis (Total N=18)**



**Figure 4.8: Bar chart showing the proportion (%) of Post-1992 mission statements that contained various codes that emerged from content analysis (Total N=55)**



**Figure 4.9: Bar chart showing the proportion (%) of Pre-1992 mission statements that contained various codes that emerged from content analysis (Total N=40)**



When considering the content analysis of the mission statements, it is evident that the importance of having a good reputation displayed by senior university managers, academic staff, and students, is also observable across the sector. In isolation, the mission statements analysis merely reveals that universities are striving to communicate that they are well regarded, but when considered alongside the qualitative data, this chapter argues that marketisation is shaping the opinions and behaviours of staff and students towards a customer culture, which is in turn mirrored in the mission statements content. Students value the reputation of universities and consider this when making their

choices, and senior university managers and academic staff are both aware and responsive to this.

This section focussed on rhetoric, opinions, and behaviours of various actors that indicate a customer culture of HE. The next section focusses more on students, and argues that marketisation has raised their expectations regarding what HE can and should do for them. Attitudes regarding tuition fees underpin much of this thinking, and are frequently at the root of why students have high expectations about their individual university experiences.

#### ***4.1.4 Increased student expectations and tuition fees***

This section of the chapter argues that marketisation, and the introduction of students paying higher tuition fees, has raised the expectations of students and pushed them further towards a student-customer way of thinking. The financial commitment involved in taking on a university degree has meant that the transactional side of the degree, plus the tuition fee figure itself, frames many of the decisions students make about whether HE has met their expectations or not. This is also reflected in staff opinions, and the high expectations of students is not only recognised by senior university managers and academic staff, but also is seen to be increasingly raised as a result of policies linked with the marketisation of HE.

Evidence to support the argument that student expectations are high, and are rising, was obtained from interviews with academic staff. During discussions about how HE has changed over the years, the focus frequently turned to issues regarding pedagogy and relationships with students, with much of the focus often being on how students expect much more than they used to. In the following example, a lecturer shared an anecdote of a student who felt they had done too much work themselves and should, therefore, receive some of their tuition payments back: 'I had one piece of feedback, only one piece, that was that she felt she shouldn't have been charged the full amount because she'd had

to do some of the work herself! But, this is obviously what goes through people's minds' (Lecturer B, Case A). It was acknowledged that this was an extreme example, but what they were explaining was that it represented what they observed as a shift in collective thinking by many students regarding HE, and the role of a lecturer. In a related example, another academic staff member reflected that students now expect more support and information regarding course content than they had seen in previous years. This was found in some students questioning whether class attendance was required: 'the students come expecting all the information, "can we have the lecture slides?" "No, read a book". They expect slides in advance "why do we have to come? Can't we just have the thing recorded". So, you're fighting against that as well' (Lecturer C, Case A). This example again highlights the lecturer's fear that a customer-orientated student expects and demands more, and they were consistent in attributing this change in attitude to students having to pay tuition fees. A final example provided by a different academic staff member contended that, since the tuition fee change, students wanted more support than ever to get a better degree, and they expected to achieve very high grades more than in previous years:

*people (students) much more frequently ask how they can get a first, whereas in the past, people in my experience would have been relatively comfortable about getting a 2:1... Now people want to get the first, and the sense I get of their motivation is "because I've paid a lot of money, and therefore I want to get as good a degree as possible, so I can make as much use of it as possible"... (Lecturer A, Case C).*

This type of account was common amongst academic staff, and suggests that a customer culture is both recognised by them, and also believed to be linked to a new way of thinking since students started paying higher tuition fees.

These findings support arguments made in the literature about the potential impact that marketisation could have on HE. For example, Naidoo and Williams (2015) claimed that marketisation leads to creating a customer relationship in that students have a sense of entitlement, because they see that they are purchasing a degree. Similarly, the findings



are also supportive of the contention that the transactional nature of starting a degree, because of tuition fees, will lead to a customer focus by students, and that they will have higher expectations of their university experience (Tomlinson, 2017). In addition, although research in this area is limited, the findings do support some small scale research conducted by Wong and Chiu (2017) in the UK, which found that lecturers reported student expectations of support, teaching quality, and how responsive they are to feedback had all increased as a result of students paying fees, and that staff now felt like providers of a service. Also, UK research conducted by Jabber *et al.* (2018) found that lecturers often expressed a view that they were teaching more than ever, but to a lower standard, because of high expectations to support students on demand.

There are myriad examples of what students might expect from university education, and these expectations would inevitably vary, depending on what an individual's opinions might be. However, the key factor regarding expectations is how the stakeholder refers to their expectations, and the context behind them. Regardless of what the student expectation in question is about, the important factor here is the understanding that the level of expectation has increased, or is beyond what was reasonably expected in the past.

Relevant examples of this were found in interviews with senior university managers, all of whom felt that increased student expectations was something that had changed in recent times, and especially so since the changes in how tuition fees were paid. One example suggested that students expect quality materials and entertaining teaching: 'there is now simply an expectation that lectures are online and most of the reading is electronically accessible, and that teaching in a sense has become almost more entertaining, that we use more multimedia, that the presentations look good. It's not just Times New Roman, lots of little scribbles on a PowerPoint slide' (Senior University Manager, Case C). Another senior university manager expressed expectations more generally, stating that 'we're having to be much more responsive to the expectations and needs of students' (Senior

University Manager, Case B), and another felt that students paying fees has created a sense of entitlement for some students, and that universities have to meet demands more than ever before: 'what has changed is there is probably now a different sense of entitlement on the part of the students to what they would perceive as a high quality education, given the amount of money they have to pay for that now. What has changed here, sort of the demands rather than the supply' (Senior University Manager, Case C). A final example from another senior university manager shows how they felt that some students expect that they pay their fees and just obtain a degree: 'you also have to manage student expectations, you have to communicate effectively with students about that, for example, they come here because they want to be the most employable global citizens, that doesn't mean that, you can't buy that, you buy the opportunity to invest in yourself, it's an investment to polish yourself up' (Senior University Manager #2, Case A). Although, in this example, the customer attitude is managed, the interviewee was clear that these expectations are heightened compared with how they perceived them earlier in their career, when tuition fees were not the responsibility of students. Indeed, what is common amongst all these examples is how senior university managers feel expectations have changed. The specifics of what an expectation is regarding are inconsequential, what matters is that there is a shared perception that expectations have increased.

These findings support arguments posed in the literature that claim that the commodification of HE means that students will see their education in terms of buying a product (Lawson et al., 2015). They also support small scale research done at a UK university that found university staff are witnessing more customer-like attitudes from students, as well as unrealistic expectations about HE, because of tuition fees (Nixon et al., 2018a).

Further evidence to support the arguments made in this chapter about high expectations were also observed from the student participants. During interviews, the expectations students expressed regarding HE were a common topic of discussion. Students were

considered in their responses about what is expected from HE, but when any student did outline how they felt their expectations were not met, it was frequently conceived in relation to tuition fees, implying that the financial transaction was important in framing what they expect to receive. Such views are intrinsically connected to a consumerist way of thinking. In one example, a student suggested that the quality of resources provided in an exam were not in keeping with what they expected, based on the fact they pay for their course: 'one thing I brought up was something as silly as the calculators in exams, I just didn't like those calculators. I thought as we're paying for the year we should get a decent calculator in the exams' (Student G, Case A). This example is far from extreme, but it could be argued that the relatively trivial matter of calculator quality, along with the reference to having paid for the course, is indeed evidence of increased expectations and an example of how small details matter in the face of paying for university education. In effect, a paying customer expects better.

A similar example from another student, this time relating to teaching and support, highlights the expectation that some students had regarding support and contact hours, which they felt fell short of expectations: 'there's not a lot of help at hand. I think some of the lectures that I have, they say "don't email on the weekends because we won't reply, because that's our off time", whereas in school or any other situation if I needed help, then people would be there to email. Not all the time, but even on weekends during the day. So, I think maybe it's sometimes lacking help by lecturers...' (Student B, Case A). Although specific regarding what the nature of the expectation was by this student, the example was one of many that supports the notion that university staff are under growing pressure from increased student expectations (UCU, 2010). The expectation that lecturers should be on hand to reply to emails at all times indicates a belief that lecturers are at the disposal of students, much like any other service provider in a consumer relationship.

A final student comment also exemplifies high expectations, this time of good teaching and support. However, it shows again how student's views are often rooted in consumerist

thinking, especially regarding tuition fees: 'yeah, that was definitely an expectation of university; you're paying all this money, you see the salary the Vice Chancellor is on and you expect to be getting good support, and receiving informative great lectures, and all the features that you can get because of the debt you're left with' (Student F, Case A). In this example, the student makes reference to the salary of the Vice Chancellor, which further cements the idea that many students feel and express customer-oriented views by framing their thinking around financial elements that extend beyond their own financial commitments. This example shows that a mental link was made between the tuition fees the student paid, and the salary of the most senior university manager. This, and the previous evidence presented, strongly indicates a customer culture in terms of the thinking and behaviour of students. In addition, the findings support theories regarding the impact of marketisation and how it may exacerbate demand and supply attitudes from stakeholders (Maringe et al., 2010).

On a closely related topic, the next section argues that marketisation, and the fact that students pay more tuition fees, has shaped the thinking and behaviours of students towards focussing on the value for money they get from HE. As part of an increasing customer culture, students are actively weighing up the cost of university education and feeling additional pressure in terms of the debt they are taking on in order to go to university. This financial pressure is a factor that is shaping how they feel about HE.

#### ***4.1.5 Transactional thinking and value for money***

This section of the chapter argues that having to pay tuition fees, or at least taking on the debt of tuition fees, shapes and directs how students feel about HE. This financial commitment means that students consider this element when evaluating their university experience, using it as a benchmark to determine whether they feel satisfied with a given aspect or not. Tuition fees create a certain level of pressure on students, focusing their

thinking further towards a customer–orientated standpoint, and causing them to question whether tuition fees offer good value.

To support these arguments, evidence obtained from a number of student interviews showed that many chose to discuss tuition fees when talking about the challenges they face at university. A consistent theme was that the fees are considered to be high, and that this influenced their evaluation of value for money. One example from a student highlights how tuition fees and other costs associated with university education were important, and also a concern: ‘we’re paying £9,000 tuition fees, but all the other things we have to pay for, it just gets so much. Even accommodation, if you want to live on campus you don’t really have a choice for the price that you pay. I think it is just quite frustrating. I’ve complained about it a lot...’ (Student C, Case A). Similarly, another student interviewed for the study suggested that the fees and the resulting debts were a concern, and that this concern changed the way they think and act as a student:

*the fees have made an impact on how I see the university, and do things... I’m into a lot of debt, over £50,000. They say the threshold is £21,000, you don’t have to start paying it back until that, but yeah most graduate jobs are going to be around that area, they’re going to be earning £21,000, and they’re going to be paying back a lot of money over their lifetime (Student G, Case A).*

These extracts highlight how evaluations about value for money are being made, which is further evidence of a customer culture in English HE.

Another example illustrates the same concerns about debt, and further establishes the fact that students consistently wanted to discuss the importance and challenges of this financial commitment: ‘a couple of weeks ago, me and my friend we were talking about how much in debt we’re going to be in after finishing university. For me, because I had to redo the first year, that’s another additional nine grand added on... It’s a lot to be honest, it’s literally just hit us this year’ (Student H, Case A). These kinds of examples highlight that the cost of HE is a concern for some, and is present in their thinking when talking about the challenges of being a university student.

Further evidence from the student perspective was obtained via questionnaires from 145 student participants across the three case study institutions. When asked for their level of agreement with the statement 'university education is good value for money', 64.8% (94) of respondents disagreed, and only 20.7% (30) agreed. Less than a quarter of the participants stated that HE is good value for money, which is further evidence to suggest that the transactional nature of going to university is influencing students to benchmark their expectations against costs. These findings support research conducted at two UK universities, which found that students placed 'value for money' as a key factor regarding their satisfaction and whether HE was a worthwhile investment (Dean and Gibbs, 2015). For the findings of this PhD research, similar conclusions can be drawn, and there was also a great deal of consistency across the three cases, with non-parametric, Mann-Whitney U Tests revealing no significant differences by university type, or by type of course (vocational and non-vocational) for this statement about HE being good value for money (see Appendix M).

Findings that support these claims emerged from interviews with senior university managers, who both recognised the opinions student participants expressed regarding value for money, and also provided insights into how they feel the pressure to provide that value. For example, a consistent theme amongst the majority of respondents was that changes to the HE fee structure have created renewed pressure for universities to provide value for money. These themes emerged whilst having open discussions about what the most recent changes in policy have been, which frequently led to dialogue about tuition fees and the impact these have had on practice. Examples of pressure to provide value for money were outlined as coming from government, in the form of policies. Although this pressure was external, providing value for money further establishes the customer culture surrounding HE. One senior university manager stated that 'there are policy drivers on reducing the cost of higher education to the state so we get asked a lot about what we do about value for money and what we have to do a lot of reporting about efficiency

initiatives' (Senior University Manager #1, Case A). Another stated that pressure to provide value for money also comes from the students, and not just externally: 'we have to make sure that we're providing some value for money, because in their (students') eyes they see themselves paying even though they're taking loans' (Senior University Manager, Case B). Another comment further highlights the influence of tuition fees on the need provide value for money, stating that 'there's a much sharper focus on "somehow it's going to cost me £27,000 here, so I'd better get something out of it"' (Senior University Manager #3, Case A).

Academic staff did not discuss value for money in any direct way, but the findings in this section reveal two sides of a different coin regarding the supply side of the HE product, and also the demand side of HE. In short, students want good value, and universities are under pressure from governments and students to display it. This supports arguments made by scholars regarding how marketisation leads to greater efficiency from universities in terms of how they operate, especially in financial terms (Brown and Carasso, 2013, Tooley, 2003, Williams, 1995), and that it has also led to students focussing more on good value for money as consumers (Brown, 2015, Woodall et al., 2014).

These arguments also tie in with the next section of the chapter, which contends that another benchmark of success for students is that they expect to get a good job as a reward for their efforts. In short, marketisation is shifting university education further towards instrumental learning than ever before.

#### ***4.1.6 Instrumental learning and the increasing focus on employment***

Marketisation and the resulting financial commitments associated with tuition fees has shifted the English HE culture further towards instrumental learning, particularly in terms of placing employment much higher on the agenda of students. Academic staff and senior university managers link this trend to the financial commitment students make to go to university. Students have an instrumental focus on their learning in that they see the end

goal of employment as their ultimate focus, and place far less importance on the intrinsic benefits of HE. Marketisation has shifted HE further towards a customer culture in that universities must adopt this approach in order to attract students in the market, which also pushes the emphasis further towards benefitting the individual. In these ways, instrumental learning has narrowed the focus of HE somewhat, and is further promoting neo-liberal thinking in terms of HE adjusting its focus towards employability, and financial returns on investments that students make to go to university.

Evidence to support these arguments was found in interviews with senior university managers. Whilst broadly discussing how the HE sector has altered in recent years, a common theme to emerge was that the new fee structure had shifted student's motivations further towards finding a good job/career: 'I think I detect that students are getting even more focused on employability and getting the job at the end which is important. In a way, I think I have a slightly old fashioned view that I think it's a bit of a shame...' (Senior University Manager #1, Case A). To further add weight to this argument, another senior university manager contended that they do not feel students want to learn in the same way anymore, and that they are more instrumental in their approach: 'I don't think they have the thirst for knowledge for the sake of it, they tend to be more instrumental now. I think they do it for a more specific purpose maybe, to get a good job or something. I think there is less doing it for your intrinsic, some of them are less academic and it's with a small a...' (Senior University Manager #2, Case A). Finally, another senior university manager described how there is greater responsibility to ensure students get a return on their investment via employment: 'we have to have a greater responsibility to help them in their trajectory to employment because they want a return on their investment' (Senior University Manager, Case B). These examples show how there is pressure in terms of government policy, and also from what students want. These factors mean that key decision-makers are recognising the shift in emphasis, and provide



important evidence regarding the impact of marketisation and the growth of a customer culture.

These findings support theories that suggest marketisation would lead to an instrumental focus from students, above all other factors (Maringe et al., 2010), and also that it could intensify the student focus towards thinking about their future careers (Bunce et al., 2017, Molesworth et al., 2011). The findings also support numerous other research projects conducted in the UK that have also concluded that finding employment is the most important factor for students entering HE (DBIS, 2016, Kandiko and Mawer, 2013, Parry et al., 2012, NUS, 2011).

Academic staff also expressed views that further support these claims during interviews. Two out of the four lecturers interviewed for this study, one from a Pre-1992 institution and one from a Russell Group institution, also suggested that students are more instrumental based on the accrual of debt: 'and then from the student's perspective, they seem much more focussed on the fact that they've got a massive debt to pay off when they finish the degree, and so they want to make sure that they do well with the degree, and that it's paying off at the end of it' (Lecturer A, Case C). Similarly, this is supported by another lecturer's view that career-focused students are reacting to the market: 'the job market creates it (instrumental behaviour). Really, we've been in a difficult economic situation for about the last 30-years, so when you leave university you worry about whether you're going to, so there's that, just the nature of the market itself' (Lecturer A, Case A). In these examples, the relevance and impact that tuition fees have on promoting instrumental learning were expressed, further emphasising the impact of marketisation on opinions and behaviour. In addition, they lend further support to theories that have argued that marketisation is, to a large extent, responsible for causing students to focus more on careers (Molesworth et al., 2009).

There was also strong evidence obtained from interview and questionnaire data from students that, not only reaffirmed the opinions of senior university managers and academic staff, but also firmly supports the notion that instrumental learning is present within HE. During interviews, when asked why they chose to go to university all of the student participants cited the desire to get a good job as one of the most important factors for choosing to go to university. For example, one student explained that the reason for going to university was because it was the only way to ensure they could get a good job and salary: 'there's no other way of getting a decent wage and a decent job, unless you go to university. So, it's doing what I saw fit' (Student B, Case A). Another stated that they just wanted to go to university to use their degree for gaining employment: '(I) wanted to come here and get a degree that I could get a job with' (Student C, Case A), and another echoed this point by saying that 'it (going to university) was more for job security... If you've got a specific job such as this course, well you can only get like one career can't you, pretty much' (Student I, Case A). These examples are just some of the many comments that consistently highlighted the focus students had on gaining a good job, with a good salary. It could be argued that this has always been parts of the reasons students have gone to university, but the combination of staff and students opinions, plus the consistency of views expressed that point towards instrumental thinking, provide strong evidence that this focus has become more important as a result of marketisation.

To further establish the importance of the above data, when responding to the questionnaire used in this study the majority of student respondents indicated that they disagreed with the statement 'my university experience is more important to me than the quality of the job I get at the end', with 73.1% (106) stating this. Only 15.2% (22) neither agreed nor disagreed, and 11.7% (17) agreed. These results indicate that future employment is a priority for the majority of respondents. In addition, questionnaire data also revealed that both the reasons for applying to university, and the outcomes that they hoped to get from attending, link to career-focussed attitudes. When asked why they

applied to university, the number one answer selected from the multiple choice answers was 'to get a good job', with 95.9% indicating this. The data does not meet the assumptions required for a chi-square test to examine the differences by type of university or type of course<sup>1</sup>, but descriptive data shows very consistent results for these variables (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2). The second most popular answer was 'to improve my life opportunities' (94.5%), also showing a high level of consideration for the private benefits of higher education for the individual. Although other factors received quite high responses, none of them were as popular as the two examples discussed, plus many of the subsequent popular answers were not contrary to instrumental ways of thinking. For example, 86.9% went university as part of their long-term career plan, yet only 56.6% wanted to go to enhance their social life/meet new people (see Table 4.1).

**Table 4.1: Table showing the proportion of students by their reasons for applying to university**

<b>Reason for applying to university</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
To get a good job	139	95.9
To improve my life opportunities	137	94.5
It seemed a logical progression in my educational journey	126	86.9
It was part of my long-term career plan	126	86.9
I wanted to study a particular subject/course at university	122	84.1
I wanted to experience being a university student	109	75.2
Family members encouraged me to apply	101	69.7
I wanted to do something different with my life	89	61.4
Teachers/lecturers encouraged me to apply	87	60.0
My existing qualifications were inadequate to meet my career ambitions	83	57.2
To enhance my social life/meet new people	82	56.6
My employer/work colleagues encouraged me to apply	33	22.8
Other reason	19	13.1
I was unemployed and decided to apply to university	4	2.8

In the same questionnaire, students were provided an open-ended question that asked them to indicate three of the main outcomes they hoped would result from attending university. Even thinking beyond the conclusion of their studies, 'getting a good job' was by far the most popular reason provided: once the open-ended answers were coded into

<sup>1</sup> Chi-Square cannot be utilised to determine associations by type of university, for example, because 12 cells (66.7%) have an expected count less than 5.

common answers, a total of 395 answers were provided, which yielded 43 different themes/outcomes (see Appendix N). Of the answers, 28.4% (112) listed ‘a good job/career’, which was almost three times as popular as the second most common answer, which was to obtain ‘a degree’ (10.1%). Both of these answers further support the argument that students are thinking instrumentally, and that the importance of gaining employment is keenly recognised by the vast majority of staff and student participants in this study.

This evidence provides new data and important insights, but also supports existing theories that argue that students see outcomes as more important than experiences and learning (Brady, 2012), and that thinking about the individual benefits of HE come before thinking about the collective benefits (Phipps and Young, 2015). In these ways, marketisation has contributed to students ‘having’ something (outcome), rather than ‘being’ (an experience) (Molesworth et al., 2009).

**Table 4.2: Table showing the top 15 answers proportions provided by students regarding what they hope the outcomes of attending university would be**

<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
A good job/career	112	28.4
A degree	40	10.1
Meet people	35	8.9
Personal development	32	8.1
Develop general skills	22	5.6
Good degree classification	18	4.6
Obtain knowledge	17	4.3
Enhance my understanding of my discipline	16	4.1
Independence	14	3.5
Increase social network	13	3.3
A good life experience	7	1.8
Enhance life opportunities	7	1.8
Continue education	6	1.5
Good life experience	6	1.5
Critical thinking	5	1.3

This section has provided a strong case that a customer culture is further established through marketisation. Senior university managers and academic staff acknowledged how HE has changed as a result of tuition fees, and how they have adapted to this. Students also displayed instrumental thinking about university education, as part of their role in developing a customer culture. However, the next section considers the concept of the student-customer more directly. It will argue that senior university managers, academic staff, and students openly recognise and acknowledge the student-customer concept, albeit with some uncertainty regarding what this means.

#### ***4.1.7 Acknowledging that students are customers of HE***

This section of the chapter argues that changes in HE as a result of marketisation have led to the recognition of students as customers of HE. There is uncertainty regarding what the concept of a student-customer means, or what exactly this entails, but senior university managers and academic staff acknowledge that students are now in this role. Directly linking the concept that students are customers frequently relates to the fact that students pay tuition fees, which has been a consistent theme that underlies many of the opinions expressed by participants in this study. However, the acceptance of the student-customer concept is an idea based on circumstance and external pressures via government policies, and is acknowledged only as something that exists, rather than as desirable. Nonetheless, the concept is a feature within English HE, but the extent to which this is accepted and internalised by staff and/or students is questionable.

To support these arguments, there was compelling data that illustrates how participants within this study did recognise and discuss the customer role of students. The nature of this was not always outlined or explained in specific detail, but the idea that this exists was frequently addressed. For example, whilst openly discussing how HE has changed over the years, one senior university manager explained that government policy changes created the idea of students being customers, even if the nature of this is somewhat

unclear: 'the one thing about policy changes, there's been a policy change to make a student more of a customer. It's a particular kind of customer they've become and I think probably we haven't worked out how to have that communication properly yet' (Senior University Manager #1, Case A). Another senior university manager also used consumer/customer language to refer to students in English HE, stating that HE is shaped by the market and what customers (students) want: 'in some ways, we've moved from largely a producer-led organisation and gradually to a market-led, or consumer-led, organisation' (Senior University Manager, Case B). These examples show clear reference being made to the student-customer concept, and how external policies and pressures have created this scenario. The findings support theories that suggest the UK government promotes marketisation through policy, and how marketisation is as much about ideology as it is about economic factors (Furedi, 2011). In this sense, the data also supports claims made that the UK government have been seduced by neo-liberal principles (John and Fanghanel, 2016) that are shaping English HE; a conception less about public goods and more about serving the needs of a market economy (Dicken, 2011, Evans, 2004).

Further evidence was obtained in interviews with academic staff. Similar discussions about the changes that have been observed in English HE over the years also yielded supportive findings, and some explained that the new fee structure made students customers in their thinking: 'yeah, and obviously, the change in the fee structure, so the fact that the students are now having to spend a lot more money, get into a lot more debt. Then there is the whole, well our students are consumers aren't they?' (Lecturer B, Case A). Another academic member of staff used similar consumerist language when discussing how relationships with students have changed over the years: 'there was one incident recently where there was a campaign to get one of the staff members sacked, because they'd made some mistake in their teaching, so in that sense I guess that could be seen as a move towards this customer relationship' (Lecturer A, Case C). A final example from another academic sees them describe how students have become more

like consumers of a product: 'I think things have changed for students, but I think fees have been a massive change for students, because they have felt rightly that they are the consumer of the product, and so your degree becomes a product rather than anything else' (Lecturer C, Case A). The data provides evidence that many staff members within this study accept that students have become more like customers/consumers, often citing the new fee structure in HE as one of the main reasons for the shift.

Interestingly, only one student participant used the consumer/customer terminology to refer to themselves during interviews. They stated that paying fees makes them a customer, suggesting that 'the fact that you're paying so much money makes you realise that you are a customer, and because you pay so much money, perhaps you have entitlement to a good education, and to have good quality facilities, because there's so much money, and so much on the line' (Student D, Case A). This is not to say that other indicators were not present from interviews with students, but the majority were less willing to directly refer to themselves in this way, or explicitly refer to themselves as customers.

However, data obtained from the student questionnaires somewhat contradicts this finding regarding respondent opinions of their student-customer status. Of the 145 respondents, the majority agree with the statement 'I consider myself a customer of higher education', with 67.6% (98) indicating this. Only 9.7% (14) disagreed, 17.2% (25) neither agreed nor disagreed, and 5.5% (8) said this was not applicable. A follow-up statement was posed later in the questionnaire, and they were asked whether they feel 'students at University should *not* be treated as customers'. The results reveal that the majority agreed that they should not be treated as customers, with 70.3% (102) indicating this. In total, 14.5% (21) stated they neither agreed nor disagreed, and only 10.3% (15) disagreed. Finally, 4.8% (7) selected not applicable for this statement. In addition, non-parametric, Mann-Whitney U Tests revealed no significant differences by university type, or by type of course (vocational and non-vocational) for these two variables (see Appendix O). This data

reveals an interesting dynamic between the recognition of the customer terminology, and the acceptance of it. In other words, the evidence suggests that there is an acceptance by most that students are customer of HE, but are less likely to want to be treated as such.

These findings suggest an uneasy relationship with the idea of being a customer. Just because one accepts their status as a customer, does not necessarily mean this is considered the ideal or desired scenario. The findings also support other theories that have argued that the customer terminology in English HE is not only loosely applied, but may also be often misunderstood (Maringe et al., 2010). Indeed, the main factor that seems to underpin the use of the term 'customer' is frequently linked with tuition fees, but the tuition fee structure is not something a student can easily choose not to be part of, so it is not inconceivable to assume that not everyone is happy to be thought of as a customer. Essentially, the customer status is imposed on them, and the views and opinions of both staff and students are shaped by it.

In the next section, the idea that a customer culture is largely imposed on the sector, rather than being fully accepted by stakeholders, will be discussed. It is suggested that marketisation is shaping opinions and behaviours, but there is strong evidence that students accept the customer role reluctantly, and that it is against their idealised views of what university education should be like.

#### ***4.1.8 The idealised view of HE and the 'reluctant customer'***

In this section, it is argued that much of the evidence that shows students are behaving and thinking more like customers is an inevitable consequence of marketisation, and that a customer culture is not fully internalised or accepted by staff or students in English HE. Government policies have created a scenario whereby universities compete for funding via attracting students, and the tuition fees that they bring with them. This factor has indeed made university education a transactional experience, which leads to customer-like behaviours and opinions, but the idealised view of HE that staff and students describe



indicates resistance towards this culture. A deeper yearning for closer relationships underlies the idealised view of HE, and there is evidence to suggest that staff and students would ideally move away from a customer culture, if circumstances were different. In short, staff and students are pushed towards a customer culture as a result of marketisation, but how they conduct themselves within this culture is with an unsettled and uneasy view of how university education should really be.

In order to support these arguments, evidence presented previously highlighted that the majority of student participants in this study considered themselves customers, yet also indicated that students at university should not be treated as customers. But, additional data in support of this view was observed during interviews with students. When discussing the purpose of HE during interviews, and if or how they would change anything about English HE, students consistently conveyed opinions that revealed how they felt HE contributes to growing people as individuals, learning things that go beyond what is on the curriculum, for connecting with people, and how university contributes to society in general.

Some of these elements could of course be considered part of the overall 'product' or 'package' that customers purchase, but the tone of the interviews did not support this, and their words conveyed a deeper yearning to engage with a university differently, rather than simply buying a product in order to get a job. There was a common feeling during this line of discussion that their own part in their educational experience was forgotten for a moment, and the importance of universities to society came to the fore. For example, one student explained that 'I think a university can serve many, many functions in a society. The possibilities for a university in society is just endless, it can train the next generation of professionals in the job market, develop knowledge, discover new things, influence policy, I think the term is technocracy' (Student E, Case A). Similarly, another student reflected that the things they have learned will help them on social level well into the future: 'even the things that we learnt, I feel there are things that are relevant, even

learning about the way people interact and things like that, those are things I have learnt from my subject, and I know they will have relevance throughout my life in different situations, just from the things I've learnt' (Student C, Case A). These comments show a deeper understanding of the intrinsic benefits of HE, rather than just the instrumental benefits for the individual. Discussing the purpose of HE, and how this compares with their idealised views, was a catalyst for a much wider consideration of the benefits of HE.

Another popular point of view in terms of the wider benefits of university for growing knowledge, improving society, and helping people's lives is exemplified in the following comment: 'but then there's stuff like research, all the lecturers, researchers, and PhD students would be trying to find out new things, look at new medicines, new clinical techniques to search for different stuff. They are the ones that are changing the world pretty much in the way that we do things, making our lives as easy as possible and trying to find the solutions to our problems. I believe that's important' (Student H, Case A). Similarly, another student recognised the importance of HE for creating a well socialised person, and that they would like to connect even more with other students and lecturers if possible:

*I think university shapes a person, it gives them the confidence to interact with the public, and makes the person outgoing, like if anyone's got any problems, they can be the person to like a leader in the communities... I would like more interaction with the students though, and lecturers more in touch with students, so a bit more involved in activities (Student D, Case A).*

These were just some examples amongst many that led students to talk enthusiastically and positively about aspects that went far beyond their own needs, beyond instrumental needs, and removed completely from the financial aspect of university education.

As noted by Tomlinson (2017), the student-customer terminology and its consequences are not only under-researched, but mainly something that is notional, rather than having much substance. The research findings in this chapter demonstrate and support this point. It would be extremely easy to focus entirely on the mounting evidence that a customer

culture is being internalised by staff and students, and exacerbated by marketisation, but the unexpected findings of this research indicate that there is far more at play here than meets the eye. The key argument being made here is that students had idealised views about HE that do not simply internalise or fully embrace a student-customer label.

These arguments are further supported with evidence from interviews with academic staff. Whilst discussing the purpose of HE, and if it has changed over the years, academic staff revealed consistent views that a student-customer concept was indeed acknowledged, but all were keen to show resistance to this, and an unwillingness to internalise the concept. For example, one academic staff member stated that the idea of a customer relationship is certainly present, but that it had not really changed their teaching or the underlying purpose of what they do: 'so, that has changed, and then there's a concern on the part of staff that the students are going to see it more as a kind of customer-seller type of relationship. In terms of what happens when you get down within the teaching, really, I think it's roughly the same to be honest... I think it's kind of trying to reinvent stuff, but in reality, it stays roughly the same' (Lecturer A, Case C). Similarly, another academic explained that there had indeed been a shift towards a more customer-focussed relationship with students, but that they resist teaching any differently and work hard to get students to think and not just demand to know what they think they need to know to get a degree: 'I think what is important is in the changing circumstances where it has become more commodified and so on, it's keeping that spirit alive is what we have to do, it is to get them to go out saying "I never thought of it like that before"' (Lecturer E, Case A). The final example is from an academic that felt that students were more instrumental in their approach to learning, but that their ideal idea of teaching is not to encourage this: 'creating well-rounded educated people who can think for themselves, and have that power to debate, have the power to lead a team, in an ideal world anyway that's where it should be' (Lecturer C, Case A). These findings show that academic staff in this study were consistently resisting many of the ideas and behaviours that reinforce customer

relationships with students, which also supports research findings from a UK study conducted by Lomas in 2007. In this small scale study, the findings also indicate that academic staff were resistant to accepting students as customers (Ibid).

Further support of these claims is evidenced from interviews with senior university managers, who consistently expressed views that revealed a reluctance to treat students as customers, even if there was an acceptance that a customer culture was more present than in previous years. For example, one senior university manager was discussing how students can sometimes see a degree as something they purchase, but also that it is important to resist such notions and reinforce different ways of thinking about it that places the onus on students and encourages hard work:

*It's (university) sort of like joining a health club, you aren't going to get fitter and better looking unless you make an awful lot of effort. Joining a university as a student is the same, there are people here to be your coaches but actually it's not like I buy a new handbag I have a beautiful handbag, it's I pay for my degree and then I have to work really hard with the help and the guidance, but if I want a fabulous degree at the end of it, actually the person who's going to be doing most of the work is me. The health club analogy works, if you pay the money and then don't go, nothing happens (Senior University Manager #1, Case A).*

Another senior university manager emphasised similar points, suggesting how important it is to reject the idea that students merely purchase a degree: 'I think the message to students needs to be this is a university that will enable you to do all of these things, but it can only provide the conditions... It's not like you buy a degree from £9000. You buy the opportunity to study for a degree, and I think that's a difficulty with this sort of whole idea of education as a market... (Senior University Manager, Case C).

One final example that highlights a reluctance to internalise the idea a customer culture in HE is a comment that a senior university manager gave regarding the importance of resisting external pressures to operate differently and to function in a way that best suits the university overall. This comment was given after it was acknowledged that external

pressures of government make universities more like businesses that caters for the needs of students:

*It would be tempting to just follow all the external drivers, but actually you do have to stick to what's different about yourself as an institution and that's about the relevance of the curriculum and yet the rigour of the curriculum, the accessible excellence really. You have to keep up with all the latest trends and discussions and policies and then you have to then strategically think what fits best with what you're doing (Senior University Manager #2, Case A).*

These findings provide strong supportive evidence that the marketisation of HE, and how it contributes towards creating a customer culture, are not what staff and students ideally wish to see. Their idealised views of HE indicate much deeper desires for embracing and recognising the intrinsic benefits of university education. However, the impact of marketisation via government policies and rhetoric have meant staff and students are merely responding to factors beyond their control. These findings indicate that, despite these external pressures, staff try to resist internalising a customer culture, and that students are reluctant customers.

The final section of this chapter provides conclusions that sum up this section and what the take away messages are.

#### **4.1.9 Conclusions**

The findings presented in this chapter provide empirical evidence at a macro, meso, and micro level in an area that has very little research conducted into the impact of marketisation, especially regarding the experiences of stakeholders, and whether customer language is being internalised. This has implications for the sector, as no other research has utilised staff and student opinions in conjunction with such largescale analysis of university mission statements in order to explore the impact of marketisation, and how this may be contributing towards creating a customer culture in English HE. As well as helping to answer the research questions posed in this study, the findings have

added to knowledge, and supported existing theories regarding the potential impact of marketisation on pedagogy and practice.

This chapter argued that marketisation has intensified competition between universities to the point that the missions, values and goals articulated by English universities via published mission statements are reflecting a customer culture. Self-adulation, and marketing-focussed statements are aimed to impress and attract students, who see the reputation of a given university as paramount when choosing their destination of choice.

Marketisation has intensified the need to establish prestige in the English HE marketplace, and establishing a good institutional reputation has become more important than ever. This reputation rests increasingly on university rankings and NSS data, which students place a great deal of value on for influencing their opinions about universities. This places students in a customer role, with universities acting as providers of goods and services.

Marketisation has led to universities re-shaping their strategies to understand and appeal to students, meaning that a customer culture is exacerbated because universities are adjusting their remit in order to offer what students want and need. As a result of paying tuition fees, what students want and need frequently leans towards instrumental factors, and finding employment after graduation is crucial to students. In addition, the transactional nature of going to university is influencing students to have high expectations, and students often make judgements of their satisfaction in terms of whether their experience is good value for money. This places universities and students in a customer relationship that is further embedded by policies and external pressure from the UK government, who are promoting the consumer agenda in the English HE sector.

Staff and students have internalised and accepted a student-customer concept to a certain degree, and recognise the reality of this relationship. However, there is resistance to fully embracing the notion of the student-customer from staff and students alike, many of whom have idealised views of what HE should be like that contradicts the customer

ideology and rhetoric. Instead, the intrinsic benefits of HE are well regarded, and students are uneasy about being treated as customers.

These factors indicate a situation that sees staff and students doing their utmost to succeed in a sector that sees more and more pressure being placed on them by government policies that are increasingly adopting neo-liberal principles. Students may well be customers as a result of marketisation, but this is imposed by external pressures. This is creating reluctant customers, and further deviating from the idealised view of what HE should be, according to senior university managers, academic staff, and students.

The next chapter discusses research findings pertaining to the impact marketisation has on SCL. The chapter argues that marketisation not only impedes SCL, but that the idealised opinions about HE of staff and students indicates that SCL is desirable and should be occurring more, at least, from the perspective of staff and students in this study.

## 5 Student Centred Learning (SCL) in English HE

### 5.1.1 Introduction

This chapter follows on from the previous arguments made in this thesis about how marketisation has contributed to creating a customer culture in HE. Specifically, it aims to explore and discuss whether marketisation and its consequences shape the nature of SCL. By doing so, this chapter will answer the following research questions:

- RQ2 – How does marketisation shape the nature of student-centred learning in English higher education institutions?
  - RQ2.1 – To what extent do students in English higher education institutions value student-centred learning, and is it shaping their learning experiences?
  - RQ2.2 – To what extent do academic staff in English higher education institutions value student-centred learning, and is it shaping their teaching?
  - RQ2.3 – To what extent are the principles of student-centred learning advocated by senior university managers in English higher education institutions?

Drawing on data obtained from mixed methods research, this chapter argues that higher student intakes and a shift in focus towards more instrumental learning, which has been exacerbated by marketisation, are impeding SCL. This impediment is largely unwanted by staff and students, but idealised views about student-centred pedagogy are not being realised. Rather than a joint venture between learners and educators, knowledge acquisition is increasingly a process of giving and receiving.

Heightened competition between universities due to the marketisation of HE has meant that attracting students is increasingly important, yet larger cohorts are stifling the abilities of academic staff and students to build strong rapport and to learn in a collaborative



environment. Relationships have become more distant, students have become more anonymous, and the 'student-customer' has knowledge imparted *onto* them as a result.

External pressures from the UK government to create a customer culture in English HE have also hindered SCL in terms of standardising student feedback mechanisms, which has created an audit culture. Rather than give students a true voice to shape their environment as part of a student-centred experience, this has resulted in less agency on the part of students. Although universities are seemingly more accountable to their students and their views because of marketisation, students generally felt disengaged with the workings of their institution, with no real voice for shaping policies, decisions, or their learning.

Overall, external factors that have contributed to creating a customer culture have resulted in disconnecting academic staff and students in the classroom, and led to learning becoming less active and student-centred, and more about learning information to pass exams. In this way, it is argued that teacher-centred education has become more important than SCL, and universities focus more on promoting quality teaching than quality learning. However, students generally felt that they should be far more involved in various aspects that make up their learning experiences, such as shaping the curriculum, developing their assessments, and contributing to the creation of knowledge.

Results presented in this chapter show consistency between university types and courses, with little to separate the trends that make up the evidence to support these arguments. Each section of this chapter explains the arguments being made in detail, provides supporting evidence for how the findings answer the research questions, how they add to knowledge, and also provides context in terms of current theories and research. The final section of the chapter provides conclusions regarding the key messages that can be taken from this study.

Before discussing the various research findings and supporting evidence, the first section will recap and summarise the definition of SCL that is being used for this study. The remainder of the chapter structures the research findings into specific themes, which cover the following areas:

- The impartation of knowledge in a marketised HE sector
- Teacher-centred education versus SCL
- Distant relationships and large student cohorts
- Students want their learning to be more student-centred
  - More active learning and closer relationships with staff and students
  - Students value the core principles of SCL
  - Audit culture, and the ineffectiveness of the student voice

### **5.1.2 Defining SCL for this study**

According to Jones (2007), a student-centred classroom means that the educator's role is to encourage and assist students with skill-development, and to provide knowledge, advice, and information. Similarly, Gibbs (1992) suggests that SCL enables student autonomy, choice, and control over their learning content and methods, and the pace of their study (1992). These factors mean that within SCL lies the principle that students can and should be consulted regarding the pedagogical process, in order to ensure that their experiences are student-centred, rather than teacher-centred (Biggs, 1999).

Definitions of SCL may vary in terms of examples given and theories drawn upon, but the core principle that drives this concept is always that the students' learning determines the activities, and the role of educators is to facilitate these. Lea *et al.* (2003) contend that the essentials of SCL tend to focus on: favouring active learning, as opposed to passive; increased accountability and responsibility in terms of the part the student plays in their learning; an increased sense of autonomy for the learners; emphasising deep learning

and understanding; an interdependence between learner and teacher; a sense of mutual respect between learners and teachers; and a reflexive approach to the process of teaching and learning.

As discussed here, and earlier in the thesis, the core elements regarding SCL are that students are actively engaged in:

- curriculum design;
- the development and design of pedagogy;
- assessment and feedback processes; activities in the classroom;
- research activities (knowledge production);
- feedback on teaching;
- and decisions made about the structure and delivery of the course.

These core principles are rooted in the writings of critical pedagogy, which has long established the notion that students should play an active role in their own learning. Indeed, Darder *et al.* argued John Dewey was possibly the earliest influence on the conceptualisation of critical pedagogy, and advancing democratic ideals in education (2009). Dewey, argued that education must engage experience and that students must be free to interact with their environments in the practice of constructing knowledge (Dewey, 1916).

These factors draw attention to one of the key issues within critical pedagogy, and also links closely with SCL, which is that critical educators should try to raise desires and ambitions, plus create hope for those that see struggle for educational and social justice (Giroux, 1988). Such ideas also connect closely with the many works of Paulo Freire (1970a), who argued that education could either promote a system of conformity, or provide freedom for people to think creatively and critically in order to transform their world. Within critical pedagogy, having the freedom to critique, create, and transform are paramount. Freire (*Ibid*) rejected the notion that students are like empty bank accounts,

ready to be filled with knowledge by teachers. Instead, he advocated an approach that unifies teachers and learners, whereby we accept that we are all incomplete. Through his writings, Freire asked important pedagogical questions related to social agency, voice and democratic participation – questions that still resonate today (Darder et al., 2009).

Freire was writing decades ago, yet what remains relevant to this day for critical pedagogy is the belief that the relationship between teachers and students should not be oppressive. Freire and Horton (1990) compared teachers with artists that can shape students, but must also allow them to find and become themselves. In other words, the teacher should never act as an oppressor over students' learning, more a partner or facilitator of the learning process. Such arguments are present in the work of other critical scholars such as Neary and Winn, who, whilst discussing the future of HE, suggest that educators need to redefine the idea of what it is to be a student, and that the undergraduate student should be able to collaborate with educators in order to create work that is of social importance and academic value (2009).

According to Bovill *et al.* (2011), Freire's work, and the work of subsequent critical scholars, shines a light on how important it is that students are active in the process of learning, and should be seen as co-creators of their own learning experiences. McCulloch (2009) explains that students being seen as co-producers means that a cooperative enterprise must focus on the production, application, and dissemination of knowledge, which should help to develop learners, and not merely create skilled technicians. Again, this harks back to the writings of (Freire, 1970b), who emphasised the importance of learning through practice, experience, and in partnership with educators, in an active way.

With these key factors in mind, SCL has been summarised and defined, and the stage is set for discussing the findings of this research within this framework. The next section begins by arguing that SCL is impeded due to the increasing trend towards imparting knowledge on students, rather than them being more active in the process of creating it.

This move can be attributed to changes that marketisation has exacerbated, meaning that the marketisation is indeed impeding SCL in this regard.

### **5.1.3 The impartation of knowledge in a marketised HE sector**

This section of the chapter argues that marketisation has created a competitive, consumer culture in HE, which has resulted in universities increasing their student numbers, and changing the focus of university education towards more instrumental principles. The end result of these factors is that student learning has become more about knowledge being imparted to them, which impedes SCL in that student involvement to shape their own learning is hampered. Large student cohort sizes makes active and personal learning more difficult, and means that academic staff often have to do their best they can to help students learn what they need to.

Evidence to support these arguments was observed during interviews with students. For example, whilst discussing if and how students can shape their learning experience, one student highlighted how the content of the course is very much set out, and that there is not my much space for their involvement:

*I think that's all determined for me. In my course I don't think it's interpretation, it's more of it is what it is, and you have to understand and learn this. There's no room for interpretation. I think that's all determined for me. In my course I don't think it's interpretation, it's more of it is what it is, and you have to understand and learn this (Student D, Case A).*

Another student echoed similar views, succinctly stating that knowledge is given to them, and that 'they (lecturers) impart the knowledge and then we just take that, then move on' (Student E, Case A). A final example highlights the same point, with the student arguing that lecturers teach in order for students to pass: '(lecturers) basically tell you to memorise this and pass your exam. They do still have to teach you stuff, but it comes out as the majority of the members of staff, through no fault of their own, are pretty much there to tell you "this is this, you need to learn this" (Student C, Case A). This evidence was consistent across student interviews, and provides strong evidence that they felt that they received

knowledge, in more of a passive fashion, rather than feeling part of creating something new. The autonomy and control that is crucial to SCL (Gibbs, 1992) is not recognised by the students in this study.

To further support this view from the student perspectives, the questionnaire data obtained for this study showed that just over one third of student participants *disagreed* with the statement 'university students obtain knowledge, they do not contribute to producing it' (see Table 5.0). If students felt more like they actively contributed towards generating new knowledge, then one would expect the disagreement levels to be much higher. Mann–Whitney U tests revealed no significant differences in opinions by university type (see Appendix M) or course type (see Appendix O), showing that these factors do not vary significantly based on these key variables.

To further support these claims, the questionnaire results also showed that less than a third of students agreed with the statement 'I consider myself a co-producer of new knowledge' (see Table 5.1). Mann–Whitney U tests revealed a significant difference between Post-1992 universities compared against Russell Group and Pre-1992 groups, with Post-1992 showing higher agreement levels (see Appendix M). Similarly, vocational courses showed a higher agreement than non-vocational courses, which was significantly different (see Appendix O). However, it is worth noting that all groups showed low agreement levels regarding responses to this statement, but students from Post-1992 universities and those studying vocational courses agreed more. The take away finding here, however, is that the majority of student respondents do not agree that they are co-producers of knowledge.

**Table 5.1: Table showing student answers to questions about pedagogy**

	<b>Russell Group (41)</b>	<b>Pre-92 (81)</b>	<b>Post-92 (23)</b>	<b>All (145)</b>
I consider myself a customer of higher education	73.2%	64.2%	69.6%	67.6%
University students obtain knowledge, they do not contribute to producing it	41.5%	38.3%	26.1%	37.2%
University education should be less academic and more about getting a job	22.0%	18.5%	30.4%	21.4%
Students at University should not be treated as customers	70.7%	72.8%	60.9%	70.3%
University education is good value for money	19.5%	22.2%	17.4%	20.7%
I consider myself a co-producer of new knowledge	24.4%	28.4%	43.5%	29.7%
My university experience is more important to me than the quality of the job I get at the end	17.1%	11.1%	4.3%	11.7%

When considering this data in addition to the consistent views of students in interviews, there is clear and strong evidence that adds credence to fears that HE has become a SAT NAV culture, whereby staff merely assist students to navigate through university towards a single goal, whilst lacking the academic freedom to help them grow and think critically (Cowden and Singh, 2013). Students being active in the learning process, and part of knowledge generation, are key features of SCL, and also within critical pedagogy, yet evidence suggests that these factors are not being fully realised by students within this study. These findings also contradict other research that has indicated a growing trend towards the adoption of SCL in the classroom (McCabe and O'Connor, 2014), at least in terms of students recognition of SCL.

Data that further supports the arguments being made in this chapter were obtained from interviews with academic staff. For example, one lecturer revealed that they feel more should be done than just imparting knowledge on students and work closer with students as part of the leaning process: 'maybe colleagues is the wrong word, but it feels like we should all be working together to get that, rather than I should just be imparting

knowledge, and the students should be just taking that bit of knowledge. We should be trying to get to the whole of it at the end' (Lecturer B, Case A). Similarly, another lecturer expressed similar views, and contended that they feel that they mainly teach students how to do things, rather than how to think for themselves: 'it's all to do with the teaching the knowledge to do. I think we do teach a lot to do, I'm not sure that we shouldn't be teaching to think' (Lecturer B, Case A). In a final example, another lecturer expressed how it can be difficult to help the students realise that lecturers are not merely loading students with information: 'my real role is to make them (students) own their own intellect, and realise what I'm doing with them is not loading them with information, I'm sharing what I know with them' (Lecturer C, Case A). Although this particular example shows a desire to stick to SCL principles, the topic came up during discussions about the challenges they faced when trying to achieve ideal learning and teaching.

Further evidence in support of the arguments presented in this section was obtained from interviews with senior university managers. One example sees a senior university manager argue that learning can often be too passive: 'I think we need to help students to participate more actively in the process of learning, every student is still very passive. The lecture format is very passive' (Senior University Manager #3, Case A). This suggestion was made whilst discussing how they would like to improve HE based on their ideal view of university education. Similar discussions emerged during an interview with another senior university manager, as they reflected on how teaching can be challenging since bureaucracy and red tape has become more prominent, and staff are required more than ever to adhere to quality assurance procedures:

*What has changed is there's a huge bureaucratic apparatus around that now from like formulating aims and objectives, and quality assurance this, and quality assurance that. In many ways what I always wonder about is how the UK or other countries used to produce Nobel prize winners without any of that, how somehow over centuries societies have managed to survive and thrive without having yet another form to fill in or yet another meeting to discuss whatever (Senior University Manager #2, Case A).*



In this statement, the senior university manager felt that recent measures to enhance teaching quality through policy and procedure may not have necessarily led to better learning and may even narrow the focus of the pedagogic process. This supports the over-arching argument for this chapter, which is that SCL is hindered by the consequences of marketisation, in that the resulting customer culture has pushed pedagogy too far towards teacher-centred practices. In short, this research supports theories that have predicted that marketisation could have negative effects on pedagogy (Naidoo, 2005), and lead to the creation of students as passive recipients of learning, rather than active participants (Bishop, 2018).

The next section of the chapter argues that marketisation has influenced student learning to lean too far away from SCL and too close towards teacher-centred principles than is desirable for effective learning. Learning need not be extreme to one end of the spectrum or the other, but pedagogy has been affected by external pressures brought on by the consequences of marketisation, meaning that quality teaching has become more important to champion to students than quality learning.

#### ***5.1.4 Marketing teacher-centred principles in favour of SCL***

This section of the chapter argues that the pressures of competing in a marketised HE sector have led to teacher-centred pedagogy being given greater priority than SCL principles. In light of the increasing importance placed on quality monitoring measures like the NSS by students and the UK government, universities are focussing on championing their quality teaching ahead of quality learning. This is not to say that quality learning is not important to universities, students, or academic staff, but evidence suggests that quality teaching is championed more than quality learning. This is especially true regarding key indicators of SCL, which are given far less coverage than quality teaching in terms of what universities convey as part of their mission, values, and goals.

Evidence to support these claims is observed in the content analysis of mission statements. Across the sector, around half of the university documents communicated the importance of 'quality teaching', with around a quarter covering 'quality learning experiences' in comparison (see Figure 4.5). An example of text that shows how 'quality teaching' is communicated in mission statements reveals that their claims are often generic: 'the University is committed to undertaking and supporting research as an integral part of its provision and for its contribution to our standing as an institution that delivers high quality teaching' (University of Chichester, 2014). In another example, Queen Mary University of London (2014) states that part of their mission is 'to teach its students to the very highest academic standards, drawing in creative and innovative ways on its research'. In a final example, Sheffield Hallam University (2014) champion their teaching, stating that they are 'an innovative and responsive university committed to the belief that high-quality inspirational teaching and applied research can transform individuals, organisations and communities'.

It is crucial to note that these text examples about quality teaching do not mean that the same institutions do not also mention learning in their mission statements. Many universities often express broad claims that indicate they provide both good quality learning and teaching, often in the same sentence. However, what is being argued here is that, across the sector as a whole, communicating quality teaching was more common than discussing quality learning. What was even less common during the analysis was to find examples of text that discussed learning in terms of SCL, with very few indicators observed that match any of its core principles. Instead, mission statements usually made vague claims to provide quality learning experiences, without any further detail as to what this entailed.

There were instances of SCL being covered in mission statements by some universities, but amongst the 113 documents that made up the sample, these examples were isolated to just a few institutions. For example, the University of West London (2014) stated that

they value inclusive education that is 'student-centred'. Oxford Brookes University (2014) expressed that they will 'provide an exceptional, student-centred experience which is based on both internationally significant research and pedagogic best practice'. Another university expressed that they aim 'to be a student-centred university rooted in the community providing a formative education informed by the Catholic ethos' (Newman University Birmingham, 2014). Similarly, the final two examples that were observed were that the University of Hertfordshire (2014) claim they would 'aspire to be student-centred', and the University of Gloucestershire (2014) stated they are 'distinctive as an inclusive, student-centred, academic community...'. These formed the extent of examples that directly referred to SCL in the mission statements, but there were also some specific extracts identified in the text that referred to key indicators of SCL. These were not extensive across the sample documents, but did cover elements that promoted collaborative learning between staff and students, and learning that is flexible to the needs of students.

Examples of text that conveyed the importance of collaboration between staff and students included claims made by Bournemouth University (2014), who said that they aim to encourage their students and staff to generate knowledge together: 'areas of focus will include encouraging staff and students to work together to co-create and co-produce knowledge and research'. Similarly, Liverpool John Moores University (2014) claimed in their mission statement that they supported staff and students working together as partners: 'our mission is to create and sustain a vibrant community for learning and knowledge where staff and students work together in an active and supportive partnership'. In a final example, another university stated that staff and students are intellectual partners: 'together our colleagues and students form a community of professionals pursuing excellence through intellectual enquiry and practical application, becoming partners in delivering our vision' (University of Cumbria, 2014). Very few examples of such claims can be found across the mission statements analysed for this

study, and it is argued that this is an indicator of how SCL, and the concepts that indicate its advocacy, are uncommon.

Amongst the few examples that covered SCL principles, there were some references made that communicated the importance of flexible learning. For example, one university stated that they create environments that 'respond flexibly to the needs of learners' (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2014), and another stated that they make it part of their mission to 'provide flexible and transformational learning' (University of Hertfordshire, 2014). These are just some extracts that could be found, which do indicate that principles of SCL are important for some universities to champion as part of their mission statements. However, as has been argued previously in this study, the vast majority of content focusses on marketing-orientated aspects. When learning and teaching is covered, the concepts are often vague, and there is also more evidence of teaching quality being communicated in order to appeal to students.

Evidence from this research study also shows consistency between types of university. Content analysis revealed that teaching quality is a more consistent theme than any other themes to do with learning for Russell Group, Post-1992, and Pre-1992 universities (see Figures, 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9, respectively). This further establishes the validity of the arguments being made, and also supports research findings from a UK study that found that the 'teaching ability of staff' is the most important factor for students in terms of what determines their satisfaction levels (Douglas et al., 2006). Universities market themselves in ways that they know appeals to students (Ressler and Abratt, 2009), and this chapter argues that this evidence further supports claims that the importance of teaching quality is recognised by universities in England, and reflected in their missions statements. This suggests that the customer culture of HE is determining how universities position themselves, and is shifting the focus of their marketing towards teacher-centred elements, rather than SCL principles.

If students are to do more than just obtain knowledge at university, there need to be meaningful exchanges between people (Cowden and Singh, 2013). Yet the next section of this chapter argues that marketisation has contributed to creating distant relationships between staff and students, which further impedes SCL in that mutual respect and working interdependently are considered prerequisites for effective SCL (Lea et al., 2003).

### **5.1.5 SCL impeded by distant relationships and large student cohorts**

In this section, it is argued that student numbers have increased in a mass HE market, which has contributed significantly towards a more distant relationship between university teaching staff and students. This is problematic for SCL in that it is leading to more passive forms of learning, with staff and students not having the correct environment and student numbers to promote more active learning. Students feel anonymous in larger cohorts, and teaching staff struggle to build rapports with students as a result. In this way, marketisation is not only hindering SCL, but it is re-shaping the relationships between staff and students.

Evidence to support these arguments was consistently observed during interviews with students, and many expressed that they feel they could have closer relationships with their lecturers. When discussing their choice to go into HE and whether university had met their expectations, many expressed surprise at how impersonal it can be between students and lecturers. In one example, a student contended that they do not really get to know the lecturers, which can often be because of cohort sizes:

*it seems to me that the student-lecturer relationship at university is more distant than I perhaps thought. For example, in A-level you're with a class of 10 to 20 people so you know the teacher, the teacher knows you personally, they care about you as an individual. But for lecturers I've noticed, possibly because of bigger class sizes they're not as personal, you don't really get to know lecturers. I think it would be nice to get to know them... (Student E, Case A).*

Similarly, whilst discussing expectations of university education, another student stated that they actually did expect interactions with lecturers to be minimised because of the

large class size, and expressed that it can make the situation difficult: 'I expected it (interactions with lecturers) would be minimised because there's about 120 people on the course, when you compare it to a classroom of 20 to 30 people, so it's a little bit more crowded, a little bit more difficult' (Student H, Case A). Another student argued that the distance between students and lecturers is due to not having enough opportunities to meet with them, instead resorting to asking friends for help, or merely resolving issues alone: 'the distance is due to not meeting with lecturers much... We can try and get in touch with the lecturers by email, but if not then you ask your friends or your colleagues, just get more information on the topic yourself' (Student J, Case A). Finally, another student discussed how they had hoped there would be more opportunities to discuss ideas with lecturers, something that would be more in keeping with SCL. Instead, they felt that learning was more teacher-led, mainly due to large class sizes:

*I thought there would be a little bit more one-on-one time with the tutor... I thought there'd be more timetable time for going over ideas, personally, not for long but a little bit. I thought it would be more personal. And I'm glad I'm on quite a small course because we have 5 or 6 people in a seminar group, but I know in some classes it's 20 for a seminar, minimum. I think that's good in a way, but the personal time on it and discussing ideas, rather than just listening to things (Student A, Case C).*

The data consistently showed that students ideally wanted to work more closely with lecturers, and in this example the student touched on elements that reveal how discussing ideas is difficult. This aspect is a key factor required for SCL (Brandes and Ginnis, 1996), yet it has been argued that many universities do not employ enough teaching staff, have poor staff to student ratios, and larger cohorts to teach (Court, 2012). If students feel unable to be fully engaged with those teaching them, and are not able to discuss new ideas, then this is moving away from SCL and closer to teaching students to re-produce skills (Bovill et al., 2011).

To further support these arguments, there were also similar views expressed by academic staff, especially by those that taught larger classes. One lecturer explained the value of

smaller groups, and how it can be easy for students to get lost in the background when the cohorts are so large:

*that small group teaching is really valuable, and that would be great. The personal tutor relationship also needs to be slightly closer, maybe that's the wrong word, but maybe a smaller number of personal tutees, that you can really work with and get to know.... I want them to know that somebody knows who they are, because I think it can be quite easy to get lost (Lecturer B, Case A).*

Whilst reflecting on how HE has changed over the years, another lecturer explained how increasingly large cohort sizes have meant that it is much harder to know student's names:

*oh, it has changed, I used to know all my student's names... Now I barely even bother, and when a student comes in I say 'Just remind me who you are?'... All of that has been transformed because of the student numbers... Now, some stand out but the nature of the relationship has changed a lot in terms of that kind of proximity (Lecturer C, Case A).*

In this example, the lecturer expressed that the higher student numbers was changing relationships. Similarly, another lecturer stated that they felt that students were more anonymous than in previous years: 'the students feel anonymous, and so they don't think anyone is really taking any notice of what they're doing, or not doing. I think we need to address that' (Lecturer D, Case A). In a final example, another lecturer suggested that the lack of a close relationships with students leads to a less engaged learning experience, with lecturers mainly just providing materials for students to work with: 'I don't think there is much of a relationship. The relationship is we provide materials, and then the students use those materials, and to be honest that's about as far as it goes... We have a personal tutor system, but students don't really engage' (Lecturer D, Case A).

These findings were consistent amongst the academic staff interviewed, and the final example comment directly addressed the problem of passive learning. This came up during discussions about if HE had changed over the years, and was part of an overall discussion about how the nature of HE has changed. These findings support theories that have argued that marketisation may be leading towards problems with staff being able to

help students grow freely and think critically, and instead must do their best to merely assist students with their learning (Cowden and Singh, 2013).

It could be argued that marketisation is not solely responsible for growing student numbers, but previous findings presented in this study found that universities are increasingly fighting to get more students due to the changes in tuition fees and funding. This supports similar arguments found in the literature, and, as Bovil *et al.* (2016) claim:

*No matter the level of institutional commitment, in the current economic climate, one of the major issues facing universities is the need to maximise recruitment of students despite resource constraints. These pressures frequently lead to large class sizes, often cited as a barrier to co-creation (p6).*

In addition, research conducted by Jabber *et al.* (2018) found that university staff in the UK felt under much more internal pressure to recruit more students to their programmes as a result of HE becoming more consumerist. For this research, the rhetoric underlying the interviews with staff was frequently about how HE has changed since tuition fees changed, and increased competition that resulted from this, and other government policies, have led to a marketised HE system.

Senior university managers did not touch and pedagogic relationships with students much, but one participant did share similar views to those of the lecturers regarding large student numbers, and acknowledged the difficulties of tailoring learning experiences for different students in the face of mass education: 'you actually have to design your learning and teaching so that an individual student can take from it what they are able to respond to and probably that's more and more difficult in a mass market' (Senior University Manager #3, Case A). From the most senior level of the university, this point is poignant in that the words 'mass market' were used. This explicitly directed the conversation towards marketisation and its consequences, showing that at the highest level within their institution, the mass market is believed to be re-shaping pedagogy.



Marketisation may well be making universities position themselves to appeal to and satisfy students, but this evidence supports claims that engaging with students should not just be happening outside of the classroom on a superficial level, but inside the classroom too (Carey, 2013a). These data also provide much needed evidence to explain why key elements of SCL are lacking in the case studies, by revealing that large student cohorts can disrupt both the relationship lecturers can develop with students, and, subsequently, the ability for more cooperative learning relationships between students and staff to take place.

Rigid frameworks and systems can thwart progress and must be re-thought and radicalised if SCL is to thrive in any given institution (Carey, 2013b), and the findings presented so far provide compelling evidence that some of the consequences of marketisation are hindering SCL. The evidence has helped to answer the first research question of this chapter, which asks if marketisation is shaping the nature of student-centred learning in English higher education. It is shaped in that it is hindered through some of the consequences of marketisation, but what is important to establish at this stage is whether students, academic staff, and senior university managers see this as an issue, and whether they value and advocate the core principles of SCL. The following sections of this chapter explore these issues in order to answer the remaining research questions.

The next section links closely with the findings presented so far, and contends that students would prefer to see a change in HE, particularly regarding how pedagogy is being experienced by them. They yearn for more interactive and people-orientated experiences, as well as to be more actively involved in shaping their learning experiences. In short, students would prefer their learning to be more student-centred.

### **5.1.6 *Students want learning to be more student-centred***

Far from living up to the fears and expectations of many who are critical of marketisation and the unknown impact that it could have on pedagogy and practice, this section argues that students place greater value on active learning and being engaged with fellow students and academic staff during their learning experiences. Not content with merely having learning *happen* to them, it is argued that students have idealised views of HE that see them as far more active in shaping their learning. Starting from the basis that students prefer to be more engaged with staff and students in general, the evidence will go on to argue that some of the core, explicit principles of SCL are desirable to students. Students prefer to shape their own learning experiences more than is currently occurring, and would ideally like to be more involved in deciding learning activities, discussing ideas, and generating new knowledge. More crucially, it is argued that the student voice is not adequately captured, and that marketisation has created student feedback that is superficial, without truly capturing their voice, as part of a truly student-centred experience.

The following will break these arguments about SCL into separate, related sub-sections, starting with the claim that students would prefer to experience more active learning and closer relationships with their peers.

### **5.1.7 *Students want active learning and closer relationships with staff and fellow students***

As has already been argued, SCL is impeded by the consequences of marketisation, and relationships between students and staff are distant as a result, with learning being more passive. However, evidence obtained from students within this study consistently showed that they desired to learn more with other people, which included lecturers and other students. Whilst reflecting on how learning in HE could be improved, one student

explained that it would be useful to spend more time with students, especially in practical learning environments:

*I do understand there's quite a few students doing one course, and it's hard obviously to spend that amount of time with every student. But I still think... I don't know, I think there could be more time in lectures, and more time in practicals. I don't know, I sometimes leave a lecture and think I didn't get a word of that, because it just went so fast (Student B, Case A).*

Another student stated that they would have liked to have seen lecturers more during their studies, and felt that talking with them more could assist their understanding:

*overall, I'd say the biggest thing would just be seeing the lecturers more, so instead of having your whole being set out in one hour, or one and a half hours of the two hours, whatever it is, on one day a week, split that up; because then that way you can talk more about something in that one session, and spend that time talking only about that, so the students will understand that (Student C, Case A).*

Finally, another student echoed these views, and, whilst discussing what they would like to see change in terms of their experiences, they expressed that more activities with both students and lecturers would make their learning experience better: 'just more interaction with the students. Lecturers more in touch with students, so a bit more involved in activities' (student J, case A).

These kinds of opinions were consistently expressed during interviews with students, and lay the foundations for the argument that students advocate SCL, at least on a general level. Indeed, Friere (1970b) argued that rich and active learning experiences rely on unified learners and teachers, and equal relationships. The evidence suggests that the majority of students support this idea in principle, and the following sub-section elaborates on these views by arguing that students also value the more specific principles that make up SCL.

### **5.1.8 Students value the core principles of SCL**

In this section, it is argued that teacher-led education is occurring more than students would like, and that the majority advocate a more student-centred educational experience.

There is a disconnection between how students would like to be learning compared with how they actually learn. As outlined previously, numerous factors linked to marketisation have hindered SCL, and this section elaborates on some of elements that students feel they should be more involved in.

The over-arching argument here is that students generally wanted to be more able to discuss new ideas and generate knowledge, as well as decide what their learning activities should be, and what the course content should be made up of. Other elements of SCL and how students perceive them will be explored in more detail, but the take home message is that universities need to do more to get students actively involved in their learning.

External pressures are affecting this, and marketisation has led to the creation of barriers to SCL. But, when one considers that government policies that have marketised HE attempted to put students in the driving seat, and put them at the heart of the system (DBIS, 2011), this chapter argues that this has failed. At least, the failure has been to put them in the driving seat in terms of pedagogy, and it is argued that marketisation has given students a superficial voice as customers of HE, rather than empowering them as scholars.

To support these arguments, participants from all case studies were asked to consider their participation in their learning experience via a questionnaire. A series of variables were listed, and the students were asked to indicate whether they feel they *should* be involved, and whether they *can* actually contribute in practice to the following:

- Designing the curriculum/course content
- Deciding the learning activities to be undertaken in class
- Deciding the format of assessments (e.g. essay, exam etc.)
- Designing assessment criteria for the course/programme
- Teaching on the course/programme

- Generating new ideas to add to knowledge
- Discussing new ideas in class
- Assessing/marking students' work
- Evaluating the quality of the teaching

For each variable, the students were also able to indicate whether they felt that only tutors/lecturers should do the activities, plus if it is only the tutors/lecturers that do them in practice. This avoided leading the students to indicate they should be involved in everything, without having another option. This allowed the research to capture the idealised views of student involvement and compare them with what happens in practice. In addition, it revealed which factors of SCL students actually wanted to see more of, and which they were happier to see remain the responsibility of their tutors/lecturers.

The results showed that, for every variable, more students felt that they should be able to contribute than indicated they can or do actually contribute (see table 5.2). However, it is worth noting that, even though they felt they should be involved more than they are for each aspect, trends revealed that students were less interested in being involved with assessing other student's work, teaching on their course/programme, or designing assessment criteria for the course/programme (see Table 5.2). More students felt they should be involved more than actually are, but the data showed that the vast majority see these activities as more the responsibility of lecturers.

**Table 5.2: Table showing student opinions regarding Student-Centred Learning (SCL) and their experiences**

<b>Variables</b>	<b><i>Students should be contribute to this</i></b>	<b><i>Students can/do contribute to this</i></b>	<b><i>Difference</i></b>
Designing the curriculum/course content	50.7%	11.7%	-39%
Deciding the learning activities to be undertaken in class	66%	16.6%	-49.4%
Deciding the format of assessments (e.g. essay, exam etc.)	43.3%	4.1%	-39.2%
Designing assessment criteria for the course/programme	21.7%	4.1%	-17.6%
Teaching on the course/programme	30.6%	15.4%	-15.2%
Generating new ideas to add to knowledge	79.7%	47.2%	-32.5%
Discussing new ideas in class	94.3%	73.10%	-21.2%
Assessing/marking students' work	18.1%	16.6%	-1.5%
Evaluating the quality of the teaching	97.9%	75.0%	-22.9%

\*Base = 144

There was far more interest expressed in being involved with assessing the quality of the teaching, discussing new ideas in class, generating new ideas to add to knowledge, and deciding the learning activities to be undertaken in class (see Table 5.2). Not only did the majority of students indicate that they should be contributing to these elements, Table 5.2 reveals the disconnection between idealised views of pedagogy and what happens in practice. For example, where two thirds of students indicated that they should contribute to deciding their learning activities, less than a quarter of them indicated that they actually contribute. Similarly, over three quarters indicated that they should contribute towards generating new ideas to add to knowledge, yet less than half said they actually do. In another example, almost all of the students indicated they should be part of discussing new ideas in class, but only two thirds of them felt that this happens in practice. A very similar trend is observed regarding evaluating the quality of teaching, and designing the

curriculum/course content. Although this final variable only saw half the students state that they should contribute to this, only around one tenth said they actually do this in practice.

These findings show that some of the activities that are traditionally teacher-led, such as teaching and assessing work, are less important to students, but that being involved more in knowledge creation and active discussion is preferable. There is very little contemporary research that considers SCL in the same ways that have been done in this research, and even less that has conducted such largescale research set against the background of marketisation, and how it may be impacting on these core principles of SCL.

However, this research does support some empirical work conducted in Belgium, which found that students that preferred deep learning favoured student-centred learning, whereas surface learners favoured teacher-centred approaches (Baeten et al., 2016). Although this PhD research has not focussed on learning styles or approaches, the evidence shows that activities that involve discussion and knowledge generation with others are desirable, which has similarities with the findings of Baeten *et al.* In short, it is argued that these data support the previous qualitative findings, and indicates that students yearn for closer learning relationships and more active learning in line with many aspects of what SCL entails.

Differences in the findings by course type and by type of university could not be analysed using significance testing, due to the properties of the data and respondent numbers. For example, a Chi-Square test could not be utilised to determine associations because 3 cells (33.3%) have an expected count less than 5, which violates the assumptions required for a Chi-Square test (must be below 20%). Despite this problem, the Table 5.3 reveals that students on vocational courses were slightly less likely to indicate that they should be contributing to shaping their learning than the non-vocational group. However, the data was consistent with the overall sample data in that the majority of students felt

that they should be contributing to discussing ideas, generating knowledge, evaluating their course, and deciding their learning activities in class (see Figure 5.3). In addition, the data also matched the overall sample data in that, for all variables, students feel they should be contributing more than they are. Furthermore, these trends are also observed between the different university types (see Table 5.4).

**Table 5.3: Table showing student opinions and experiences regarding Student-Centred Learning (SCL) by course type**

	<b>Non-Vocational (65)</b>	<b>Vocational (79)</b>	<b>All (144)</b>
<b><i>Students should be involved in:</i></b>			
Designing the curriculum/course content	61.5%	41.8%	50.7%
Deciding the learning activities to be undertaken in class	73.8%	59.5%	66.0%
Deciding the format of assessments (e.g. essay, exam etc.)	52.4%	35.9%	43.3%
Designing assessment criteria for the course/programme	26.6%	17.7%	21.7%
Teaching on the course/programme	32.3%	29.1%	30.6%
Generating new ideas to add to knowledge	86.2%	74.4%	79.7%
Discussing new ideas in class	95.2%	93.6%	94.3%
Assessing/marking students' work	9.2%	25.3%	18.1%
Evaluating the quality of the teaching	100.0%	96.2%	97.9%
	<b>Non-Vocational (65)</b>	<b>Vocational (79)</b>	<b>All (144)</b>
<b><i>Students can/do contribute to this process</i></b>			
Designing the curriculum/course content	9.2%	13.8%	11.7%
Deciding the learning activities to be undertaken in class	15.4%	17.5%	16.6%
Deciding the format of assessments (e.g. essay, exam etc.)	0.0%	7.5%	4.1%
Designing assessment criteria for the course/programme	4.6%	3.8%	4.1%
Teaching on the course/programme	15.6%	15.2%	15.4%
Generating new ideas to add to knowledge	50.8%	44.3%	47.2%
Discussing new ideas in class	81.5%	66.3%	73.1%
Assessing/marking students' work	9.2%	22.5%	16.6%
Evaluating the quality of the teaching	83.1%	68.4%	75.0%



**Table 5.4: Table showing student opinions and experiences regarding Student-Centred Learning (SCL) by university type**

	<b>Russell Group (41)</b>	<b>Pre-92 (81)</b>	<b>Post-92 (22)</b>	<b>All (145)</b>
<b>Students should be involved in:</b>				
Designing the curriculum/course content	58.5%	42.0%	68.2%	50.7%
Deciding the learning activities to be undertaken in class	78.0%	58.0%	72.7%	66.0%
Deciding the format of assessments (e.g. essay, exam etc.)	46.2%	45.7%	28.6%	43.3%
Designing assessment criteria for the course/programme	32.5%	14.8%	27.3%	21.7%
Teaching on the course/programme	31.7%	23.5%	54.5%	30.6%
Generating new ideas to add to knowledge	85.4%	75.0%	86.4%	79.7%
Discussing new ideas in class	97.5%	91.1%	100.0%	94.3%
Assessing/marking students' work	9.8%	19.8%	27.3%	18.1%
Evaluating the quality of the teaching	100.0%	96.3%	100.0%	97.9%
<b>Students can/do contribute to:</b>	<b>Russell Group (41)</b>	<b>Pre-92 (80)</b>	<b>Post-92 (23)</b>	<b>All (144)</b>
Designing the curriculum/course content	4.9%	13.6%	17.4%	11.7%
Deciding the learning activities to be undertaken in class	17.1%	14.8%	21.7%	16.6%
Deciding the format of assessments (e.g. essay, exam etc.)	0.0%	4.9%	8.7%	4.1%
Designing assessment criteria for the course/programme	2.4%	3.7%	8.7%	4.1%
Teaching on the course/programme	17.5%	15.0%	13.0%	15.4%
Generating new ideas to add to knowledge	43.9%	46.3%	56.5%	47.2%
Discussing new ideas in class	78.0%	67.9%	82.6%	73.1%
Assessing/marking students' work	9.8%	19.8%	17.4%	16.6%
Evaluating the quality of the teaching	87.8%	73.8%	56.5%	75.0%

Rather than focus on minute differences between individual questionnaire variables, the important argument being made here is that this research presents compelling evidence and consistent trends to support the argument that students both advocate important aspects of SCL, and that their experiences do not match these idealised views. This is not the case for all students, but the fact that this is true for the majority of participants is both telling and relevant. It also supports some small scale UK research findings that found HE students often place great value on flexibility in their learning (Hill et al., 2003), yet often

felt that they had no power to change key elements of their learning experiences (Carey, 2013b).

Paulo Friere (1970b) argued that the most empowering form of education allowed dialogue between learners and educators, and how important it is for both to reflect on the learning process together. However, the next sub-section argues that the consequences of marketisation are impeding the student voice and creating a void between university staff and students. Superficial feedback mechanisms have become more important because of marketisation and the resulting customer culture, and they are failing to capture the true student voice. It is argued that this is yet another hindrance to an important aspect of SCL.

#### ***5.1.9 Audit culture, and the ineffectiveness of the student voice***

This section argues that marketisation has led to students having less of a voice and less agency. The exacerbation of a customer culture means that feedback mechanisms are not empowering students to feel that they can truly shape their learning, or shape the direction the university takes, or influence important decisions made at the top levels. Instead, it is argued that marketisation has created a disconnection between staff and students. Marketisation is recognised by university staff as having led to the student voice being more important than ever before, but that this is not recognised by students. It is argued that the validity of formal feedback systems, such as the NSS, must be questioned if they are failing to empower students to really have their say.

Evidence to support these arguments was obtained from interviews with students. Whilst discussing the role of the student in HE and the ability of students to shape the learning experience, one student explained that they did not feel they could shape their learning, and that students just learn what lecturers say they should: 'there's not much room for you to have an opinion on things, so I guess it's just what they teach you, that's what you stick

to' (Student B, Case A). Another student echoed the similar point, stating that they would prefer to be able to influence change in terms of their learning experiences:

*it would be nice to have more say, but I don't think there is too much from students... There's the pretence of students having a say, and I guess for some modules they do take feedback seriously to be fair. Some lecturers are really good, but I think for the course as a whole I couldn't imagine students having too much to say (Student E, Case A).*

Similarly, another student explained that they can give feedback, but that they feel they cannot affect what the module content will be:

*in terms of shaping the course there's one module which I really don't like, and I feel it's irrelevant to the actual course and what we're going to be doing in our future. I feel in terms of changing that there is nothing we can do... But we do get chance to bring it up, we get surveys to do at the end of each module. So, I suppose we could put our thoughts into the box, but I don't know if they would get heard (Student H, Case A).*

A final point from a student reveals that they also feel that the curriculum is set, regardless of student feedback, that any suggestions that students have power over these elements is incorrect, and that true student engagement is not really happening:

*the curriculum is decided by not even our lecturers I don't think. I think it's their hierarchs that decide the curriculum. I might be wrong, but to me it doesn't seem like there's any power at all, and anything said otherwise is pretty much just for show to say "We have student engagement", and so-on (Student C, Case A).*

The same student went on to explain that any power they have over their learning is more to do with superficial elements, rather than the nitty gritty of their learning:

*there's power in the sense of altering what information is available to us, in a lecture its uploaded on one side per page, and students want it to be uploaded as three slides per page, say five, six, or seven students email the lecturer then they will generally upload it in three slides per page format, instead of one. That is generally the only real power there is, and anything else it's already been decided (Student C, Case A).*

These views were very consistent during interviews, regardless of the type of course the students studied, and the findings support theories that suggested marketisation could lead to the dilution and standardisation of course content (Grafton, 2010). In addition, they support the contention that marketisation could lead to course content being sealed as

part of the commercialisation of degrees, which in turn leads to poorer scholarship (Naidoo, 2005). It is argued in this chapter that these fears are somewhat realised in light of these research findings. Strong evidence points to a desire for more SCL from students, and also that they have no real power to make change.

However, it has also been argued that there is a disconnection between the opinions of staff and students regarding how much power students have to shape their learning. For example, senior university managers consistently expressed the belief that students are able to feedback to their universities, and, ultimately, shape their learning experiences. One senior university manager stated that student representative systems and student feedback forms are important for allowing students to give their input:

*we've spent a lot of time strengthening the role of the course reps and the student union and the guild, the student union senate and things and making sure every school has got its student advisory boards, students and feedback boards, operating. It's really crucial to get students input so we also have now got into the system across the institution where every lecturer for every part of the course they deliver has to put out student feedback forms and those have to be collected by the school (Senior University Manager #1, Case A).*

Whilst discussing how HE has changed over the years, another senior university manager suggested that policy changes made by the government have meant universities focus more on giving students a voice and acting on it, which they saw as positive: 'I also think getting students more focused on the fact that they're entitled to a good experience has been a good thing.... I think students are engaging more in that and I think that's healthy' (Senior University Manager #1, Case A). Finally, another senior university manager felt that students play a key role in shaping their learning, through various systems of obtaining feedback:

*students play a crucial role in shaping that. And we've got extensive student academic partners here, we've got a large number of student reps, the student voice is very important, we have a whole range of academic partnerships which include students and academics working on programmes together to shape what it is we do. And so the input from students is really important (Senior University Manager, Case B).*

These opinions expressed by senior university managers reflect the importance of capturing the student voice in light of recent changes brought on by marketisation, but they do not mirror the opinions of the students in this study. As a result, this chapter argues that the disconnection between opinions further supports claims that rigid student feedback systems are part of a customer culture, rather than mechanisms that improve learning. They certainly do not fit with the principles of SCL, which values student input into shaping their learning. Additionally, the findings of this PhD research support the argument that students are merely consulted as part of these feedback processes, rather than actually having any true power or agency (Bovill et al., 2011).

The next section brings this chapter together by providing over-arching conclusions about the findings and what the take away messages are.

#### ***5.1.10 Conclusions***

The views of staff and students concerning the principles of SCL is a significantly under-researched topic, especially with regards to the impact that marketisation is having on pedagogy. This chapter has identified strong evidence to support the claim that SCL is impeded in a marketised HE sector.

Senior university managers and academic staff consistently expressed views that revealed that relationships with students were impacted by the distance that is created by large cohorts. In addition, the changing focus of HE has meant that university staff see that knowledge is imparted to students more than they would ideally like, which further highlights how elements of SCL are preferred, but also how SCL is further impeded by the consequences of marketisation.

Students also recognised that knowledge is given to them far more than they feel that they create it. Not only do the majority of students yearn for more active learning, with closer relationships with their peers, but rigid and superficial feedback mechanisms only present

the appearance that students can shape their learning experiences. On a deeper level, students are denied key principles of SCL, which include the ability to influence what they learn, how they learn it, and to have the voice that empowers them to do this.

In terms of SCL, and particularly in terms of students voicing their opinions regarding how their learning is being shaped, this case study research shows that there is a disconnection between what senior university managers think about students shaping their learning, and what students believe. Not only does the evidence show that key elements of SCL are lacking in the classroom, but student participants do not feel they have much of a voice to shape their learning. The disconnection between student opinions and senior university manager opinions does not mean that either group are incorrect, but the importance of its existence should not be underestimated. This research has shown that student opinions and experiences are important to both senior managers and lecturers, but if students do not feel that they have any real power to shape their learning, then SCL is hampered. It is argued that this issue is exacerbated by marketisation, which has created an audit culture of feedback, more suited to exploring the superficial needs of customers than the intricate and complex needs of different types of learners. In spite of these factors, it is argued that staff and students want learning to be more student-centred, but also that this is going to become increasingly problematic unless external pressures that marketisation causes are eased, or at least re-focused.

The next chapter considers the contributions that this research has made to knowledge, and what the implications are for the HE sector. In addition, the overall conclusions drawn from the research will be presented, and positioned within current research. The final part of the next chapter considers the extent to which the aims and objectives of the research were achieved, and makes suggestions for further research.

## 6 Conclusions – Bringing it all together

### 6.1.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together the findings of the research in order to draw out the overall conclusions of the project, and its scholarly contributions. Additionally, the implications that the research has for the English HE sector as a whole will be considered.

The first section of this chapter provides a summary of how this research project has added to knowledge, and what the main conclusions of the project are. The second section discusses each of the research questions in turn, and presents conclusions that answer these questions. In addition, how the conclusions specifically contribute to knowledge, and what the implications are, will be discussed. In the final sections of this chapter, the research approach is evaluated, and suggestions for further research are made.

Before the conclusions are presented, it is important to revisit the research questions. These were established in order to explore key gaps in knowledge that emerged out of the literature review:

- RQ1 – Has marketisation contributed to creating a consumer culture in English higher education?
  - RQ1.1 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by senior management in English higher education institutions?
  - RQ1.2 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by academic staff in English higher education institutions?
  - RQ1.3 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by undergraduate students in English higher education institutions?
  - RQ1.4 – Is student-customer rhetoric evident in the published missions, values and goals of English universities?

- RQ2 – How does marketisation shape the nature of student-centred learning in English higher education institutions?
  - RQ2.1 – To what extent do students in English higher education institutions value student-centred learning, and is it shaping their learning experiences?
  - RQ2.2 – To what extent do academic staff in English higher education institutions value student-centred learning, and is it shaping their teaching?
  - RQ2.3 – To what extent are the principles of student-centred learning advocated by senior university managers in English higher education institutions?

The next section explores the overall conclusions of this study, and how they contribute to knowledge.

### **6.1.2 Overall conclusions and contributions to knowledge**

Overall, this thesis has filled important gaps in knowledge concerning tensions between marketisation and SCL in English HE, a previously under-researched area. It has done so through research that examined the experiences and views of students, academic staff, and senior university managers, contributing a new micro-level perspective to the field. In addition, this research, through a case study approach, provided new insights into the effects of marketisation on pedagogy and practice within different types of universities, and also across the English HE sector, through largescale analysis of university mission statements.

Based on the findings of the research, the main conclusion of this thesis is that the marketisation of English HE is fundamentally dehumanising the process of pedagogy, and is turning what could be a transformational experience into a standardised package of knowledge and skills for students to learn in order to gain a degree, and pursue a successful career. Education has become a transactional experience of knowledge



transfer, with knowledge being imparted to students more than ever before as a result of the marketisation of English HE.

The nature of the policies imposed on English HE by the UK government means that students, academic staff, and senior university managers are met with little choice other than to shape their behaviours in line with customer norms. If individuals do not yield to the pressures imposed by the government, which actively encourage consumer culture, they risk being left behind or unable to compete with other HEIs within the sector. In this sense, customer norms are exacerbated by the consequences of marketisation, and what universities offer their students in terms of products and services risks becoming homogenised. Despite universities often claiming distinctiveness in the HE marketplace, there are fewer differences between universities as a result of marketisation, and they market themselves in similar ways, regardless of the age or type of university. How they position themselves and what they prioritise are very consistent across the English HE sector.

Like a plethora of chocolate bars on a store shelf, the branding and marketing of the product is vital, and presents the illusion that customers are buying something unique. Yet when the ingredients that make up the product itself are examined, it becomes clearer that consumer choice is limited, and the ingredients across the whole range of bars are essentially very similar. From this point of comparison, this chapter argues that marketisation has created this type of situation in English HE. Increased competition between universities ultimately means that they often market themselves in very similar ways, and that the product they each can offer is shaped by what students want, which, in itself, is partly shaped by how universities are being positioned by the UK government. In short, universities have little choice other than to adapt to what the market demands, and they are shaping their products and services to appeal to potential student-customers.

The argument that suggests these factors dehumanise pedagogy stems from the belief that neo-liberal policies, which underlie the marketisation process, have helped turn English HE into a transactional experience. Students are encouraged to think about value for money and are increasingly involved in evaluating the quality of English HE, which in itself is further exacerbating a customer culture. In addition, the debt that students frequently take on in order to go to university inevitably leads to student-customer attitudes, and an increased desire to see a return on their investment.

In other words, tuition fees directly lead to increased demands for graduates to get good jobs, and, ultimately, place them in a better position to contribute to society and the economy. These demands often come from students themselves, and, as empowered customers of HE, the sector is shifting its focus to accommodate these needs. However, it is this shift that is argued to be damaging pedagogy, and contributing to moving learning further away from being student-centred, and more towards being teacher-centred. In this sense, imparting crucial skills and knowledge often takes priority ahead of the co-production of knowledge, and also hinders opportunities for close working relationships between academic staff and students.

From this standpoint, this chapter argues that marketisation means that SCL is being transformed into consumer-centred learning. In this way, the cooperation between academic staff and students is less about co-creating learning experiences, and more about students making demands for a quality learning experience. The issue here is argued to be that this also further promotes a customer culture, in that universities supply what the students demand. This is not necessarily conducive to a cooperative journey towards creating and advancing knowledge, as the power dynamic between staff and students is being skewed by tuition fees. As long as students behave and are treated as purchasers of a product, then developing equal learning relationships in an SCL environment is problematic.

This chapter concludes that students, academic staff, and senior university managers must adapt to policies and rhetoric that further create a customer culture in the English HE sector, but that there is a collective resistance to fully embracing this culture. The UK government has an open and explicit agenda to create competition between universities and position students as customers, but much of the conformity that can be observed in the behaviours of staff and students is at odds with idealised views of what university education should be like. In this sense, this chapter concludes that many students, academic staff, and senior university managers yearn for changes to pedagogy and practice. These groups often share a desire to experience closer human interactions, a cooperative approach to shaping learning and generating knowledge, as well as to have closer relationships within in the learning process, in an active learning environment.

However, this chapter also concludes that the consequences of marketisation are disruptive to with these ideals. Furthermore, the fact that students make the choice to attend university and engage in the learning process can be misunderstood to indicate acceptance by them regarding how university education is operating. For example, marketisation has exacerbated audit culture and the importance of student feedback, such as the NSS. However, this chapter also argues that student feedback, which often has a narrow focus within a questionnaire format, is incorrectly used as evidence to indicate what students want. Without true voice or agency, it is argued that what students actually desire is not being captured within a marketised HE sector. Instead, it is argued that these mechanisms are used to shape the thinking and behaviour of university stakeholders, whether that be students or senior managers. Indeed, it is argued that a failure to engage with student feedback mechanisms could result in catastrophic consequences for universities. In short, it is much easier for universities to conform in order to survive, and for students that wish to obtain a degree to engage with HE as it currently stands. It is in these details that this research has added to knowledge by shining a light on the conflict

that exists between how students behave as customers and what they would ideally like to see change about their learning experience.

These arguments are closely related to the over-arching conclusion of this study, and this chapter contends that standardised student feedback mechanisms play an important part in dehumanising university education. For example, if a university achieves the top award (Gold) as part of the TEF, then this forms part of the justification that teaching is of a good standard. This is deemed to be a strong indicator of teaching quality within a HEI, but this chapter argues that this process has very little to do with reflecting how students want to experience their learning, or what their idealised view of university education should be. It is also argued that these kinds of processes shape pedagogy and practice, and that true autonomy to shape learning experiences are stifled by the importance placed on metrics like the NSS and the TEF. In short, SCL is hindered and teacher-centred approaches are favoured because this approach is less problematic in the face of so much pressure to deliver quality teaching, good rankings, and good student satisfaction scores.

Because so little empirical research exists that explores the experiences of students, academics, and senior university managers, this research has filled important research gaps. By establishing that these particular stakeholders are consistently resisting a consumer culture, despite the influence that marketisation is having on re-shaping university education, this chapter argues that the concept of a student-customer must be re-thought and reframed. Instead, it is proposed that the term 'reluctant customer' is more accurate as a concept, and also one that encapsulates the important distinction between acknowledging that students are customers and accepting that they should be customers.

The following section considers each of the research questions, and presents specific conclusions that help to answer them. How the research contributes to knowledge, and what the implications for the sector are will also be addressed.

### **6.1.3 Answering the research questions**

By considering each of the individual research questions in turn, conclusions are presented that provide answers to the questions, and how this contributes to knowledge. In addition, the implications that the research conclusions have for the HE sector will be presented.

#### ***RQ1 – Has marketisation contributed to creating a consumer culture in English higher education?***

In this section, it is concluded that marketisation has contributed strongly towards creating a consumer culture in English HE. In shifting the burden of paying tuition fees onto the students themselves, university education is underpinned by a financial transaction between the student and their university. In this way, the UK government has also succeeded in increasing competition between universities, who are further positioned as providers of goods and services to potential student-customers. Part of the motivation that underlies this shift by the UK government was an attempt to enhance teaching quality within the sector by re-shaping students as demanding customers. This has also led to universities adapting in order to appeal to potential students (customers), which further exacerbates the customer and provider dynamic between students and English HEIs.

One of the main conclusions that relates to this point is the view that universities now market themselves more like businesses do, and frequently communicate their missions and values in ways that bolster their reputations and self-promote their qualities and attributes. In short, marketisation has led to self-adulation within university mission statements, aimed at attracting potential students and impressing current students. This has also resulted in homogenisation of what universities promote as part of their offer to students, meaning that, regardless of the type of university in question, many of the same attributes are positively marketed to students.

Marketisation has also increased the accountability of universities, and they are now subject to more evaluations and quality monitoring procedures than ever before. The importance of aspects like the NSS, the TEF, and university rankings have increased and become increasingly influential for informing students about the perceived quality of universities, which is another consequence of marketisation. Because these mechanisms have been positioned by the UK government as important for indicating quality, universities are positioning themselves in order to appeal to students. In this sense, students are customers because their feedback is shaping university performance within these metrics, and ultimately leads to universities focusing on improving their performance based on key metrics linked to student feedback. Students are, therefore, shoe-horned into customer roles, and universities have little choice other than to respond to the demands of the market in order to attract and satisfy students.

Very little research has explored English university mission statements, as well as captured the experiences and views of students, academic staff, and university senior managers in order to examine the impact of marketisation, and whether it creates a consumer culture. This research has added numerous key insights to knowledge, especially regarding the extent to which universities self-promote via their mission statements. The views of key stakeholders re-affirms the importance of having a good reputation in order to attract students, and the fact that this research revealed that almost half of the content of all mission statements focusses on marketing the attributes of the universities shows how consumer culture has infiltrated the English HE sector.

These conclusions have implications for university students, staff, and government policy-makers in that they highlight the danger that marketisation poses for homogenising what universities do and how they operate. If universities were to shape their activities based solely on student demand and preferences, then the other benefits that universities offer to society could be lost. If universities are led to rely too heavily on tuition fees in order to survive, then innovation and research could suffer because, in order to survive,

universities become increasingly demand-driven. However, these demands are becoming increasingly narrow in focus and based on what paying students want, rather than what society might need.

The next section presents conclusions about whether senior university managers are internalising the notion that students are customer of English HE.

***RQ1.1 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by senior management in English higher education institutions?***

The conclusion that is drawn from this research is that senior university managers are resistant to fully internalising the concept of a student-customer. Their role as managers and decision-makers means that they must accept that students are positioned as customers, and adapt to changes in the HE sector. But, this is borne out of necessity to survive and thrive within a HE sector that is being re-shaped by marketisation. UK government policy and rhetoric explicitly aims to position students as customers, but senior university managers only internalise the idea that students are customers because universities need to compete for students, and the market dictates that students are customers because they pay for their own tuition. This section concludes that adapting oneself to accommodate the student-customer concept is not the same as internalising it, and the findings of this research strongly indicate that senior university managers are not willing to fully internalise this notion.

Very little empirical research has explored the experiences and views of senior university managers, especially across three different types of university. Although caution must be applied when generalising these conclusions to apply to the wider HE sector, the strength that this research has is in how consistent the experiences and ideals of the senior university managers were is pertinent. The implications of this are that marketisation is shaping pedagogy in ways that go against the ideals and philosophical perspectives of some of those that make key decisions at highest level of their HEIs. Furthermore, their

ability to lead and shape the values and direction of their institutions is disadvantaged because they must adapt to external pressures created by government policy, which is positioning them as providers of good and services, whether they agree or not.

The importance of the findings that this research uncovered from the perspective of senior university managers must not be underestimated, as it is recognised that their resistance to a student-customer concept is also shared by students and academic staff. In short, this research has added to knowledge by concluding that resisting customer rhetoric is a common factor between senior university managers, academic staff, and students. If English HE is being re-shaped by marketisation, but this goes against the ideals of its stakeholders, then this has crucial implications for policy-makers, practitioners, teachers, and students alike.

The next section explores conclusions regarding these issues, but from the perspective of academic staff.

***RQ1.2 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by academic staff in English higher education institutions?***

In this section, the conclusion that is drawn from this research is that academic staff resist fully internalising the idea that students are customers. However, it is argued that academic staff experience the most pressure to accept student customer rhetoric. As teachers/tutors, they are in regular contact with students that often behave like customers; they are under pressure to provide quality teaching that satisfies students; their teaching and support is evaluated by students through feedback mechanisms, such as the NSS; and the reputation of their university partly rests on how students evaluate them.

These are just some of the factors that indicate the extent to which academic staff are under pressure to accept and work within a consumer HE culture, and how students are



the ones that purchase goods and services. In other words, the product that students are buying is, in part, the product that academic staff are creating.

However, despite all of this pressure, academic staff do not fully internalise the notion that students are customers. In a similar way to senior university managers, they accept that students are customers to a large extent, and also work as best they can to accommodate this fact. But, academic staff consistently resist internalising the idea, and actively avoid contributing to promoting the notion that students are customers. Instead, there is a duality to how they approach students and pedagogy. On one hand, there is a collective acceptance of many of the factors that makes students customers, but on the other hand, academic staff largely maintain that pedagogy must not totally change as a result. For example, academic staff will work hard to help keep students satisfied in order to get good NSS scores, but it is argued that they resist altering pedagogy itself to accommodate customer needs. How achievable this might be is unknown, but the key conclusion here is that academic staff reject the student-customer concept when it comes to pedagogy, but there is some acceptance of it when it comes to how they interact with students, and how HE is administrated.

These findings have filled a gap in knowledge, as very little empirical research has considered the lived experiences of academic staff, especially from different university types and regarding the impact marketisation has on pedagogy. In addition, the conclusion that academic staff accept a student-customer concept on a surface level, but reject it in terms of how they teach, reveals a duality within their experiences that has not been fully explored in research. It is this aspect that indicates important implications for the sector.

If academic staff are also resisting the idea that students are customers for fear that it will be detrimental to pedagogy, then attempts to marketise the HE sector must be viewed as disruptive to the relationships between academic staff and students. If students are

actively encouraged into customer roles by UK government policies, yet academic staff consistently attempt to resist it, then it is conceivable that tension is actually created based on opposing views regarding what role a student has within HE. Like a tug of war between UK government policy-makers on the outside, and practitioners on the inside, there is a philosophical gulf between them, and, for now, academic staff are not fully internalising the idea that students are customers.

The next section explores whether students have internalised the idea that they are customers of HE.

***RQ1.3 – Has the idea that students are customers been internalised by undergraduate students in English higher education institutions?***

In this section, it is concluded that the marketisation of English HE has created a conflict for many students. Their identity is complex, confused, and in conflict due to how marketisation is re-shaping the purpose and values of university education. Students are responsible for their own tuition fees; are actively positioned as customers by the UK government; are increasingly charged with evaluating the quality of teaching; and their custom is sought by numerous competing universities within a marketised sector. To try to argue that this does not make the students customers would be folly. A key conclusion of this study is that students have only internalised the idea that they are customers because there are too many external factors for this to realistically result in any other outcome. However, the most notable addition to knowledge regarding this work is the conclusion that being a customer opposes many of their idealised views about what university education should be like.

There has been little empirical research that has explored student experiences and opinions related to aspects of marketisation, especially across different universities. However this research concludes that students internalise and display various customer behaviours, but these frequently stem from the fact that they are responsible for paying

their tuition fees. In other words, students have internalised transactional thinking about university education, which drives their thoughts and opinions regarding value for money, the quality of teaching, and what returns they can get from getting a degree (i.e. a good career). But, it is argued that this research shows students to be reluctantly identifying as customers.

Students display ambivalence towards being labelled as customers, and they revealed values regarding the philosophy of HE that indicate that, under different circumstances, they would prefer to have closer learning relationships with staff, be less anonymous, and, ultimately, enjoy more of the intrinsic benefits of university education. This research also showed that these factors are hindered because of the consequences of marketisation. As such, it is argued that external pressures to place students in a customer role have only been internalised because there is little other choice for them, other than to not go to university at all. Action through protests, pressure groups, or lobbying are possible (and have indeed taken place in the UK before - see Myers, 2017), but further actions of this nature would either be done by students that are already part of the current system, or by potential students that campaign for changes to be made in the future. Either way, this chapter argues that students have very little voice or agency regarding how the UK government regulates English HE, and that students cannot easily change the fact that they have to pay fees to go to university. Even if this conclusion is refuted, this research has shown that many students do not recognise their voice or agency, at least enough to believe they can change the way the system operates. Therefore, students can become customers by default, despite the finding that customer values do not shape their idealised views of what university education should be like, and this is where the conflict exists.

The implications of these findings are that there is yet more tension caused by the marketisation of HE, and that that students, as 'reluctant customers', can be re-framed and their role within HE reconsidered. This re-framing will be reflected on and considered in the next and final chapter, but this research has implications for the sector in terms of

understanding how students might identify themselves within the learning process, and that there are opportunities to collectively resist customer-orientated thinking, behaviours, and policies. When one considers that resistance to customer ideologies was observed from students, academic staff, and senior university managers, then it is argued that government policies and strategies to promote this way of thinking must be challenged.

The next section presents conclusions regarding whether customer-rhetoric is evident in the published mission statements of English universities.

***RQ1.4 – Is student-customer rhetoric evident in the published missions, values and goals of English universities?***

This section of the chapter concludes that the main purpose of university mission statements is to serve as a marketing tool in order to appeal to current and potential students, and other stakeholders. The increasingly competitive English HE marketplace is influencing how universities communicate their goals and values within mission statements, and the prevalence of self-promotion within the published documents reinforces the argument that students are targeted like customers within a business-like environment.

English university mission statements do indeed outline the values and goals of the institutions, but the rhetoric that underlies the content is more in keeping with what one might expect to find in promotional leaflets about a hotel, or holiday resort. As such, it is concluded that mission statements are indicative of how English HE has been positioned to treat students like customers. The research findings consistently revealed that whether universities communicated that they aim to provide (or already provide) quality teaching, excellent facilities, or supportive staff, competition within the HE marketplace means that these elements are communicated with a customer-focus. More often than not, students are the focus of what is being said in the mission statements. More importantly, it is this kind of focus that is contributing to the creation of a consumer culture in the sector.

These conclusions add important contributions to knowledge, and very little research has been conducted on this scale in order to consider whether students are framed as customers within university mission statements. In addition, the conclusion that much of the focus and content of mission statements reveals similar trends further supports the claim that what universities offer students is becoming homogenised.

These elements reveal important implications for university policy-makers, and staff involved in shaping the external reputation of their university. Awareness that mission statements are failing to distinguish universities from one another, and that there is so much consistency across the sector in terms of what is being said, and how it is being said, means that there is an opportunity to take a different approach. Because this research has also shown that students and staff are resistant to customer culture in HE, there may be scope for HEIs to reposition themselves in ways that, not only distinguish them more from other universities, but also focusses less on content that reinforces consumer culture, and more about quality learning.

The next section moves on to presenting conclusions that are drawn from the findings in terms of SCL, and how marketisation shapes the nature of it.

***RQ2 – How does marketisation shape the nature of student-centred learning in English higher education institutions?***

In this section, it is concluded that marketisation is influencing and shaping learning to become more teacher-centred within English HEIs. Elements of SCL are overshadowed by the need to provide quality teaching, which marketisation has helped to ensure is judged against narrow foci that quality monitoring mechanisms dictate. For example, the increasing importance of the NSS as part of indicating quality within the HE marketplace means that teaching staff and university managers work hard to ensure students are satisfied with teaching in ways that fit within the parameters of the NSS. It is argued that SCL is more difficult to justify and manage within an education system that values student

feedback scores ahead of the intrinsic benefits of university education. In this sense, knowledge is increasingly imparted to students in ways that might result in better satisfaction scores.

This section also concludes that part of the move to marketise English HE has been to make students responsible for paying higher tuition fees, which in turn has led to learning becoming more about lecturers teaching skills than co-creating knowledge with students. To elaborate, the debt that students take on makes them customers of HE, and getting a return on their investment has become paramount. This means that the empowered customers (students) increasingly want their university education to lead to getting a good job, which universities are adapting to. This has led to an instrumental focus on learning, with students placing more value than ever on whether they are learning the skills they need to work in their chosen career. This is also reflected by UK government policies and quality monitoring that increasingly measures success by how satisfied students are, but also in terms of the quality of the employment that students get after graduation.

The combination of these pressures means that course content is more standardised, and academic staff must deliver teaching in accordance with what has been promised as part of a contract with students. To deviate from this is to go against policies that the government have put in place to ensure that students get the experience that they pay for. These elements mean that SCL, which favours flexibility and freedom to shape learning with the students, is hindered by the consequences of marketisation.

These conclusions add important contributions to knowledge, because there is very little empirical research conducted that has examined the impact of marketisation on SCL. The implications of this research are that the findings provide powerful evidence that can be used to justify demands for student satisfaction mechanisms, such as the NSS, to be re-framed. This re-framing should ensure that quality monitoring systems do not lead to restricting the autonomy and scope that universities require in order to avoid

standardisation of courses. Without this change, there is a danger that innovative pedagogy that encourages collaborations between teachers and students could become increasingly difficult to implement. As empowered customers, students have contracts with universities to ensure they receive the learning they are promised, as well as the power to tarnish the reputation of a university by indicating their dissatisfaction in the NSS. Without changes to these aspects, SCL will continue to be overlooked in favour of clear and effective teacher-centred approaches that are conducive to good satisfaction scores and employability statistics.

The next section explores the extent to which students value the principles of SCL, and whether SCL plays a part in shaping their learning experiences.

***RQ2.1 – To what extent do students in English higher education institutions value student-centred learning, and is it shaping their learning experiences?***

This section concludes that there is a disconnection between how involved students would like to be in shaping elements of their own learning experiences, and what is actually occurring in the classroom. As has been argued previously, marketisation is playing a part in impeding SCL and pushing pedagogy further towards teacher-centred principles. However, it is argued that students recognise the connection this has for leading to knowledge being imparted to them, rather than encouraging them to collaborate in shaping their own learning. Related to this issue, the impartation of knowledge is another factor that dehumanises pedagogy in English HEIs, and the research findings of this study identified that many students yearned to have a more active learning experience, and one that leads to better working relationships with both academic staff and fellow students.

These conclusions add important contributions to knowledge, particularly regarding how it has been established that there is a disconnection between how much students would like to experience elements of SCL, compared with how much they actually experience them. Across the three case studies, research findings consistently revealed that, not only were

elements of SCL valued by students, but that the majority would want to see more of it in class. This leads to the conclusion that the principles of SCL are lacking in terms of shaping their experiences, and further highlights how teacher-centred approaches are favoured. It is also argued that this, in part, is due to some of the consequences of marketisation, which is re-shaping pedagogy to be more about imparting skills and knowledge to students than it is about staff and students co-producing knowledge together. It is also argued that the prominence of instrumental learning and the importance students place on gaining a good career after university means that pedagogy is further pushed towards teacher-centred approaches.

These findings identify important implications for government policy-makers, senior university managers, and academic staff. By highlighting how pedagogy is less student-centred than students would like within three different universities, there are some crucial concerns that can be raised regarding how best to shape pedagogy. If marketisation is re-shaping pedagogy in ways that are counter to student's idealised views of how they would like to learn, then there needs to be a dialogue that addresses this and how it can be overcome. Ideas regarding how pedagogy can shift closer towards adopting some of the core principles of SCL, rather than further towards teacher-centred approaches, need to be considered.

The next section draws conclusions about whether academic staff value SCL, and if it shapes their teaching.

***RQ2.2 – To what extent do academic staff in English higher education institutions value student-centred learning, and is it shaping their teaching?***

This section is very closely related to the previous one, in that many of the conclusions about why SCL is failing to shape teaching are rooted in the same problems associated with the impact of marketisation on HEIs, and how external pressures are re-shaping pedagogy to be more teacher-centred than student-centred. Additionally, the pressures



that academic staff are under to accommodate instrumental learning and career-focussed students are argued to hinder SCL and any potential place it has for shaping pedagogy. Instead, academic staff are shaping pedagogy in ways that provide and impart the knowledge and skills that students want, as part of increasingly career-focussed HE sector.

Although the research findings did not reveal explicit acknowledgments of SCL by academic staff, many key factors were discussed that reveal they wish to see a reduction in teacher-centred approaches. To elaborate, academic staff felt that large class sizes hindered relationships with students and it is argued that this exacerbates the problem of teacher-centred approaches to education. Teaching must be efficient in order to accommodate so many students, and the anonymity that larger cohorts creates is stifling opportunities for staff and students to work closely together and collectively shape their learning.

In addition, academic staff consistently argued that the intrinsic benefits of university education must not be lost in the face of increasing pressures to focus learning on gaining employment. This type of instrumental learning was not wholly rejected, but there was a yearning to ensure that learning was not just about imparting knowledge to students, but working closely with them in order to create a rich learning experience.

These conclusions add important contributions to knowledge in an area that is under-researched. They also highlight important implications for policy-makers, senior university managers, and students in that the findings reveal shared opinions regarding re-shaping pedagogy to be less teacher-centred. This should result in dialogue with UK government policy-makers, who are behind many of the decisions that have led to a marketised HE sector, which is being re-shaped in ways that impede SCL.

The next section discusses conclusions in terms of senior university manager experiences and their advocacy of SCL principles.

***RQ2.3 – To what extent are the principles of student-centred learning advocated by senior university managers in English higher education institutions?***

In a similar vein to the previous section, SCL principles were not directly addressed by senior university managers. However, in very similar ways to academic staff, senior university managers displayed resistance to pedagogy that is overly focussed on imparting knowledge, and exacerbates instrumental learning. Although career-focussed students were not deemed problematic, there was an underlying desire to maintain pedagogy that promotes collaboration and close relationships between staff and students.

However, it must be acknowledged that senior university managers did not discuss teaching as much as academic staff did, rather they focussed more on policies and sector trends. Despite this, gaining insights from decision-makers at the highest level within the case study universities was invaluable, and has contributed to filling gaps in knowledge.

The next section of this chapter evaluates this research project, and considers the extent to which it achieved its aims and objectives.

***6.1.4 Evaluation of the research approach***

This research project contributes valuable findings based on empirical research that explores the views and experiences of senior university managers, academic staff, and students, which were identified as gaps in knowledge after a review of the literature was undertaken. These views and experiences provided micro-level insights into the impact of marketisation on practice and pedagogy in English HE. In addition, largescale data analysis of published mission statements provided a sector wide context that allowed macro-level insights related to the marketisation of HE to be considered. The breadth of this work filled numerous gaps in knowledge, both in terms of providing a national picture of how universities are positioning themselves, as well as providing some much needed

data to build on numerous theories regarding how marketisation might be shaping staff and student opinions and behaviour.

Although the qualitative research elements of this study only captured the views of 24 participants, the themes and concepts reached saturation, and there was a great deal of consistency in terms of the key findings that emerged. This, coupled with having quantitative student data across three different case studies, meant that the data contained a richness that was much needed in order to draw out conclusions that add to knowledge. Furthermore, this meant that the findings could also build on existing knowledge and theories, often supporting arguments that have been made by scholars, but that were not based on empirical evidence. In this way, the research has succeeded in both adding to existing knowledge, and creating new knowledge.

Of course, caution must be applied when generalising across the entire sector based on case study research at three institutions, and the analysis of English mission statements. However, many of the research findings in this study have been shown to answer key research questions, which were established based on gaps in the literature. In addition, they have added a level of clarity to some existing theories, and provided insights into how academic staff and students feel, and how marketisation is manifesting via their opinions, actions, and choices. Additionally, the research has explored the experiences of senior university managers, something which is has not been widely researched to date. These individuals are often tasked with making key decisions that position their institutions within the sector, so their inclusion as part of filling research gaps has been invaluable.

When considering whether this research has adequately answered these research questions, it is important to establish whether the research findings were consistent enough to allow some generalisation to be made regarding the implications they have for the sector. In addition, it is important that the sample was not limited to a handful of participants, which would in no way allow wider confusions to be drawn out. However, for

this research, 113 mission statements were obtained and analysed (85% of the population), 24 participants were interviewed, and 145 students completed questionnaires, across three case studies. In addition, many research findings were very consistent across the sample, plus a number of issues reached saturation in terms of how common they occurred. This provides a level of assurance in terms of making reasonable claims and conclusions about the relevance of the work.

For this research, measures were put in place to ensure that the case studies were useful in their ability to act as exemplars of the different universities in the country (i.e. exploring data from three distinct types of university). Furthermore, by researching vocational and non-vocational courses, the research avoided inevitable criticisms that could have been made if only one discipline was chosen to represent the sample. Despite the fact that different types university and different and course types made up the sample, the findings still revealed a great deal of consistency across board.

However, where the research could have been more successful was in terms of the qualitative interviews conducted with students. One of the case study sites yielded no student responses, and another yielded only one. This was far from ideal, but students cannot and should not be pressured into taking part in research, and everything that was reasonable to try and recruit students was done. To overcome this, much of the analysis focussed on the collective power of combining all participants into one group. By accepting that the whole sample included various courses, types of university, and different stakeholders (staff and students), it can be argued that the richness was still preserved within the data, and the findings were still useful for answering the research questions.

A final reflection when evaluating this project is that it sometimes felt as if the research design was overly enthusiastic. Collecting the level of data that was obtained for the study almost became a hindrance when trying to synthesise all of it for the reader. As such,

caution had to be maintained in order to avoid overwhelming the reader with irrelevant data, or overcomplicating the aims and objectives of the study. Too little data would be a catastrophe for any PhD thesis, but too much data can present its own set of problems, and it could be argued that future work might benefit from a more focussed approach in terms of the aims and objectives of the study.

The final part of this chapter considers what comes next in terms of further research and what work could be done. Indeed, much has been revealed during the course of this project, but it is important to reflect on potential further work, and how this might continue to fill gaps in knowledge.

## **6.2 Further research**

A key question that emerged from this research, and would require further investigation, is how might the tension between economic factors and philosophical ones be reconciled? The HE system in England is subject to a funding system that dictates much of what was uncovered in this research, yet there is a great deal of resistance and lack of acceptance to many of these outcomes, especially in terms of the desires of many to have more SCL in the classroom. As such, comparative research conducted in Scotland, as one example, could provide an opportunity to explore the same factors highlighted in this research, but without tuition fees being paid by students<sup>2</sup>. Exploring whether SCL thrives more or less without the same fee structure in place would be extremely valuable for further understating the impact of marketisation on pedagogy and practice. Furthermore, researching whether students are more or less customer-orientated than they are in England, and whether their HE sector is also marketised in the same ways would also be valuable. Being able to compare and contrast similar data between countries would provide additional data for considering the influence of marketisation, and especially the impact of tuition fees on relationships between students and lecturers.

---

<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that other countries with different fee structures to English HE would also be of interest.

In addition, more largescale research conducted in collaboration with numerous institutions would further enhance understating and add to knowledge. This research provided strong, robust, and important evidence to answer the research questions, but collaborative research across many more institutions would be a logical next step, and prove invaluable as part of further research.

Finally, although potential differences of opinions based on factors like age, gender, ethnicity, and economic background were not part of the focus of this research, these could be considered as important variables for future work. For this study, the type of university, the type of course, and the role of staff and students were of more importance. However, it would be of great interest to explore how differences in identity and the personal circumstances of stakeholders may or may not impact on customer attitudes, or opinions about the nature of pedagogy. Similarly, future work could also explore the relevance of different learning styles in terms of shaping values and opinions about pedagogy and practice.

In the next and final chapter, this research will discuss how the role of the student as a 'reluctant customer' should be re-framed in line with the findings and conclusions presented in this thesis, as well as outline important reflections regarding how this project has impacted on the thoughts and opinions of the researcher.

## 7 Final reflections

### 7.1.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I again refer to myself in the first person in order to present my key reflections and ideas regarding how students, as ‘reluctant customers’, can be re-framed as ‘producers’ of knowledge, and how they should be more active in the learning process. My PhD research has uncovered and conceptualised this notion of the ‘reluctant customer’ and, in doing so, has identified a critical moment of potential from which to re-imagine an alternative to the marketisation of HE, based on principles that link critical pedagogy and SCL. In this chapter, I discuss links between these ideas and key theories regarding SCL and critical pedagogy.

Upon presenting ideas about how we can re-frame students as ‘producers’ rather than ‘reluctant customers’, I also reflect on some of the most important factors that have shaped my journey during this PhD. This journey started with me identifying as a ‘reluctant administrator’ and ended with me feeling emancipated, informed, and invigorated as a ‘critical researcher’, ready to try and influence change in the HE sector through my work. With reluctance underlying many of the experiences I have had as an administrator working in HE, I argue that the reluctance shown by staff and students to internalising customer rhetoric in this project highlights this important need for change, and a re-framing of the student role.

The following section begins by discussing how we might re-frame students as ‘producers’, and positions these ideas within key concepts related to critical pedagogy and SCL.

### **7.1.2 From 'reluctant customers' to 'producers' of knowledge**

In the previous chapter, I concluded that because students are 'reluctant customers' there is an opportunity to re-frame their role within the learning process. In this research, I found that many of the students, academic staff, and senior university managers resisted fully internalising the idea that students are customers, and frequently expressed opinions that indicated a yearning for closer relationships between staff and students; less instrumental learning; and more active learning. Additionally, the majority of students advocated the core principles of SCL, feeling that there should be more of it in the classroom.

In this sense, the combination of SCL and critical pedagogy provide an ideal framework from which to reconsider the nature of learning and teaching, as well as the role of the university student. It is from this perspective that I wish to argue that the re-framing of students as 'producers' begins. Before explaining what it means for students to be re-framed as 'producers', I will first outline how SCL and critical pedagogy link, and how this provides a springboard for re-imagining the student role.

Critical pedagogy aims to 'encourage independently minded learners who question the status quo and engage explicitly with questions of truth, power and justice' (Farrow, 2017p, 2), as well as being committed to developing an empowering culture for students, especially those that are marginalised and disenfranchised (Darder et al., 2009). By working to try and transform practices and structures in education that hinder democratic ideals, critical pedagogy examines aspects that thwart agency, voice, or participation in the classroom (Ibid), aspects that I identified as being problematic for students in this study. The idea that students become 'producers' will address some of these concerns, and I will argue that it would give students agency, voice, and more involvement in shaping their learning, which also ties in with the ideals of SCL.

Within this research, I concluded that students are empowered as 'customers' through the consequences of marketisation, but that the standardisation of feedback mechanisms and



pressures for universities to satisfy students means that said students actually have very little voice or agency regarding shaping pedagogy. In short, universities are under pressure to make students happy and listen to their feedback, but this feedback does not necessarily mean that students can shape their learning experiences in a meaningful way, as SCL and critical pedagogy would advocate. The contractual relationship between students and teachers in a marketised sector might appear to support SCL on the surface, but this notion is highly contested among scholars (Klemenčič, 2017). For example, formalised mechanisms for capturing engagement levels and the student voice are often imposed from outside of the student and teacher relationship (White, 2015). Far from encouraging the close relationship required for a successful SCL, this external imposition has the potential to undermine trust between students and teachers, as well as distort perceptions of authority (Ibid). This research supports these views and sets the scene for my argument that this is a critical moment for re-framing students as 'producers'. A theoretical framework that links critical pedagogy and SCL can help to re-shape the idea of the university student away from a customer role, which is heavily influenced by external factors, and towards a 'producer' role, whereby knowledge is produced by students rather than just imparted.

I argue that re-framing students as 'producers' is actionable within the framework I have set out, which links SCL and critical pedagogy. Provided this re-framing is not imposed on students and staff with overly rigid policies and external pressures, a more student-centred approach can enable student choices in their education, help them be more active learners (rather than passive), and alter the power relationship between the student and the teacher so that it is not too teacher-centred (O'Neill and McMahon, 2005). I argue that it is crucial to empower stakeholders of HE to emancipate themselves from the constraints of thinking of students as 'reluctant customers'. In this way, students need to be enabled as 'producers' within the learning process. This concept not only helps us to move away from customer rhetoric, but promotes many of the important elements that participants of

this study expressed were important, as part of their idealised view of HE. Neary and Saunders (2016) describe the idea of ‘students as producers’ in the following way:

*Student as Producer is a model for teaching and learning in higher education, promoting research-engaged teaching as the organising principle for curriculum development at the University of Lincoln, England. Research-engaged teaching means student engagement with research and research-like activities as the default mode of their learning experience and beyond, so that undergraduates become recognised as an integral part of the academic project of their institutions (p2).*

The purpose of this is to reconstruct the idea of what a university student is and enable them to work collaboratively with academics to create and shape their work so that it has social importance, is full of academic value, whilst also ‘reinvigorating the university beyond the logic of market economics’ (Neary and Winn, 2009, p193). In doing this, pedagogy moves away from being demand-driven in terms of what is delivered within the curriculum, how students learn, and what the outcomes of university education are for the students. In this way, I argue that students and staff can begin to shape a learning process that is democratic, empowering, and emancipatory.

Neary and Winn (2009) also contend that the development of the idea of ‘student as producer’ encourages collaborative work between students and academics, in order to produce knowledge. In practical terms, this arrangement means that students actively work with academics on research projects to develop knowledge, meaning that the curriculum is set up for students to help solve problems through collaborative research, rather than to merely have knowledge given to them (Ibid). The idea of research-engaged teaching not only places students in a more active role, it helps solve many of the issues outlined in this research regarding the perceived lack of SCL in the classroom. Indeed, it is argued that re-framing students as producers also ‘creates the space for a democratic relationship to emerge between students and their teachers in the classroom and at the level of the institution’ (Ibid, p5), something that was frequently outlined as a problem during this research. In addition, the concept of students working with academics to develop research projects is argued to positively impact on their relationships, as well as

make students feel part of the university (Brew, 2015). This is central to my argument, and I believe students must be re-framed as 'producers' in order to achieve this.

The idea of placing students in the role of 'producer' does more than create a research-led environment, whereby students actively learn to solve problems that are of value to society. It also has the potential to transform the student from being a passive recipient of knowledge into a creative subject within an academic project (Neary, 2010). It is this key element that makes the concept so relevant within the context of this study. It is not just achievable and pragmatic, but helps to re-frame the 'reluctant customer' more towards learning in line with the core elements that make up SCL. For example, students being involved with research alongside academics is said to achieve the following:

- academic authority is challenged;
- different learning spaces are used;
- students co-create their learning;
- teaching is informed by student and academic research;
- and courses are designed based on student and academic input (Brew, 2015).

These elements address many of the key factors that make up SCL, which is something that the majority of students within this research valued. Furthermore, from the perspective of critical pedagogy, the idea of students being 'producers' also helps to rebalance power relations between teacher and student, something that also challenges the customer rhetoric that is exacerbated by marketisation.

In short, students being re-framed as 'producers' achieves more than just getting students involved in research projects; it can be set up to ensure that student involvement penetrates multiple aspects of their learning experience, from course design to learning outcomes. Not only do I argue that this re-framing supports many of the changes that staff and students within this study would like to see happen in an idealised HE system, but I conclude that it improves the quality of student learning, which ultimately improves how

the students, the lecturers, and society benefit from HE. Indeed, I argue that students as 'producers' will help to develop them as free thinkers, with the skills to self-direct their learning, conduct collaborative research, and also add to knowledge. It is in these ways that re-framing students as 'producers' has multiple benefits, including a positive move away from the unhelpful role of being 'reluctant customers', with not real voice, agency, or power to shape their own learning.

The next section considers how this project has also impacted on me as a researcher, how my opinions have changed regarding what I think and feel about HE, my place within it, and how I will put this research to use as I move forwards.

### ***7.1.3 From reluctance to resistance – emancipation and empowerment through critical research***

It is argued that critical research can lead to empowerment and emancipation for both the researched and the researcher (Lin, 2015), which is something that I feel this PhD project has achieved in terms of re-shaping my own thinking about the current state of HE in England, my place within it, and the decisions I will make about my future. Additionally, I argue that empowerment and emancipation is possible for other stakeholders of HE through a re-framing of the role that students have within pedagogy.

When considering my own place within this research and the impact it has had on me, I reflected on my initial thought processes during the conception of this PhD topic. I now recognise that the changing nature of HE in the UK had, in part, influenced my career enough to lead me into an administrative role that I had neither planned nor expected. Having begun my career with every intention of becoming a social researcher, the marketisation of HE had elevated the importance of 'The Student Experience', which created opportunities for someone with my background to work on. Initially considering this to be a distraction from my long-term career plan, I increasingly felt a certain amount of reluctance and resentment towards this change. The irony of this fact is that these

experiences helped to shape the ideas that eventually led to this PhD research. Without working in a role that positioned me to effectively gain insights and perspectives into policy, practice, and stakeholder opinions, I would not have chosen to undertake research that examined the impact of marketisation. I am now able to recognise that becoming a 'reluctant administrator' not only informed my ideas, but also motivated me to change my own situation, and also attempt to highlight important issues relating to marketisation that I had been observing through my work.

From this starting point, I feel that conducting research in this area has helped me understand and identify how influenced both staff and students are by power structures that exist in wider society. Specifically, the increasingly strong influence of government policies that have marketised HE have impacted on my own career, as well as the lives of participants in this study. The customer culture that has been discussed in this thesis has been exacerbated by marketisation and neo-liberal policies, but this research has provided strong evidence that resistance can lead to change. Indeed, resistance to customer rhetoric, something that is so heavily promoted by government policy, was identified from students, academic staff, and senior university managers. Add my own experiences as a 'reluctant administrator' into the mix, and my thoughts shift away from a feeling a sense of futility regarding the impact of marketisation and more towards a feeling of empowerment. The insights and knowledge I have gathered during this research has enthused me to share my findings and ideas with HE stakeholders via articles, conference presentations, and further collaborative work. My resistance to the external, neo-liberal pressures that the HE sector faces are shown to be shared by staff and students alike in this research, and it is important to build on this through dissemination and further work. In doing this, my aim is empower and emancipate HE stakeholders by drawing attention to the potential for re-framing the idea of what it means to be a student. Not only does my research provide strong evidence that students are ambivalent towards being labelled as

customers, but also that academic staff and senior university managers are reluctant to internalise this idea as well.

Overall, this project is underpinned by feelings of reluctance, resistance, and deeper desires to move away from customer rhetoric in English HE. I believe pedagogy and practice should be student-centred. Not in a way that standardises quality improvement processes, or by imposing our will over others, but in a way that means students are free to shape their learning experiences in collaboration with academic staff. This should be achieved in ways that develop human relationships, generates knowledge, and engages students in active learning, rather than serving the needs of the economy and training students for the labour market.

Ironically, it is argued that, while students in the UK have 'never been as free to make choices in the way they conduct their private lives as adults, they have never been as unfree to learn at university in the ways they might prefer' (Macfarlane, 2016, p1). The next phase of my work will be to try and expose such issues through dissemination, collaboration, and further research aimed at exploring how pedagogy and practice can be improved in the face of external pressures that increasingly limit our freedoms to learn as we see fit.

## References

- ADAMS, A. & COX, A. L. 2008. Questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus groups. [http://oro.open.ac.uk/11909/1/9780521870122c02\\_p17-34.pdf](http://oro.open.ac.uk/11909/1/9780521870122c02_p17-34.pdf).
- ADAMS, R. & SMITH, D. 2014. Universities spend more to attract clearing students. *The Guardian*, 8.
- AMSLER, M. & SHORE, C. 2017. Responsibilisation and leadership in the neoliberal university: A New Zealand perspective. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 38, 123-137.
- ARONSON, J. 1995. A pragmatic view of thematic analysis. *The qualitative report*, 2, 1-3.
- ASKEHAVE, I. 2007. The impact of marketization on higher education genres—the international student prospectus as a case in point. *Discourse Studies*, 9, 723-742.
- AYOUBI, R. M. & MASSOUD, H. K. 2007. The strategy of internationalization in universities: A quantitative evaluation of the intent and implementation in UK universities. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 21, 329-349.
- BAETEN, M., DOCHY, F., STRUYVEN, K., PARMENTIER, E. & VANDERBRUGGEN, A. 2016. Student-centred learning environments: an investigation into student teachers' instructional preferences and approaches to learning. *Learning Environments Research*, 19, 43-62.
- BELL, A. R. & BROOKS, C. 2017. What makes students satisfied? A discussion and analysis of the UK's national student survey. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 1-25.
- BIGGS, J. B. 1999. *Teaching for Quality Learning at University: What the Student Does*, Society for Research into Higher Education & Open University Press.
- BISHOP, D. C. 2018. More than just listening: The role of student voice in higher education, an academic perspective. *IMPact: The University of Lincoln Journal of Higher Education Research*, 1.
- BLACKLEDGE, A. & CREESE, A. 2010. *Multilingualism: A critical perspective*, Bloomsbury Publishing.
- BODEN, R. & EPSTEIN, D. 2006. Managing the research imagination? Globalisation and research in higher education. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 4, 223-236.
- BOLIVER, V. 2015. Are there distinctive clusters of higher and lower status universities in the UK? *Oxford Review of Education*, 41, 608-627.
- BOONE, H. N. & BOONE, D. A. 2012. Analyzing likert data. *Journal of extension*, 50, 1-5.
- BOURKE, B. 2014. Positionality: Reflecting on the research process. *The qualitative report*, 19, 1-9.
- BOURNEMOUTH UNIVERSITY. 2014. <https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/vision-and-values> [Accessed 2014].
- BOVILL, C., COOK-SATHER, A., FELTEN, P., MILLARD, L. & MOORE-CHERRY, N. 2016. Addressing potential challenges in co-creating learning and teaching: overcoming resistance, navigating institutional norms and ensuring inclusivity in student-staff partnerships. *Higher Education*, 71, 195-208.
- BOVILL, C., COOK-SATHER, A. & FELTEN, P. 2011. Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design, and curricula: implications for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 16, 133-145.
- BOYNTON, P. M. & GREENHALGH, T. 2004. Hands-on guide to questionnaire research: Selecting, designing, and developing your questionnaire. *BMJ: British Medical Journal*, 328, 1312.
- BRADY, N. 2012. From 'moral loss' to 'moral reconstruction'? A critique of ethical perspectives on challenging the neoliberal hegemony in UK universities in the 21st century. *Oxford Review of Education*, 38, 343-355.
- BRANDES, D. & GINNIS, P. 1996. *A guide to student-centred learning*, Nelson Thornes.

- BRAUN, V. & CLARKE, V. 2006. Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3, 77-101.
- BRENNAN, M., SEYMOUR, P. & GENDALL, P. The effect of a monetary incentive on mail survey response rates: new data. *Journal of the Market Research Society*, 1992. Citeseer.
- BREW, A. 2015. Shifting perspectives on research and teaching relationships: A view from Australia. *Dimensions of Marketisation in Higher Education*. Routledge.
- BROWN, J. A., SERRATO, C. A., HUGH, M., KANTER, M. H., SPRITZER, K. L. & HAYS, R. D. 2016. Effect of a post-paid incentive on response rates to a web-based survey. *Survey Practice*, 9.
- BROWN, R. 2015. The marketisation of higher education: Issues and ironies. *New Vistas*, 1, 4-9.
- BROWN, R. & CARASSO, H. 2013. *Everything for sale? The marketisation of UK higher education*, Routledge.
- BRYMAN, A. 2001. *Social Research Methods*, Oxford University Press, Incorporated.
- BULMER, M. 1982. *The merits and demerits of covert participant observation*, Springer.
- BUNCE, L., BAIRD, A. & JONES, S. E. 2017. The student-as-consumer approach in higher education and its effects on academic performance. *Studies in Higher Education*, 42, 1958-1978.
- BURBULES, N. C. & BERK, R. 1999. Critical thinking and critical pedagogy: Relations, differences, and limits. *Critical theories in education: Changing terrains of knowledge and politics*, 45-65.
- CAMMAERTS, B. 2013. The mediation of insurrectionary symbolic damage: The 2010 UK student protests. *The international journal of Press/Politics*, 18, 525-548.
- CANTERBURY CHRIST CHURCH UNIVERSITY. 2014. <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/courses/about/mission-statement.asp> [Accessed 2014].
- CAREY, P. 2013a. Student as co-producer in a marketised higher education system: a case study of students' experience of participation in curriculum design. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 50, 250-260.
- CAREY, P. 2013b. Student engagement: stakeholder perspectives on course representation in university governance. *Studies in Higher Education*, 38, 1290-1304.
- CASTILLO-MONTOYA, M. 2016. Preparing for interview research: The interview protocol refinement framework. *The Qualitative Report*, 21, 811-831.
- CHIANG, C.-F. & JANG, S. S. 2007. The Effects of Perceived Price and Brand Image on Value and Purchase Intention: Leisure Travelers' Attitudes Toward Online Hotel Booking. *Journal of Hospitality & Leisure Marketing*, 15, 49-69.
- CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON. 2014. <http://www.city.ac.uk/about/city-information/the-city-vision/citys-vision> [Accessed 2014].
- CLEARY, T. 2018. Social Work Education and the Marketisation of UK Universities. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 48, 2253-2271.
- COHEN, L., MANION, L. & MORRISON, K. 2007. *Research Methods in Education*, Taylor & Francis.
- COLLINI, S. 2012. *What are universities for?*, Penguin UK.
- COOK, J., HEPWORTH, S., WALL, T. & WARR, P. 1981. The experience of work: A compendium and review of 249 factors and their use. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- COURT, S. 2012. An analysis of student: staff ratios and academics' use of time, and potential links with student satisfaction. *The University and College Union (UCU)*.
- COWDEN, S. & SINGH, G. 2013. *Acts of Knowing: Critical Pedagogy in, Against and Beyond the University*, Bloomsbury Publishing.
- DARDER, A., BALODANO, M. & TORRES, R. D. 2009. *The Critical Pedagogy Reader: Second Edition*, Taylor & Francis.



- DBIS 2011. Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System. Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS).
- DBIS 2016. Success as a knowledge economy: Teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice. Author London.
- DEAN, A. & GIBBS, P. 2015. Student satisfaction or happiness? A preliminary rethink of what is important in the student experience. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 23, 5-19.
- DEWEY, J. 1916. *Education and democracy*, New York.
- DFE 2017. Employment and earnings outcomes of higher education graduates by subject and institution: experimental statistics using the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data.  
[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/718225/SFR\\_18\\_2017\\_LEO\\_mainText.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718225/SFR_18_2017_LEO_mainText.pdf).
- DICKEN, P. 2011. *Global Shift: Mapping the Changing Contours of the World Economy*, Guilford Press.
- DOUGLAS, J., DOUGLAS, A. & BARNES, B. 2006. Measuring student satisfaction at a UK university. *Quality assurance in education*, 14, 251-267.
- EAGLE, L. & BRENNAN, R. 2007. Are students customers? TQM and marketing perspectives. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 15, 44-60.
- ELEN, J., CLAREBOUT, G., LEONARD, R. & LOWYCK, J. 2007. Student-centred and teacher-centred learning environments: What students think. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 12, 105-117.
- EVANS, M. 2004. *Killing thinking: Death of the university*, Bloomsbury Publishing.
- FARROW, R. 2017. Open education and critical pedagogy. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 42, 130-146.
- FISHER, M. 2009. *Capitalist realism: Is there no alternative?*, John Hunt Publishing.
- FORSTENZER, J. 2016. The Teaching Excellence Framework: What's the Purpose?
- FOSS, C. & ELLEFSEN, B. 2002. The value of combining qualitative and quantitative approaches in nursing research by means of method triangulation. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 40, 242-248.
- FRANKHAM, J. 2017. Employability and higher education: the follies of the 'Productivity Challenge' in the Teaching Excellence Framework. *Journal of Education Policy*, 32, 628-641.
- FREEMAN, R., MILLARD, L., BRAND, S. & CHAPMAN, P. 2013. Student academic partners: student employment for collaborative learning and teaching development. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 1-11.
- FREIRE, P. 1970a. *Cultural action for freedom*, Harvard educational review.
- FREIRE, P. 1970b. Pedagogy of the Oppressed, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum.
- FUREDI, F. 2011. Introduction to the marketisation of higher education and the student as consumer. *The marketisation of higher education and the student as consumer*. Routledge.
- GAIR, S. 2012. Feeling their stories: Contemplating empathy, insider/outsider positionings, and enriching qualitative research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 22, 134-143.
- GIBBS, G. 1992. *Assessing more students*, Oxford Centre for Staff Learning and Development, Oxford Brookes University.
- GIBBS, G. 2010. *Dimensions of quality*, Higher Education Academy York.
- GIROUX, H. A. 1988. *Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning*, Greenwood Publishing Group.
- GOURLAY, L. & STEVENSON, J. 2017. Teaching excellence in higher education: Critical perspectives. Routledge.
- GOW, L. & KEMBER, D. 1993. Conceptions of teaching and their relationship to student learning. *British journal of educational psychology*, 63, 20-23.

- GRAFTON, A. T. 2010. Britain: the disgrace of the universities. *NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS*, 57, 32-32.
- GRANT, R. W. & SUGARMAN, J. 2004. Ethics in human subjects research: do incentives matter? *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy*, 29, 717-738.
- GRINYER, A. 2002. The Anonymity of Research Participants: Assumptions, Ethics and Practicalities, social research update. *Guildford: University of Surrey*.
- GRIX, J. 2010. *Demystifying postgraduate research*, A&C Black.
- GUILLEMIN, M. & GILLAM, L. 2004. Ethics, reflexivity, and "ethically important moments" in research. *Qualitative inquiry*, 10, 261-280.
- HAMMONDS, W. 2017. *What does the Longitudinal Education Outcomes data tell us?* [Online]. Universities UK. Available: <https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/blog/Pages/Longitudinal-Education-Outcomes-data.aspx> [Accessed 13/6/2018 2018].
- HARVEY, L. 1990. *Critical social research*, Unwin Hyman London.
- HAYS, P. A. 2004. Case study research. *Foundations for research: Methods of inquiry in education and the social sciences*, 217-234.
- HAZELKORN, E. 2015. *Rankings and the reshaping of higher education: The battle for world-class excellence*, Springer.
- HEMSLEY-BROWN, J. & OPLATKA, I. 2015. University choice: what do we know, what don't we know and what do we still need to find out? *International Journal of Educational Management*, 29, 254-274.
- HILL, Y., LOMAS, L. & MACGREGOR, J. 2003. Students' perceptions of quality in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education*, 11, 15-20.
- HINKIN, T. R. 1998. A brief tutorial on the development of measures for use in survey questionnaires. *Organizational research methods*, 1, 104-121.
- HOLYROD, J. & SAUL, J. 2016. Will the Teaching Excellence Framework Be Sexist. *The Guardian*, 4th April: <http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/2016/apr/04/will-the-teaching-excellence-framework-be-sexist>.
- HORTON, M. & FREIRE, P. 1990. *We make the road by walking: Conversations on education and social change*, Temple University Press.
- HUBBLE, S., FOSTER, D. & BOLTON, P. 2016. Higher Education and Research Bill 2016 [Bill No 004 of 2016-17].
- JABBAR, A., ANALOUI, B., KONG, K. & MIRZA, M. 2018. Consumerisation in UK higher education business schools: higher fees, greater stress and debatable outcomes. *Higher Education*, 76, 85-100.
- JAMES, O. 2008. *The selfish capitalist: origins of affluenza*, Random House.
- JOHN, P. & FANGHANEL, J. 2016. *Dimensions of marketisation in higher education*, Routledge.
- JOHNSON, R. B. & ONWUEGBUZIE, A. J. 2004. Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational researcher*, 33, 14-26.
- JONES-DEVITT, S. & SAMIEI, C. 2010. From Accrington Stanley to academia? The use of league tables and student surveys to determine 'quality' in higher education. *The marketisation of higher education and the Student as consumer*. Routledge.
- JONES-DEVITT, S. & SAMIEI, C. 2011. From Accrington Stanley to academia? The use of league tables and student surveys to determine 'quality' in higher education. *The marketisation of higher education and the Student as consumer*. Routledge.
- JONES, L. 2007. *The student-centered classroom*, Cambridge University Press.
- KAISER, K. 2009. Protecting Respondent Confidentiality in Qualitative Research. *Qual Health Res*, 19, 1632-41.
- KANDIKO, C. & MAWER, M. 2013. Student expectations and perceptions of higher education. *London: King's Learning Institute*.
- KELLE, U. 2001. Sociological Explanations between Micro and Macro and the Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods. *2001*, 2.

- KELLE, U. 2005. Sociological explanations between micro and macro and the integration of qualitative and quantitative methods. *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung*, 95-117.
- KEMBER, D. 1997. A reconceptualisation of the research into university academics' conceptions of teaching. *Learning and instruction*, 7, 255-275.
- KIM, H. W. 2012. Research with children: Challenges and dilemmas as an insider researcher. *Early Child Development and Care*, 182, 263-276.
- KITZINGER, J. 1995. Qualitative research: introducing focus groups. *Bmj*, 311, 299-302.
- KLEMENČIČ, M. 2017. From student engagement to student agency: Conceptual considerations of European policies on student-centered learning in higher education. *Higher education policy*, 30, 69-85.
- KUMAR, R. 1999. Research methodology. Sage Publications.
- LAWSON, S., SANDERS, K. & SMITH, L. 2015. Commodification of the information profession: A critique of higher education under neoliberalism. *Journal of Librarianship and Scholarly Communication*, 3.
- LEA, S. J., STEPHENSON, D. & TROY, J. 2003. Higher education students' attitudes to student-centred learning: beyond 'educational bulimia'? *Studies in Higher Education*, 28, 321-334.
- LIN, A. M. 2015. Researcher positionality. *Research methods in language policy and planning: A practical guide*, 21-32.
- LINCOLN-UNIVERSITY. 2014. *Student as Producer*. Retrieved February 2014 - <http://studentasproducer.lincoln.ac.uk/> [Online]. [Accessed].
- LITTLE, B. & WILLIAMS, R. 2010. Students' roles in maintaining quality and in enhancing learning: is there a tension? *Quality in Higher Education*, 16, 115-127.
- LIVERPOOL HOPE UNIVERSITY. 2014. <http://www.hope.ac.uk/aboutus/theliverpoolhopestory/missionandvalues/>. [Accessed 2014].
- LIVERPOOL JOHN MOORES UNIVERSITY. 2014. <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/studyessentials/69211.htm> [Accessed 2014].
- LOMAS, L. 2007. Are Students Customers? Perceptions of Academic Staff. *Quality in Higher Education*, 13, 31-44.
- LYNCH, K. 2006. Neo-liberalism and marketisation: The implications for higher education. *European educational research journal*, 5, 1-17.
- MACFARLAND, T. W. & YATES, J. M. 2016. Mann-Whitney U Test. *Introduction to Nonparametric Statistics for the Biological Sciences Using R*. Springer.
- MACFARLANE, B. 2016. *Freedom to Learn: The threat to student academic freedom and why it needs to be reclaimed*, Taylor & Francis.
- MACMILLAN, L., TYLER, C. & VIGNOLES, A. 2015. Who gets the top jobs? The role of family background and networks in recent graduates' access to high-status professions. *Journal of Social Policy*, 44, 487-515.
- MALTA, S. Qualitative interviewing of older adults: Offline versus online methods. Proceedings of the 8th National Emerging Researchers in Ageing Conference "A new era for ageing research: What's in your toolkit?" (ERA 2009), 2009.
- MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY. 2014. <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/marketing/mission-and-values/> [Accessed 2014].
- MANOHAR, N., LIAMPUTTONG, P., BHOLE, S. & ARORA, A. 2017. Researcher Positionality in Cross-Cultural and Sensitive Research. In: LIAMPUTTONG, P. (ed.) *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*. Singapore: Springer Singapore.
- MARGINSON, S. 1997. *Markets in education*, Allen & Unwin Sydney.
- MARGINSON, S. 2011. Higher education and public good. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 65, 411-433.
- MARINGE, F., MOLESWORTH, M., SCULLION, R. & NIXON, E. 2010. The student as consumer: Affordances and constraints in a transforming higher education

- environment. *The marketisation of higher education and the student as consumer*, 142-154.
- MARTINEZ, E. & GARCIA, A. 1997. What is neoliberalism? A brief definition for activists. *National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights*, 1.
- MAY, T. 2001. *Social research: Issues, methods and practice*. Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press.
- MCCABE, A. & O'CONNOR, U. 2014. Student-centred learning: the role and responsibility of the lecturer. *Teaching in Higher Education*, 19, 350-359.
- MCCULLOCH, A. 2009. The student as co-producer: Learning from public administration about the student–university relationship. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34, 171-183.
- MCGUIRK, P. M. & O'NEILL, P. 2016. Using questionnaires in qualitative human geography.
- MCLAREN, P. & KINCHELOE, J. L. 2007. *Critical Pedagogy: Where are We Now?*, Peter Lang.
- MOLESWORTH, M., NIXON, E. & SCULLION, R. 2009. Having, being and higher education: The marketisation of the university and the transformation of the student into consumer. *Teaching in higher Education*, 14, 277-287.
- MOLESWORTH, M., SCULLION, R. & NIXON, E. 2011. *The marketisation of higher education*, Routledge.
- MORRISH, L. & SAUNTON, H. 2010. Vision, values and international excellence: The 'products' that university mission statements sell to students. *The marketisation of higher education and the student as consumer*. Routledge.
- MORSE, J. M., BARRETT, M., MAYAN, M., OLSON, K. & SPIERS, J. 2002. Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 1, 13-22.
- MYERS, M. 2017. *Student Revolt: Voices of the Austerity Generation*, Pluto Press.
- NAIDOO, R. 2005. Universities in the marketplace: The distortion of teaching and research. *Reshaping the university: New relationships between research, scholarship and teaching*, 27-36.
- NAIDOO, R. & JAMIESON, I. 2005. Empowering participants or corroding learning? Towards a research agenda on the impact of student consumerism in higher education. *Journal of Education Policy*, 20, 267-281.
- NAIDOO, R. & WILLIAMS, J. 2015. The neoliberal regime in English higher education: Charters, consumers and the erosion of the public good. *Critical Studies in Education*, 56, 208-223.
- NEARY, M. 2010. Student as producer: a pedagogy for the avant-garde? *Learning Exchange*, 1.
- NEARY, M. 2016a. Raised Voices: from student engagement to political engagement. *Student Engagement in Higher Education Journal*, 1.
- NEARY, M. 2016b. Teaching Excellence Framework: a critical response and an alternative future. *Journal of Contemporary European Research*, 12.
- NEARY, M. & SAUNDERS, G. 2016. Student as producer and the politics of abolition: making a new form of dissident institution? *Critical Education*, 7.
- NEARY, M. & WINN, J. 2009. The student as producer: reinventing the student experience in higher education. *Continuum, London*, pp. 192-210. ISBN 1847064728.
- NEARY, M. & WINN, J. 2017. There is an alternative: A report on an action research project to develop a framework for co-operative higher education. Berghahn Journals.
- NEWMAN, S. & JAHDI, K. 2009. Marketisation of education: marketing, rhetoric and reality. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 33, 1-11.
- NEWMAN UNIVERSITY BIRMINGHAM. 2014. <http://www.newman.ac.uk/jobs/914/mission-statement> [Accessed 2014].



- NIXON, E., SCULLION, R. & HEARN, R. 2018a. Her majesty the student: marketised higher education and the narcissistic (dis) satisfactions of the student-consumer. *Studies in Higher Education*, 43, 927-943.
- NIXON, E., SCULLION, R. & HEARN, R. 2018b. Her majesty the student: marketised higher education and the narcissistic (dis)satisfactions of the student-consumer. *Studies in Higher Education*, 43, 927-943.
- NORTHUMBRIA UNIVERSITY. 2014. <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/our-vision/> [Accessed 2014].
- NUS 2011. NUS Student Experience Report, 2010/11 - National Union of Students.
- O'NEILL, G. & MCMAHON, T. 2005. Student-centred learning: What does it mean for students and lecturers.
- OFS 2018. A summary of the law and general guidance relating to the impact of the industrial action on students. <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/1311/summary-guidance-on-cra.pdf>.
- OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY. 2014. <http://business.brookes.ac.uk/about/mission/> [Accessed 2014].
- PARRY, G., CALLENDER, C., TEMPLE, P. & SCOTT, P. 2012. Understanding higher education in further education colleges.
- PETERS, M. A. 2017. From state responsibility for education and welfare to self-responsibilisation in the market. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 38, 138-145.
- PHIPPS, A. & YOUNG, I. 2015. Neoliberalisation and 'lad cultures' in higher education. *Sociology*, 49, 305-322.
- PORTER, S. R., WHITCOMB, M. E. & WEITZER, W. H. 2004. Multiple surveys of students and survey fatigue. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 2004, 63-73.
- PROSSER, M. & TRIGWELL, K. 1999. *Understanding learning and teaching: The experience in higher education*, McGraw-Hill Education (UK).
- QUEEN MARY UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. 2014. <http://www.qmul.ac.uk/about/mission/> [Accessed 2014].
- RAAPER, R. 2018. Students' unions and consumerist policy discourses in English higher education. *Critical Studies in Education*, 1-17.
- RADICE, H. 2013. How We Got Here: UK Higher Education under Neoliberalism. *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies*, 12.
- RAFFE, D. & CROXFORD, L. 2015. How stable is the stratification of higher education in England and Scotland? *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 36, 313-335.
- REISZ, M. 2010. Soul searching, not soul stirring. *Times Higher Education*, May 20, 2010.
- RESSLER, J. & ABRATT, R. 2009. Assessing the impact of university reputation on stakeholder intentions. *Journal of General Management*, 35, 35-45.
- SCULLION, R. & MOLESWORTH, M. 2016. *Normalisation of and resistance to consumer behaviour in higher education*. Routledge.
- SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY. 2014. <http://www.shu.ac.uk/university/overview/corporate/vision.html> [Accessed 2014].
- SIEBER, S. D. 1973. The integration of fieldwork and survey methods. *American journal of sociology*, 78, 1335-1359.
- STREETING, W. & WISE, G. 2009a. Rethinking the values of higher education—consumption, partnership, community?
- STREETING, W. & WISE, G. 2009b. Rethinking the Values of Higher Education—Consumption, Partnership, Community?(Gloucester, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education).
- SULLIVAN, G. M. & ARTINO JR, A. R. 2013. Analyzing and interpreting data from Likert-type scales. *Journal of graduate medical education*, 5, 541-542.
- THOMAS, D. R. 2006. A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 27, 237-246.

- TOMLINSON, M. 2017. Student perceptions of themselves as 'consumers' of higher education. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 38, 450-467.
- TOOLEY, J. 2003. Why Harry Brighouse is nearly right about the privatisation of education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 37, 427-447.
- UCU 2010. Workload Protection: A UCU Local Negotiating Guide. University and College Union (UCU).
- UNIVERSITIES UK 2012. Futures for higher education: Analysing trends. *online*, <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Documents/2012/FuturesForHigherEducation.pdf>.
- UNIVERSITIES UK 2013. Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2013.
- UNIVERSITY OF CHICHESTER. 2014. <http://www.chi.ac.uk/about-us/mission-and-vision/core-strategies> [Accessed 2014].
- UNIVERSITY OF CUMBRIA. 2014. <http://www.cumbria.ac.uk/AboutUs/Services/HR/OurMissionAndVision.aspx> [Accessed 2014].
- UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA. 2014. [https://www.uea.ac.uk/polopoly\\_fs/1.74259!corporateplan.pdf](https://www.uea.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.74259!corporateplan.pdf) [Accessed 2014].
- UNIVERSITY OF EXETER. 2014. <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/about/vision/> [Accessed 2014].
- UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE. 2014. <http://www.glos.ac.uk/unipubs/Documents/Annual%20Reports/stratPlan2012-2017.pdf> [Accessed 2014].
- UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE. 2014. <http://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-governance/vision> [Accessed 2014].
- UNIVERSITY OF HUDDERSFIELD. 2014. <https://www.hud.ac.uk/hr/jobs/abouttheuniversity/> [Accessed 2014].
- UNIVERSITY OF LANCASTER. 2014. <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/vc/vision.htm> [Accessed 2014].
- UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD. 2014. <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ourplan/what-we-stand-for> [Accessed 2014].
- UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX. 2014. <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=our-strategy-making-the-future-2013-18.pdf&site=271> [Accessed 2014].
- UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON. 2014. <http://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/strategy-governance/> [Accessed 2014].
- UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK. 2014. [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/about/vision2015/research\\_and\\_scholarship/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/about/vision2015/research_and_scholarship/) [Accessed 2014].
- UNIVERSITY OF WEST LONDON. 2014. <http://www.uwl.ac.uk/about-us/how-university-works/strategic-plan> [Accessed 2014].
- VENUGOPAL, R. 2015. Neoliberalism as concept. *Economy and Society*, 44, 165-187.
- WAGNER, L. 1995. A thirty-year perspective: from the sixties to the nineties. *The changing university*, 15-24.
- WEINER, E. J. 2007. Critical pedagogy and the crisis of imagination. *Critical pedagogy: Where are we now*, 57-78.
- WHITE, M. 2015. Some considerations on higher education as a 'post-experience good'. *Dimensions of marketisation in higher education*, 93-101.
- WILLIAMS, G. 1995. The "marketization" of higher education: Reforms and potential reforms in higher education finance. *Emerging patterns of social demand and university reform: Through a glass darkly*, 170-193.
- WONG, B. & CHIU, Y.-L. T. 2017. Let me entertain you: the ambivalent role of university lecturers as educators and performers. *Educational Review*, 1-16.
- WOODALL, T., HILLER, A. & RESNICK, S. 2014. Making sense of higher education: Students as consumers and the value of the university experience. *Studies in Higher Education*, 39, 48-67.

- WYLLYS, R. E. 1978. Teaching descriptive and inferential statistics in library schools. *Journal of Education for Librarianship*, 3-20.
- YATES, S. 2003. *Doing social science research*, Sage.
- YUEN, K. M. & HAU, K. T. 2006. Constructivist teaching and teacher-centred teaching: a comparison of students' learning in a university course. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 43, 279-290.

## 8 Appendices

### **8.1.1 Appendix A – A list of all inductive codes generated from the analysis of mission statements**

1. Academic excellence
2. Academic freedom
3. Accessible (despite background)
4. Accessible on merit
5. Accessible university (disability)
6. Accountable
7. Accredited institution
8. Acknowledgement of student fees
9. Active learning
10. Adaptable university
11. Adheres to external accreditation specifications
12. Advance understanding
13. Adventurous
14. Agile university
15. Ambitious university
16. Application of ideas
17. Application of research
18. Attain wisdom
19. Attract/bid for funding
20. Autonomous staff
21. Award-winning university
22. Benefit business
23. Benefit culture
24. Benefit employers
25. Benefit health/well-being
26. Benefit industry
27. Benefit politics
28. Benefit society
29. Benefit the economy
30. Benefit the environment
31. Benefit the individual
32. Benefit the public sector
33. Business growth
34. Business-focussed university
35. Career success – Students
36. Career-focussed university
37. Careers advice
38. Caring university
39. Centre of Excellence
40. Challenge norms/conventions
41. Challenge prejudice
42. Challenging market
43. Co-creation/production – Knowledge
44. Co-creation/production – Pedagogic innovation
45. Co-creation/production – Research
46. Collaborative university – Alumni



47. Collaborative university – Businesses/industry
48. Collaborative university – Charities
49. Collaborative university – Collegiate
50. Collaborative university – Departments/schools (internal)
51. Collaborative university – Field/discipline
52. Collaborative university – General
53. Collaborative university – Government/policy-makers
54. Collaborative university – International/global
55. Collaborative university – Learning
56. Collaborative university – National
57. Collaborative university – Public sector
58. Collaborative university – Research
59. Collaborative university – Scholars
60. Collaborative university – Society/community
61. Collaborative university – Students and staff
62. Collaborative university – Students' Union
63. Collaborative university – Universities/HEIs
64. Committed university
65. Community environment
66. Competitive market
67. Conduct research
68. Confident approach
69. Continuing Professional Development (CPD) of staff
70. Continuous improvement
71. Control university costs
72. Cosmopolitan
73. Cost-effective university
74. Courageous university
75. Creativity
76. Critical thinking
77. Customer-focussed
78. Democratic
79. Develop students' skills – Academic
80. Develop students' skills – Citizenship
81. Develop students' skills – General graduate skills
82. Develop students' skills – Global citizens
83. Develop students' skills – Life
84. Develop/unlock potential
85. Distance learning
86. Distinctive university
87. Diversity
88. Dynamic university
89. Economic growth
90. Effective university
91. Efficient university
92. Elite university
93. Employability
94. Employable graduates
95. Empowering university
96. Engagement with alumni
97. Engaging learning and teaching
98. Enquiry-based learning
99. Enterprising/Entrepreneurial university
100. Enthusiastic approach
101. Equality – Age

102. Equality – Athena Swan
103. Equality – Background
104. Equality – Disability
105. Equality – Ethnicity
106. Equality – Gender
107. Equality – General
108. Equality – Marital status
109. Equality – Nationality
110. Equality – Opportunities
111. Equality – Religion
112. Equality – Sexuality
113. Ethical approach
114. Evidence-based learning
115. Exceeds expectations
116. Excellent staff
117. Experiential learning
118. Expert staff
119. External engagement – Unspecified
120. External partnerships – Alumni
121. External partnerships – Business/industry
122. External partnerships – Capital investment
123. External partnerships – Community
124. External partnerships – Development agencies
125. External partnerships – Donors
126. External partnerships – Employers/professions
127. External partnerships – Government
128. External partnerships – International/global
129. External partnerships – Local/regional
130. External partnerships – National
131. External partnerships – Organisations
132. External partnerships – Placements
133. External partnerships – Political figures/bodies
134. External partnerships – Public sector
135. External partnerships – Religion/faith groups
136. External partnerships – Research
137. External partnerships – Schools/colleges/academies
138. External partnerships – Society/community
139. External partnerships – Sport
140. External partnerships – Teaching
141. External partnerships – Undefined
142. External partnerships – Universities/Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)
143. Extra-curricular activities – Arts
144. Extra-curricular activities – Clubs and societies
145. Extra-curricular activities – Culture
146. Extra-curricular activities – Drama
147. Extra-curricular activities – Music
148. Extra-curricular activities – Social
149. Extra-curricular activities – Sports
150. Extra-curricular activities – Undefined
151. Extra-curricular activities – Volunteering
152. Fairness
153. Fairtrade university
154. Fellowship opportunities
155. Fellowships – Visiting fellows
156. Flexible learning

157. Flexible student fees
158. Forward thinking approach
159. Freedom of speech/expression
160. Freedom of thought
161. Friendly
162. Fun learning
163. Fun/enjoyable
164. Fusion between education, research and practice
165. General excellence
166. Generous university
167. Good communication
168. Good employer
169. Good library resources
170. Good location
171. Good management/infrastructure
172. Good practice – General
173. Good ranking – Destination of Leavers Survey (DLHE)
174. Good ranking – Global
175. Good ranking – National Student Survey (NSS)
176. Good ranking – Programme-level
177. Good ranking – UK
178. Good scholarship
179. Good student experience
180. Good student feedback/satisfaction
181. Good study/learning space
182. Good university branding
183. Good university facilities/resources
184. Good university marketing approach
185. Good value
186. Good value accommodation
187. Grow income – Commercial activities
188. Grow income – Research
189. Health and safety standards
190. High number of alumni
191. High number of international partnerships
192. High number of international students
193. High number of staff
194. Historic
195. Holistic approach
196. Honesty
197. Hopeful university
198. Human rights
199. Imaginative university
200. Impact – Business
201. Impact – Community/society
202. Impact – Culture
203. Impact – Drive change
204. Impact – Economy
205. Impact – Industry
206. Impact – Intellectual
207. Impact – International/global
208. Impact – Learners
209. Impact – Local/regional
210. Impact – National
211. Impact – Organisations

212. Impact – Public
213. Impact – Religion
214. Impact – Research
215. Inclusive university
216. Increase student intake
217. Independent learning
218. Independent thinking
219. Independent/autonomous university
220. Industry/employer-informed curriculum
221. Influential university
222. Innovative university
223. Inquisitive
224. Inspirational
225. Integrated university – Age
226. Integrated university – Disability
227. Integrated university – Ethnicity
228. Integrated university – Gender
229. Integrated university – General
230. Integrated university – Politics
231. Integrated university – Religion
232. Integrated university – Sexuality
233. Integrity
234. Intellectual curiosity/exploration
235. Intellectually challenging
236. Intellectually stimulating
237. Interdisciplinary – Education
238. Interdisciplinary – General
239. Interdisciplinary – Research
240. Internationalisation – Curriculum/learning
241. Internationalisation – General focus
242. Internationalisation – Research
243. Internationalisation – Staff
244. Internationalisation – Students
245. Internationalisation – Undefined
246. Internship opportunities
247. Investment – Accommodation
248. Investment – Appraisal
249. Investment – Business development
250. Investment – Campus/buildings
251. Investment – Continuing professional development (CPD) of staff
252. Investment – Cooperation between staff and students
253. Investment – Education
254. Investment – Equipment/resources
255. Investment – Fellowship opportunities
256. Investment – Knowledge transfer
257. Investment – Leadership
258. Investment – Learning resources
259. Investment – Library resources
260. Investment – People
261. Investment – Research
262. Investment – Resources/facilities
263. Investment – Security
264. Investment – Space
265. Investment – Staff
266. Investment – Student scholarships

267. Investment – Students
268. Investment – Study/learning spaces
269. Investment – Teaching
270. Knowledge advancement/creation
271. Knowledge application
272. Knowledge commercialisation
273. Knowledge transfer – Businesses
274. Knowledge transfer – Conferences
275. Knowledge transfer – Informal/colloquial
276. Knowledge transfer – Lectures
277. Knowledge transfer – Publications
278. Knowledge transfer – Seminars/webinars
279. Knowledge transfer – Society
280. Knowledge transfer – Undefined
281. Knowledge transfer – Workshops
282. Language support
283. Large student body (numbers)
284. Leadership
285. Learning community
286. Life-long learning
287. Marketised system – “Market”
288. Market-orientated courses
289. Medium-sized university
290. Metropolitan university
291. Modern university
292. Monitor general performance/success
293. Monitor general quality
294. Monitor performance – Attrition rates
295. Monitor performance – Course-level
296. Monitor performance – Employment figures
297. Monitor performance – Employment/Destination of Leavers Survey (DLHE)
298. Monitor performance – Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
299. Monitor performance – National Student Survey (NSS)
300. Monitor performance – Surveys
301. Monitor staff to student ratio
302. Motivational university
303. Multi-disciplinary
304. Nice campus
305. Online learning
306. Open enquiry
307. Openness
308. Opportunities to study abroad
309. Original thinking/ideas
310. Parking at the university
311. Passionate university
312. Pedagogic development – External examiners' reports
313. Pedagogic development – External reviews
314. Pedagogic development – Quality assurance
315. People-focussed
316. Performance review – University level
317. Personal development
318. Placements/work experience opportunities
319. Practical learning
320. Practice-based courses
321. Problem-based learning

322. Problem-solving
323. Professional approach/practice
324. Professional development - Students
325. Professional focus
326. Progressive university
327. Promotion of debate
328. Promotion of dialogue
329. Promotion of discipline/field
330. Promotion of religious ideals
331. Promotion of research
332. Promotion/advancement of field/discipline
333. Public engagement
334. Public policy
335. Purposeful/useful university
336. Quality Assurance
337. Quality curriculum/courses
338. Quality degree
339. Quality education
340. Quality feedback (assessments)
341. Quality improvement – General
342. Quality improvement – Learning environment
343. Quality improvement – Support services
344. Quality learning experience
345. Quality learning resources
346. Quality post-doctoral programmes
347. Quality student services departments
348. Quality teaching
349. Raise aspirations
350. Recruit good students
351. Reflective approach
352. Reflective learning
353. Relevant course/degree
354. Relevant curriculum
355. Relevant research
356. Relevant teaching
357. Religious worship
358. Religious-influenced university
359. Reputation – Academic
360. Reputation – Alumni
361. Reputation – Best modern university
362. Reputation – Business
363. Reputation – Business partnership
364. Reputation – Campus-based university
365. Reputation – Civic
366. Reputation – Creativity
367. Reputation – Donors
368. Reputation – Education
369. Reputation – Employability
370. Reputation – Employers
371. Reputation – Field/discipline
372. Reputation – First choice university
373. Reputation – Higher education sector
374. Reputation – Inclusive
375. Reputation – International
376. Reputation – Learning and teaching

- 377. Reputation – Local/regional level
- 378. Reputation – Modern
- 379. Reputation – National level
- 380. Reputation – National Student Survey (NSS) results
- 381. Reputation – National Teaching Fellows
- 382. Reputation – Pioneering
- 383. Reputation – Professional practice
- 384. Reputation – Quality (unspecified)
- 385. Reputation – Regional growth
- 386. Reputation – Research
- 387. Reputation – Scholarship
- 388. Reputation – Society
- 389. Reputation – Staff
- 390. Reputation – Staff and student achievements
- 391. Reputation – Stakeholders
- 392. Reputation – Student experience
- 393. Reputation – Student satisfaction
- 394. Reputation – Students
- 395. Reputation – Sustainability
- 396. Reputation – Teaching
- 397. Reputation – Vibrant
- 398. Reputation – Welcoming
- 399. Research training
- 400. Research-led – Learning and teaching
- 401. Research-led – Undefined
- 402. Respect people
- 403. Responsible university
- 404. Responsive – Appeals processes
- 405. Responsive – Business
- 406. Responsive – Challenges
- 407. Responsive – Changing environment
- 408. Responsive – Committees
- 409. Responsive – Consultations
- 410. Responsive – Economy
- 411. Responsive – Global change
- 412. Responsive – Global issues
- 413. Responsive – Government
- 414. Responsive – Higher Education sector
- 415. Responsive – Individual needs
- 416. Responsive – Industry/employers
- 417. Responsive – Market change/demands
- 418. Responsive – New ideas
- 419. Responsive – Opportunities
- 420. Responsive – Practical issues
- 421. Responsive – Professions/professional community
- 422. Responsive – Public services
- 423. Responsive – Quality assurance
- 424. Responsive – Social issues
- 425. Responsive – Society/community
- 426. Responsive – Stakeholders (other)
- 427. Responsive – Student feedback/voice
- 428. Responsive – Students' needs
- 429. Responsive – Undefined
- 430. Reward achievement/success – Staff
- 431. Reward achievement/success – Students

432. Reward excellence
433. Safe environment
434. Sharing university
435. Social justice
436. Social mobility
437. Social spaces
438. Specialist provider
439. Spirited university
440. Spiritual university
441. Sports/recreation facilities
442. Stakeholder satisfaction
443. Student exchange
444. Student satisfaction
445. Student-centred – Decision-making
446. Student-centred – General
447. Student-centred – Ideas
448. Student-centred – Learning
449. Student-centred – University direction/values/strategy
450. Successful students/alumni
451. Successful university
452. Supportive – Chaplaincy
453. Supportive – Disability
454. Supportive – Financial advice
455. Supportive – General
456. Supportive – Health & wellbeing
457. Supportive – Personal
458. Supportive – Research activities
459. Supportive – Staff
460. Supportive – Stakeholders
461. Supportive – Student mentoring
462. Supportive – Students
463. Supportive – Students' Union
464. Sustainability – Academic/curriculum
465. Sustainability – Economic
466. Sustainability – Environmental
467. Sustainability – Food
468. Sustainability – Social
469. Sustainability – Student recruitment
470. Sustainability – Thinking
471. Sustainability – Undefined/general
472. Takes risks
473. Talented students
474. Teacher-led university
475. Technology-enhanced learning
476. Thriving university
477. Tolerance
478. Traditional university
479. Transformational experience
480. Transparency
481. Treat people with dignity
482. Trusting university
483. University as a business
484. Vibrant university
485. Widening participation
486. Work-based learning opportunities



487. Young university

### **8.1.2 Appendix B – A list of sample universities and mission statement URLs**

Below is a complete list of the website links to the mission statements used in this study, as well as the name of the institution they belong to. Where appropriate, further notes have been provided on which section of the website was used if a mission statement was not available. All websites were accessed between October 2014 and February 2015.

- Anglia Ruskin University - [http://www.anglia.ac.uk/ruskin/en/home/microsites/global\\_sustainability\\_institute/mission\\_and\\_values.html](http://www.anglia.ac.uk/ruskin/en/home/microsites/global_sustainability_institute/mission_and_values.html)
- Arts University Bournemouth - <http://aub.ac.uk/why-aub/>
- University of the Arts London - <http://www.arts.ac.uk/about-ual/strategy-governance/>
- Aston University - <http://www.aston.ac.uk/about/strategy/>
- University of Bath - <http://www.bath.ac.uk/about/organisation/strategy/index.html>
- Bath Spa University - <http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/about-us/quality-and-standards/university-title/1-introduction>
- University of Bedfordshire - <http://www.beds.ac.uk/about-us/our-university/strategic-plan,-vision,-mission-and-values>
- University of Birmingham - <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/staff/excellence/professional/index.aspx>
- Birmingham City University - <http://www.bcu.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/missions-statement>
- University College Birmingham - <http://www.ucb.ac.uk/about-us/mission-statement.aspx>
- Bishop Grosseteste University - <http://www.bishopg.ac.uk/about/Pages/visionmission.aspx>
- University of Bolton - <https://www.bolton.ac.uk/AboutUs/Resources/StrategicPlan.pdf> (just the section under 'Our mission').
- Bournemouth University - <https://www1.bournemouth.ac.uk/about/vision-and-values>
- BPP University - <http://www.bpp.com/bpp-university/lp/university-college/10682>
- University of Bradford - <http://www.bradford.ac.uk/management/about-the-school/our-reputation-and-history/mission-vision-and-values/>
- University of Brighton – No University-wide mission statement could be found
- University of Bristol - <http://www.bristol.ac.uk/university/governance/policies/vision/mission.html>
- Brunel University London - <http://www.brunel.ac.uk/about/strategic-plan/introduction>
- Buckinghamshire New University - [http://bucks.ac.uk/content/documents/Communications/Strategic\\_Plan/strategic\\_plan\\_summary.pdf](http://bucks.ac.uk/content/documents/Communications/Strategic_Plan/strategic_plan_summary.pdf)
- University of Cambridge - <http://www.cam.ac.uk/about-the-university/how-the-university-and-colleges-work/the-universitys-mission-and-core-values>
- Canterbury Christ Church University - <http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/courses/about/mission-statement.asp>
- University of Central Lancashire - [http://www.uclan.ac.uk/corporate\\_information/mission\\_values.php](http://www.uclan.ac.uk/corporate_information/mission_values.php)
- University of Chester - <http://www.chester.ac.uk/about/the-university/our-mission-values>

- University of Chichester - <http://www.chi.ac.uk/about-us/mission-and-vision/core-strategies>
- City University London - <http://www.city.ac.uk/about/city-information/the-city-vision/citys-vision> (this link is just for the vision part. It summarises the other parts quite well).
- Coventry University - <http://www.coventry.ac.uk/life-on-campus/the-university/about-coventry-university/corporate-plan-2015/our-mission-and-core-values/>
- Cranfield University - <http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/about/cranfield/strategic-vision/>
- University for Creative Arts - <http://www.ucreative.ac.uk/about/future>
- University of Cumbria - <http://www.cumbria.ac.uk/AboutUs/Services/HR/OurMissionAndVision.aspx>
- De Montfort University - <http://www.dmu.ac.uk/about-dmu/mission-and-vision/mission-and-vision.aspx>
- University of Derby - <http://www.derby.ac.uk/hr/vision-and-values>
- Durham University - <https://www.dur.ac.uk/resources/about/strategy/Finalfullstrategydocument.pdf> (summary section - B)
- University of East Anglia - [https://www.uea.ac.uk/polopoly\\_fs/1.74259!corporateplan.pdf](https://www.uea.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.74259!corporateplan.pdf) (page 4 – mission and vision)
- University of East London - <http://www.uel.ac.uk/about/vision-and-values/>
- Edge Hill University - <https://www.edgehill.ac.uk/governance/vision-and-values/>
- University of Essex – <http://www.essex.ac.uk/about/strategy/documents/strategic-plan.pdf>
- University of Exeter - <http://www.exeter.ac.uk/about/vision/>
- University of Gloucestershire - <http://www.glos.ac.uk/unipubs/Documents/Annual%20Reports/stratPlan2012-2017.pdf> (just the ‘at a glance’ section)
- University of Greenwich - <http://www2.gre.ac.uk/study/ask/ug/mission-statement>
- Harper Adams University - <http://www.harper-adams.ac.uk/about/mission-statement.cfm>
- University of Hertfordshire - <http://www.herts.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-governance/vision>
- University of Huddersfield - <https://www.hud.ac.uk/hr/jobs/abouttheuniversity/>
- University of Hull - <http://www2.hull.ac.uk/student/careersandemployability/aboutus/missionobjectives.aspx>
- Imperial College London - <http://www.imperial.ac.uk/about/leadership-and-strategy/mission-and-strategy/strategy2014/mission/> (2010-2014)
- Keele University - <http://www.keele.ac.uk/aboutus/missionandvalues/>
- University of Kent - <http://www.kent.ac.uk/about/mission.html>
- Kingston University - <http://www.kingston.ac.uk/aboutkingstonuniversity/howtheuniversityworks/universityplan/>
- Lancaster University - <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/vc/vision.htm>
- University of Leeds - [http://hr.leeds.ac.uk/info/60/strategy\\_values\\_and\\_standards/229/the\\_university\\_strategy\\_values\\_and\\_standards](http://hr.leeds.ac.uk/info/60/strategy_values_and_standards/229/the_university_strategy_values_and_standards)
- Leeds Beckett University - <http://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/strategicplan/values.html>
- University of Leicester - <http://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/racs/about-racs/our-mission-vision>

- University of Lincoln - <http://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/abouttheuniversity/governance/strategyandvision/>
- University of Liverpool - No University-wide mission statement could be found
- Liverpool Hope University - <http://www.hope.ac.uk/aboutus/theliverpoolhopestory/missionandvalues/>
- Liverpool John Moores University - <http://www.ljmu.ac.uk/studyessentials/69211.htm>
- Birkbeck, University of London – <http://www.bbk.ac.uk/about-us/mission>
- Courtauld Institute of Art - <https://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.courtauld.ac.uk/vacancies/2014/EarlyCareerLecturerInEarlyModernHistoryOfArt/Background%2520Institutional%2520Information%2520for%2520candidates%2520October%25202012.doc&sa=U&ei=MUIeVfrKH4ivsQHYILL4Dg&ved=0CAsQFjAD&client=internal-uds-cse&usg=AFQjCNHdOvWCdaTbq-F7R3PnjjdUiloPyw> (Strategic Plan section only)
- Goldsmiths, University of London - <http://www.gold.ac.uk/strategy/> (Mission and values sections only)
- Heythrop College, University of London - <http://www.heythrop.ac.uk/governance-policies/mission-values-strategy>
- UCL Institute of Education - <http://www.ioe.ac.uk/about/760.html>
- King's College London - <http://www.kcl.ac.uk/study/learningteaching/kli/aboutus/mission.aspx>
- London Business School - <https://www.london.edu/about/vision#.VajCHPIVikp>
- London School of Economics - <http://www.lse.ac.uk/aboutLSE/LSEsplanForStrategicAction/LSE-aspirations.aspx>
- London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine - <http://www.lshtm.ac.uk/aboutus/introducing/mission/>
- Queen Mary University of London - <http://www.qmul.ac.uk/about/mission/>
- Royal Academy of Music - [http://www.rcm.ac.uk/about/governance/strategy/Strategic%20Plan%202007-17\\_sept2013.pdf](http://www.rcm.ac.uk/about/governance/strategy/Strategic%20Plan%202007-17_sept2013.pdf)
- Royal Holloway, University of London - <https://www.royalholloway.ac.uk/iquad/documents/pdf/principal/theroyalhollowaystrategicplan2013%E2%80%932020.pdf>
- Royal Veterinary College - <http://www.rvc.ac.uk/about/the-rvc/our-departments/academic-support-and-development/emedial/mission-statement>
- St George's, University of London - [http://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/corporate\\_docs/SGUL-Strategic-Plan\\_2010-15.pdf](http://www.sgul.ac.uk/images/about/corporate_docs/SGUL-Strategic-Plan_2010-15.pdf) (Mission and Values section only)
- School of Advanced Study - <http://www.sas.ac.uk/about-us/introducing-school/mission>
- Institute of Advanced Legal Studies - [http://ials.sas.ac.uk/about/docs/IALS\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_2007-2012.pdf](http://ials.sas.ac.uk/about/docs/IALS_Strategic_Plan_2007-2012.pdf)
- Institute of Classical Studies - <http://www.icls.sas.ac.uk/about-us/research-promotion-and-facilitation-strategy>
- Institute of Commonwealth Studies - [http://commonwealth.sas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/files/fileadmin/documents/ICWS\\_Planning\\_Template\\_version\\_28.03.2011.pdf](http://commonwealth.sas.ac.uk/sites/default/files/files/fileadmin/documents/ICWS_Planning_Template_version_28.03.2011.pdf)
- Institute of Modern Languages Research - <http://modernlanguages.sas.ac.uk/about-us> (no mission statement could be found, so their 'About us' page was used)
- Institute of Historical Research - <http://www.history.ac.uk/about> (Mission located on 'About us' summary was used)

- Institute for the Study of the Americas – <http://ilas.sas.ac.uk/about-us> (no mission statement could be found, so the 'About us' summary was used)
- Warburg Institute - <http://warburg.sas.ac.uk/home/aboutthewarburginstitute/strategic-plan/>
- School of Oriental and African Studies - <https://www.soas.ac.uk/corevalues/> (No mission statement document, so used 'Core values' summary)
- UCL School of Pharmacy – No mission statement: they default to UCL pages for 'Why choose us?'
- University College London - <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/white-paper/mission>
- University of London Institute in Paris - [http://ulip.london.ac.uk/mission\\_and\\_background](http://ulip.london.ac.uk/mission_and_background)
- London Metropolitan University - <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/media/london-metropolitan-university/london-met-documents/professional-service-departments/vice-chancellors-office/Strategic-plan-2013-15.pdf> (only first section - summary)
- Loughborough University - <http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/sbe/about/mission/>
- University of Manchester - <http://www.manchester.ac.uk/discover/vision/> (summary paragraph only)
- Manchester Metropolitan University - <http://www.mmu.ac.uk/marketing/mission-and-values/>
- Middlesex University London - <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/about-us/our-present>
- Newman University Birmingham - <http://www.newman.ac.uk/jobs/914/mission-statement>
- University of Northampton - <http://www3.northampton.ac.uk/about/publications/docs/strategic-vision.pdf> (first page summary)
- Northumbria University - <https://www.northumbria.ac.uk/about-us/our-vision/> (summary page only)
- Norwich University of the Arts - <http://www.nua.ac.uk/about/> (summary section only)
- University of Nottingham - <https://nottingham.ac.uk/is/about/mission,visionandgovernance.aspx>
- Nottingham Trent University - [https://www.ntu.ac.uk/human\\_resources/about\\_ntu/mission\\_aims/index.html](https://www.ntu.ac.uk/human_resources/about_ntu/mission_aims/index.html)
- Open University - <http://www.open.ac.uk/about/main/mission>
- University of Oxford - <https://www.ox.ac.uk/about/organisation/strategic-plan?wssl=1>
- Oxford Brookes University - <http://business.brookes.ac.uk/about/mission/>
- Plymouth University - <https://www.plymouth.ac.uk/your-university/about-us/vision-mission-and-values>
- University of Portsmouth - <http://www.port.ac.uk/realising-the-vision/mission-and-vision/>
- University of Reading - <http://www.reading.ac.uk/about/about-policies.aspx>
- Richmond, The American International University in London - <http://www.richmond.ac.uk/about-richmond/mission-statement/>
- Royal Agricultural University - <http://www.rau.ac.uk/the-rau/governance-finance/mission-statement>
- University of Salford - <http://www.salford.ac.uk/research/our-vision>
- University of Sheffield - <http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ourplan/what-we-stand-for>
- Sheffield Hallam University - <http://www.shu.ac.uk/university/overview/corporate/vision.html>
- University of Southampton - <http://users.ecs.soton.ac.uk/hcd/LandT/mission.htm#uni> (just the section for the University)

- Southampton Solent University - <http://www.solent.ac.uk/about/mission-and-values/charter.aspx>
- University of St Mark & St John - No University-wide mission statement could be found
- St Mary's University - <http://www.stmarys.ac.uk/about/mission-and-strategic-aims.htm>
- Staffordshire University - <http://www.staffs.ac.uk/about/plan/values/index.jsp>
- University of Sunderland - [http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/university/publications/UofS\\_CorporatePlan.pdf](http://www.sunderland.ac.uk/university/publications/UofS_CorporatePlan.pdf) ('Our vision \* purpose section)
- University of Surrey - <http://www.surrey.ac.uk/information-management/wis/> (summary of mission and values only)
- University of Sussex - <https://www.sussex.ac.uk/webteam/gateway/file.php?name=our-strategy-making-the-future-2013-18.pdf&site=271> (mission and values section only)
- Teesside University - <http://www.tees.ac.uk/sections/about/mission.cfm>
- University of West London - <http://www.uwl.ac.uk/about-us/how-university-works/strategic-plan>
- University of Warwick - [http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/about/vision2015/research\\_and\\_scholarship/](http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/about/vision2015/research_and_scholarship/) (each section combines to make one document)
- University of Westminster - <http://www.westminster.ac.uk/about-us/our-university/vision-mission-and-values>
- University of the West of England - <http://www1.uwe.ac.uk/aboutus/visionandmission/strategy.aspx>
- University of Winchester - <http://www.winchester.ac.uk/aboutus/missionandvalues/Pages/MissionandValues.aspx>
- University of Wolverhampton - <https://www.wlv.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-information/strategic-plan/strategic-plan-2006-2012/mission-statement/>
- University of Worcester - <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/documents/university-worcester-strat-plan-2013-18.pdf> (just mission and values section)
- University of York - <https://www.york.ac.uk/about/mission-strategies/>
- York St John University - <https://www.yorks.ac.uk/about/our-strategy/our-mission.aspx> (just the first summary page).

### **8.1.3 Appendix C – Email sent to staff participants**

Below is a copy of the initial email that was written and sent to university staff, requesting time to conduct an interview as part of the study.

‘Dear \*\*\*\*,

My name is Paul Gorman and I am a part-time PhD student at Aston University, studying within the School of Languages and Social Sciences (LSS). My PhD research involves an investigation of how key staff and students are responding to changes in the HE sector, particularly since the introduction of the new fee structure.

I would like to request a short interview with you, in which we can discuss how aspects of education delivery and management may or may not have changed, what impact these have on your experiences, and if/how these have changed learning and teaching.

For this research, your identity and the identity of the University will remain completely confidential. My research will be conducted at multiple universities (a minimum of three), and at no stage will any person or institution be named.

I would be extremely grateful if you could spare me 40-60 minutes of your time for an interview.

In a period of such dynamic change in the HE sector, I am very excited to be conducting this research and your insight and experience would benefit my work tremendously.

I look forward to hearing from you and am happy to answer any questions that you might have.

Kind regards,  
Paul Gorman’.

### **8.1.4 Appendix D – Semi-structured interview prompts for staff**

The following outlines the semi-structured interview schedule and prompts used for university senior managers:

Short history of the participant's background higher education:

- Brief description of participant's role – for context.
- Length of time worked in Higher Education.
- Length of time in current position
- Reasons for choosing their career path.

Current priorities for the University from the participant's perspective:

- Current policy drives – how does the participant feel about these drives?
- Factors that drive the development of new and existing policies.
- Discuss current challenges, if any, for the University.
- Overcoming challenges.

The purpose of university education:

- Explore opinions regarding the purpose of university education for a) individuals taking part b) society as a whole. Also, discuss learning and teaching philosophy, compared with actual experiences – What would they change?
- Changes to the purpose of university education over time.

Marketing the University:

- Aspects regarding the University that are most important to convey to potential students.
- Why are these elements so important?

The university experience:

- Factors that make a quality university experience.
- Who decides how we craft students' experiences?
- Role, if any, students play in shaping their learning experience.

Ideal vision of university education versus what actually occurs:

- Do they differ?
- What would you like to see change?

Any other issues the participant thinks are important.

-----  
Final question – Could the participant possibly suggest any courses/programmes at their University that could act as a useful case study for exploring how students and staff work together to shape their learning experience?



### **8.1.5 Appendix E – The online questionnaire content**

The following shows the content of the online student questionnaires. These were copied and pasted from an online version, so do not have the exact appearance of the actual questionnaires that students viewed, but the content is correct.

#### Student perceptions of higher education' - Questionnaire

This questionnaire will be used to inform research conducted by a PhD student at Aston University in Birmingham. The research aims to examine the opinions of both students and staff regarding: the purpose of higher education; the role of the student and the educator; and factors that influence these opinions.

This questionnaire is strictly confidential, and your identity will not be known to anyone other than the researcher, so please answer as honestly as possible. The questionnaire should take between 10-15 minutes to complete.

Participation is voluntary, and permission to contact students has been granted by the tutors/lecturers in your department.

Please contact Paul Gorman at gormanp1@aston.ac.uk if you have any questions or comments.

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING.

THE REASONS YOU DECIDED TO GO TO UNIVERSITY.

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, view as separate questions instead?

Reflecting back on your reasons for choosing to attend university, please read the following statements and indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with them:

IMPORTANCE:

1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly agree Not applicable

I wanted to experience being a university student

I was unemployed and decided to apply to university

To enhance my social life/meet new people

It was part of my long-term career plan

To improve my life opportunities

To get a good job

I wanted to study a particular subject/course at university

I wanted to do something different with my life

My existing qualifications were inadequate to meet my career ambitions

Family members encouraged me to apply

My employer/work colleagues encouraged me to apply

Teachers/lecturers encouraged me to apply

It seemed a logical progression in my educational journey

2. If there were any other reasons that led to you applying to university, then please list them below:

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF STUDYING AT UNIVERSITY:

3. Now that you are studying at University, please indicate up to THREE of most important outcomes you are hoping to gain from a university education. These can cover anything at all that you feel is important to you:

OUTCOMES:

Outcome # 1:

Outcome # 2:

Outcome # 3:

YOUR IDEAL VIEW OF LEARNING & TEACHING ON YOUR COURSE:

'THE FOLLOWING SECTION EXAMINES YOUR IDEAL" VIEWS REGARDING THE ROLE OF STUDENTS, AND THE ROLE OF LECTURERS/TUTORS IN LEARNING AND TEACHING AT UNIVERSITY. Please read the following statements and indicate whether you feel students should contribute to the role/activity, or whether the role should only be for lecturers/tutors:"'

IDEALLY, WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED?

Students should contribute to this process

Only tutors/lecturers should do this

I do not know

Designing the curriculum/course content

Deciding the learning activities to be undertaken in class

Deciding the format of assessments (e.g. essay, exam etc.)

Designing assessment criteria for the course/programme

Teaching on the course/programme

Generating new ideas to add to knowledge

Discussing new ideas in class

Assessing/marking students' work

Evaluating the quality of the teaching

THE REALITIES OF LEARNING & TEACHING ON YOUR COURSE:

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, view as separate questions instead?

5.'THE FOLLOWING SECTION EXAMINES YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF WHAT ACTUALLY" HAPPENS ON YOUR COURSE REGARDING THE ROLE OF STUDENTS, AND THE ROLE OF LECTURERS/TUTORS IN LEARNING AND TEACHING. Thinking about your course in general, please read the following statements and indicate whether you feel students are able to contribute to the roles/activities listed, or whether they are done by lecturers/tutors only:"'

ON YOUR COURSE, WHO IS ACTUALLY INVOLVED?

Students can/do contribute to this process    Only tutors/lecturers do this    I do not know

Designing the curriculum/course content

Deciding the learning activities to be undertaken in class

Deciding the format of assessments (e.g. essay, exam etc.)

Designing assessment criteria for the course/programme

Teaching on the course/programme

Generating new ideas to add to knowledge

Discussing new ideas in class

Assessing/marking students' work

Evaluating the quality of the teaching

YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION:

Please read the following statements and indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with them:

LEVEL OF AGREEMENT/DISAGREEMENT:

1 = Strongly disagree    2 = Disagree    3 = Neither agree nor disagree    4 = Agree    5 = Strongly agree    I do not know

I consider myself a customer of higher education

University students obtain knowledge, they do not contribute to producing it

University education should be less academic and more about getting a job

Students at University should not be treated as customers

University education is good value for money

I consider myself a co-producer of new knowledge

I am thinking of continuing my studies after my undergraduate degree

The cost of university tuition fees should reflect the reputation of the university

Anyone should be able to go to university if they can pay the fees

Only those that achieve the best grades should be able to attend university

All universities should charge the same tuition fees

My university experience is more important to me than the quality of the job I get at the end

I would prefer to go straight into a job after my undergraduate studies

#### POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION.

Thinking about your experiences to date, please list up to THREE aspects of your university experience that you find/have found the most challenging. These can cover any issues at all that you feel are important to you:

#### CHALLENGES:

Challenge # 1:

Challenge # 2:

Challenge # 3:

#### YOUR COURSE/PROGRAMME:

8. Thinking about the way your degree is taught and organised, what elements would you like to see change if it all possible? If there are none, then please leave blank. You can list up to THREE examples below:

#### CHANGES:

Change # 1

Change # 2

Change # 3

#### POSITIVE ASPECTS OF UNIVERSITY:

This part of the survey uses a table of questions, view as separate questions instead?

9. Please list up to THREE aspects of your overall university experience that you think are the most positive. They can cover anything that is important to you:

#### POSITIVE EXAMPLES:

Positive example # 1

Positive example # 2

Positive example # 3

#### ABOUT YOU:

10. What is your year of study?

1, 2, Final year.

11. What is your mode of study?

Full-time

Part-time

12. What is your age?

13. What is your gender?

Female

Male

Other

Prefer not to say

14. How would you describe your ethnic background?

a. If you selected Other, please specify:

15. Do you consider yourself as having a disability?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

16. Please indicate your fee status below:

UK Student

Other EU Student

International Student

17. Which of the following describes your current living arrangements?

a. If you selected Other, please specify:

18. Have any of your family members ever been students at university? Please indicate all that apply below:

None of my family have been to university

My father

My mother

A guardian

A sibling

An extended family member

Other

a. If you selected Other, please specify:

19. What are/were the occupations of your parents or guardians?

Please type occupation below:

Occupation of father/guardian

Occupation of mother/guardian

20. What were the main qualifications you obtained to get accepted onto your University course?

21. Approximately, how much do you pay per year for your university tuition? Please indicate in the box below:

22. Would you be willing to participate in a one-hour focus group discussion as part of this research in 2015? (Free snacks & refreshments will be provided).

Yes

No

a. If yes, many thanks and please provide your email address below. This will not be shared with anyone):

23. WOULD YOU LIKE TO ENTER THE PRIZE DRAW TO WIN A 'KINDLE FIRE HD 6', OR ONE OF THREE £10 AMAZON VOUCHERS?

Yes

No

a. PLEASE PUT YOUR CONTACT EMAIL BELOW TO ENTER (this will not be shared with anyone):

### **8.1.6 Appendix F - Email sent to students about questionnaires**

Below is a copy of the initial email that was written and sent to university staff, requesting time to conduct an interview as part of the study. This email was sent to relevant students by the designated lecturer that had agreed to assist with the research at each institution.

'Dear students,

I am a PhD student at Aston University and I am offering students on your course £10 for taking part in a one-to-one interview, or telephone interview if that is preferable (approx. 45 minutes).

Your views will be extremely useful to my PhD research, which is exploring the opinions of students, lecturers, and senior staff (at various universities in England) regarding the purpose of Higher Education and the roles that staff and students play in shaping it.

Your identity, the name of your course and your university will be held in the strictest confidence, and only pseudonyms will be used when data is written up as part of my thesis. This research has also been approved by senior staff at your institution.

If you wish to take part in an interview then please complete the following details below and email them to [p.gorman1@aston.ac.uk](mailto:p.gorman1@aston.ac.uk) and I will contact you on a time and date that suits you (your details will not be used for any other purpose other than conducting the interview and nobody else will see them):

Your name:

Year of study:

Your contact number (for telephone interviews only):

Date you wish to be contacted:

Time you wish to be contacted:

Second choice date and time (just in case above is not possible):

If you would prefer to take part in a face-to-face interview, then this can be arranged on campus at your convenience, so please advise if this is the case.

Interview slots will be given on a first come first served basis, as slots and vouchers are limited.

Many thanks for your time and good luck with your studies.

Kind regards,

Paul Gorman

PhD Student

Aston University, B4 7ET'

### **8.1.7 Appendix G – Email sent to students about interview participation**

Below is a copy of the initial email that was written and sent to university students, requesting time to complete a questionnaire. This email was sent to relevant students by the designated lecturer that had agreed to assist with the research at each institution.

‘Dear student,

I am a PhD student from Aston University and wish to invite 1st, 2nd, and final year \*\*\* students to complete this short questionnaire to inform my research – (URL REMOVED FOR CONFIDENTIALITY REASONS).

Participants will be entered into a prize draw to win one of three £10 Amazon vouchers. The questionnaire should take between 10 and 15 minutes to complete, and all data will be held in the strictest confidence.

The research explores students’ perceptions of the purpose of higher education, the role of students, and the role of educators.

Your participation is voluntary, but your input would be greatly appreciated.

Kind regards,

Paul Gorman

gormanp1@aston.ac.uk’.

### **8.1.8 Appendix H – Consent form for research participants**

The following text shows the content of the consent form give to all research participants:

#### **INFORMATION SHEET & CONSENT FORM FOR VOLUNTEERS**

Purpose of the research - This PhD research project aims to examine staff and student perceptions of the purpose of higher education; how university policy may be changing / developing; and if / how these factors influence pedagogy, practice, and your personal experiences within your university.

Confidentiality of information - The identity of all participants, and the identity of all the institutions that make up the sample, will be held in the strictest confidence, and only pseudonyms will be used whilst writing up the research results. Where necessary, this will include altering job titles and roles to generic descriptions (should the data be unique enough to allow identification to be possible), as well as degree programme titles.

The participant understands and accepts the following:

- participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time;
- all data will be stored in accordance with the data protection act (1998);
- recordings of interviews will only be used to assist note-taking / transcribing, and will be securely destroyed once the data has been written up;
- the identity of the participant / institution will not be revealed to anyone and all names of people and places will be anonymised;
- any names of people or places referred to by the participant in the interview will also be anonymised, or pseudonyms used;
- the details provided on this consent form will not be linked to the answers given in this interview.

If you agree with the above information then please complete the following section:

Name of participant:

Signature of participant:

Signature of researcher:

Date:

Please contact Paul Gorman at [p.gorman1@aston.ac.uk](mailto:p.gorman1@aston.ac.uk) if you have any further questions/queries about the research.

Thank you very much for your participation.

### **8.1.9 Appendix I – Semi-structured interview prompts for students**

The following outlines the semi-structured interview schedule and prompts used for university senior managers:

Short history of the participant's background higher education:

- Reasons for choosing their institution and HE in general. The purpose of university education:
- Explore opinions regarding the purpose of university education for a) individuals taking part b) society as a whole.
- University life – expectations versus reality.
- Factors that make a quality university experience.
- Who decides how we craft students' experiences?
- Role, if any, students play in shaping their learning experience.

Ideal vision of university education versus what actually occurs:

- Do they differ?
- What would you like to see change?

Any other issues the participant thinks are important.



### **8.1.10 Appendix J – Semi-structured interview prompts for staff**

The following outlines the semi-structured interview schedule and prompts used for university senior managers:

Short history of the participant's background higher education:

- Brief description of participant's role – for context.
- Length of time worked in Higher Education.
- Length of time in current position
- Reasons for choosing their career path.

Current priorities for the University from the participant's perspective:

- Current policy drives – how does the participant feel about these drives?
- Factors that drive the development of new and existing policies.
- Discuss current challenges, if any, for the University.
- Overcoming challenges.

The purpose of university education:

- Explore opinions regarding the purpose of university education for a) individuals taking part b) society as a whole. Also, discuss learning and teaching philosophy, compared with actual experiences – What would they change?
- Changes to the purpose of university education over time.

Marketing the University:

- Aspects regarding the University that are most important to convey to potential students.
- Why are these elements so important?

The university experience:

- Factors that make a quality university experience.
- Who decides how we craft students' experiences?
- Role, if any, students play in shaping their learning experience.

Ideal vision of university education versus what actually occurs:

- Do they differ?
- What would you like to see change?

Any other issues the participant thinks are important.

-----  
Final question – Could the participant possibly suggest any courses/programmes at their University that could act as a useful case study for exploring how students and staff work together to shape their learning experience?

### **8.1.11 Appendix K – Ethics application for conducting fieldwork**

Below is the completed application to Aston University for conducting PhD fieldwork, as well as the project outline required to evidence what was being planned, and if appropriate procedures would be in place to ensure the work would be ethical. The project was granted approval and the ethics were deemed to be sufficiently considered and accounted for.

#### **School of Languages and Social Sciences**

#### **Doctoral Student Fieldwork Form**

**Student Name**...Paul Gorman.....

**Project Title**..... Are undergraduate students co-producers or consumers of knowledge?  
A critical examination of policy, practice, and pedagogy at three UK universities.  
**Supervisor(s)** Prof. Jonathan Tritter and Dr. Chris Bolsmann.

1. Please give the exact location of your fieldwork?  
(Give geographic location and likely setting eg classroom in a primary school in Coventry, private homes in Birmingham)

*(Names of sites/universities removed from this PhD thesis in order to maintain confidentiality) - classrooms, University offices, meeting rooms.*

2. Please state all your research methods, type of informant and how you intend to access them.  
(ie qualitative interviews with teachers recruited through parental contacts)

Spread over a two-year period, the sample will include senior university executives, lecturers, quality officers, support staff, and undergraduate students from three different universities. A mixed methods approach will be adopted, with questionnaires, interviews and focus groups being employed to obtain the data required.

Provisional contact with senior executives has already been established at two of the chosen universities and their participation has been provisionally agreed via email and telephone, on the condition that ethical approval is obtained and further details of the project provided. Contact will be made with senior executives at the other universities in the coming weeks via email and/or telephone (as required), once ethical approval has been obtained.

Once access to senior executives has been fully established and their participation officially agreed, then access to other staff and students will be requested, with their approval. Once they have given their approval, accessing lecturers, staff and students at each University will come with an endorsement, making emails and telephone calls a more effective method for establishing contact. Where appropriate, face-to-face meetings will be organised in order to explain the research to lecturers and other university staff.

Access to student participants will be via lecturers and/or the Students' Union. This will be requested and arranged via email and/or telephone, plus face-to-face meetings arranged where appropriate.

3. Please list all the safety risks identified from this proposed fieldwork

A). Travel to and from locations requires the researcher to take public transport and walk short distances across pedestrian areas.

B). The researcher could potentially be in the company of volunteers unknown to them and unverified as actual members of the University/site of study.

4. What steps will be taken to minimise these risks?

Both A and B pose minimal and unlikely risks to the researcher. However, the researcher will ensure that the PhD supervision team are aware of when and where interviews, meetings, and focus groups are taking place, plus they will be in contact via mobile phone in case there are any issues on days where fieldwork is taking place. Advice or reporting of any problems will be made via telephone if required. In the unlikely event of serious incidents, the researcher will contact the relevant authorities via mobile phone.

The researcher will ensure that every participant is able to identify themselves by name and also sign a consent form, which can be cross-checked against a list of expected/enrolled participants. Even if names of participants cannot be verified, focus groups and interviews will all be taking place on authorised university property, minimising any potential risks to the researcher.

Declaration

I/We have read and understood the School Guidance on Fieldwork Safety

I/We understand that I/we am/are responsible for taking appropriate measures to ensure my/our own safety during fieldwork.

Signed (student(s)).....Paul Gorman.....

.....  
Fieldwork approved by (supervisors name).....

Signed..... Date...1-8-2014.....

## 8.2 Appendix L – Application to Ethics Committee

Title of project

Are undergraduate students co-producers or consumers of knowledge? A critical examination of policy, practice, and pedagogy at three UK universities.

Research questions

Using three English universities as comparative case studies over a two year period this research will aim to answer the following research questions:

1. To what extent are undergraduate students co-producers of knowledge?
2. Are undergraduate students viewed as consumers of Higher Education and if so, by whom?
3. Is the marketisation of higher education (HE) impacting on the design and practice of pedagogy?

This research will employ multiple research methods to collect data on the themes that merge from university documents (mission statements/strategy documents), and the opinions and experiences of university students, teachers, administrators, and senior management representatives.

Through the lens of critical pedagogy, the data will be analysed in order to establish if/how the marketisation of HE is impacting on pedagogy and the relationships between staff and students.

Background/theoretical context

In their report, 'Teaching That Matters', Hadfield et al. (2012) contend that universities have a transformational impact upon students, and that quality teaching and learning places students at the heart of the system. Statements such as this echo the rhetoric of the UK universities White Paper, Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System (BIS, 2011), which set out proposals to place students in the 'driving seat' of higher education (HE) and to make the sector more accountable to students.

Over the course of the last thirty years, HE in the UK has shifted further towards a competitive market, where students are increasingly responsible for financing their own university education and are seen to be empowered as consumers (Brown, 2013). As such, we are witnessing an era of vast change, as government intervention in UK HE policy continues to have a huge impact on the way the sector functions and this has never been more apparent than in recent years (Brown, 2013).

The marketisation of HE can be traced back over a long period in the UK (Brown, 2013), but some of the most recent and significant changes to emerge from sector reforms are that university income generated from tuition fees has 'more than doubled over the past decade, from around £3 billion in 2000–01 to just over £8 billion in 2010–1' (Universities-UK, 2013, p6); that state subsidies for HE have been cut significantly; and that HEFCE teaching grants are expected to fall from about 64 per cent in 2011-12 to around 25 percent by 2014-15 (Brown, 2013). Furthermore, from 2012 onwards universities were able to charge up to a maximum of £9000 per year for undergraduate study, making students more responsible for financing their own education than has ever previously been seen in the UK (Brown, 2013).

The rhetoric of government policy makers suggests that such reforms will increase competition and, ultimately, drive quality of teaching and provision through student choice (Collini, 2012). In addition, Williams (1995) argues that the rationale for the marketisation of HE assumes that such moves will increase efficiency and the control that stakeholders have on equity and processes, and that the burden of cost must move further towards private sources as enrolment increases. Similarly, Tooley (2003) argues that competition in education leads to innovation and also contends that the privatisation of education leads to efficiency, which means money is less likely to be wasted.

However, there is some concern that the marketisation of HE creates a mechanism not unlike a customer/consumer culture, which allows student choice to determine what and how universities teach, and in some cases, whether a university exists at all (Collini, 2012). Similarly, others argue that current HE reforms have resulted in placing students in a customer role, whereby the HE sector functions according to the idea that students are a source of income (Carey, 2013). Furthermore, universities are enhancing customer satisfaction as a major strategy (Carey, 2013), something which has only been exacerbated by the growing emphasis and importance of the National Student Survey (NSS).

Many argue that universities frequently deliver education according to what leads to student satisfaction, and critics suggest that this approach threatens to damage the very role and purpose of the university (Grafton, 2010). If universities only support what students want to study now, in the short term, then the future of HE is lost (Grafton, 2010). Grafton (2010) elaborates by saying that slow scholarship – like slow food – is nourishing compared to fast food. In other words, he maintains that good scholarship cannot be standardised, and there must be autonomy and freedom for learning to be created without rigid standards being placed on what is taught and how it needs to be taught (Grafton, 2010).

Authors of critical pedagogy believe that a university structure driven by market forces leads to a commodification of learning, and sees that governments and educationalists are promoting a consumerist model of HE more than ever before (Cowden and Singh, 2013). As a result, one of the main concerns for contemporary authors of critical pedagogy is that marketisation, and the resulting shifts in stakeholders' perceptions, are challenging the relationships between students and their universities, resulting in rhetoric that sees students as demanding customers, rather than active and willing learners (Carey, 2013). The University and College Union (UCU) (2010) in the UK argue that marketisation has also affected university staff and teachers: they contend that there is growing competition between institutions, increasing student numbers (not matched by additional staff), increased student expectations, pressures to provide flexible learning, and extended working hours, which have all led to pressures on staff and threaten the freedom, democracy and the critical role of university.

Far from accepting that such changes are universal or should be accepted by all, critical pedagogy scholars see that researchers and progressive educators can help students and teachers resist the domination of normative practices and behavioural standards (McLaren and Kincheloe, 2007). Central to the basis of critical pedagogy is the notion that a critical educator should 'raise ambitions, desires, and real hope for those who wish to take seriously the issue of educational struggle and social justice' (Giroux, 1988, p177). This echoes in the work of Paulo Freire (1970), who suggested that education can either act as the means by which people can be integrated into a system of conformity, or it can give freedom to people to think critically and creatively to transform their world, the latter of which is preferred in critical pedagogy. Freire (1970) rejected the notion that students are like empty bank accounts, ready to be filled with knowledge by teachers. Instead, he advocated an approach that unifies teachers and learners, whereby we accept that we are all incomplete. Through his writings, Freire asked important pedagogical questions related to social agency, voice and democratic participation – questions that resonate with critical pedagogy authors to this day (Darder et al., 2009).

Although Freire was writing over forty years ago, the underlying messages of his work remain relevant today, and an important aspect that remains true for critical pedagogy to this day is the belief that the relationship between teachers and students should be equal; Freire (1990, p181) described this in the following way:

'The teacher is of course an artist, but being an artist does not mean that he or she can make the profile, can shape the students. What the educator does in teaching is to make it possible for the students to become themselves'.

Such arguments are present in the work of other critical scholars, such as Neary and Winn (2009), who, whilst discussing the future of HE, suggest that educators need to redefine the idea of what it is to be a student:

'The point of this re-arrangement would be to reconstruct the student as producer: undergraduate students working in collaboration with academics to create work of social importance that is full of academic content and value, while at the same time reinvigorating the university beyond the logic of market economics' (Neary and Winn, 2009, p 193)

Using similar terminology, McCulloch (2009, p171) suggests students can be co-producers and that 'lecturers and others who support the learning process are viewed as being engaged in a cooperative enterprise focused on the production, dissemination and application of knowledge, and on the development of learners rather than merely skilled technicians'. This highlights the importance of active, rather than passive learning and exemplifies one of the core arguments of co-production, which is that students should not just be trained to learn and reproduce certain skills in the classroom, but active in all aspects of knowledge creation (Bovill et al., 2011).

The issues raised above are far from new, but in the midst of so much change in the sector there is concern amongst critical scholars regarding how exactly these changes will impact on policy and practice in the HE sector. As Brown (2013) describes it, the UK is currently in a 'real time experiment', whereby we do not know exactly how institutions, students and staff will respond to reforms made in the sector. With this in mind, there is a unique opportunity for new research to take place.

#### Research design and approach

Through a critical lens this research will use multiple research methods within three comparative case studies over a two-year period to gather data.

A Case study is concerned with the nature and complexities of the case in question and allows for detailed and intensive analysis (Bryman, 2001), which will benefit this research in exploring experiences, opinions, relationships and structures within the context of each institution. Case study research is well suited to longitudinal research (Bryman, 2001), and multiple sites will allow contrasts and comparisons to be made, and lead to a better understanding of social phenomena (Bryman, 2001).

As the research questions driving this study are concerned with examining if/how the marketisation of HE is impacting on pedagogy and the relationships between staff and students, UK universities will be selected that have different public profiles i.e. they are marketed according to different criteria; have contrasting research/teaching profiles; and have contrasting entry requirements. In other words, the universities often attract, and are often marketed towards, different students in the market.

Before discussing the methods that will be employed for this research, it is important to establish how/why the universities that will be used as the cases have been selected, and also why they will remain anonymous.

#### The cases

Three English universities have been selected as the cases for this research, each of which represent three different and distinct types of HEI:

1. a post-1992 university;
2. a pre-1992 university;
3. a Russell Group University.

As well as the three cases providing the opportunity to compare data across three different types of HEI, the universities are located within the general region of a major metropolitan city, which will allow for interesting comparisons to be made due to their shared geography.

The close proximity of the chosen case studies means that the way in which the universities are marketed, how they communicate their goals and missions, and the

student profile for each university could potentially allow for interesting comparisons to be made across the cases.

Many metropolitan areas in England have three or more universities in the general vicinity, which frequently consist of different types of institution. This minimises the chances that they can be identified. Categorising and classifying the cases in this way will allow for the participants to remain anonymous, which will provide a safe platform for the participants to express their opinions and experiences as openly as possible.

The above factors are important, as social research within academic environments has become increasingly exposed to ethical regulation and researchers are under more pressure than ever to ensure confidentiality and anonymity (Bell and Bryman, 2007). More than ever the researcher is expected to predict and consider any potential negative effects that their research might have on the participants (Bell and Bryman, 2007). One could argue that this is particularly important when researching the opinions of senior managers, teachers, administrators and students in an institution, as the views they express have the potential to expose negative as well as positive experiences, plus reveal potentially sensitive or controversial issues.

For these reasons, it has been decided that all participants and universities will be anonymised and described only by their titles (unless these are unique to the institution, in which case they will be amended to a more general term) and/or pseudonyms.

It is hoped that taking this approach will lead to easier access to sites, that participants will be more accommodating, and that they will feel confident to be able to discuss issues more openly and without fear of repercussions after the findings are disseminated. Indeed, anonymity in social research has long been seen as a means to encourage and allow participants to express their opinions more honestly and accurately (Bates and Cox, 2008).

#### Data collection and analysis

Critical theorists and radical educators need not be tied to either qualitative or quantitative research methods and all the tools of research are available to be utilised, as long as they are fit for purpose (Harvey, 1990). Bryman (2001) also argues that multiple methods are appropriate within case study research, and this research will employ numerous methods of data collection and analysis in order to explore and answer the research questions.

The research will be done in numerous phases, with different participants and exploring different sources of information over time. The details of each phase will be outlined in the following sections.

#### Senior management at three universities

Vice-Chancellors and Pro-Vice-Chancellors at the three universities in question will be contacted and invited to take part in semi-structured interviews during the summer break in 2014. These interviews will only take place once during the two year study, in order to provide context and feed into further research with students and teachers.

The semi-structured interviews will broadly cover how they, as leaders and policy-makers, are responding to changes in the HE sector, particularly since the introduction of higher tuition fees. The interviews will also attempt to cover the following:

- how the university functions;
- what their priorities are;
- the perceived role of students (scholar/consumer);
- what the goals and mission of the university is;
- how policies are formulated;
- and how students and teachers act and conduct themselves within the institution.

It is hoped that the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality will increase their willingness to take part in the research. In addition, the knowledge that multiple cases are being compared as part of the research adds weight to the argument that the universities being studied, as well as its participants, will not be identifiable.

As part of the interview with Vice-Chancellors, permission will be asked to access one course/programme at their University, in order to survey opinion from staff and students regarding their role in HE and how they perceive the relationship between learner and educator. They will be invited to select an appropriate programme in which they feel would suit the research being done. This approach increases the likelihood that access will be granted, carries an endorsement from the Vice-Chancellor of the University, and also acts as a repeatable method of selecting a course/programme to include as part of the study, as it removes the decision from the researcher.

Once the courses/programmes have been selected and included, any differences by discipline will be considered as part of the analysis and courses/programmes will be written up in terms of the general discipline they fall under, rather than naming them precisely (as to avoid the institution being identifiable).

If senior managers are unwilling to endorse further access to staff and students, then a different University will be approached to take part and the data obtained from the interview will be used purely to add weight to data about how policy-makers view current issues in HE.

#### Document analysis

The content of the University mission/strategy documents, which are readily available in the public domain, will be collected and analysed in September 2014.

Thematic analysis of the content of the documents will consider:

- Who wrote them?
- When did they write them?
- What is the intended purpose of the document?
- What unintended elements are present in the language used?
- What are the implications for students and teachers?
- Who benefits from the document and in what ways?

Analysing the documents using the above questions will provide a context that can help reveal the goals and position of the institutions that the students and teachers are part of. Furthermore, they begin to help answer, in part, the main research questions stated previously. In particular, themes that points to consumer language, power structures, and/or the relationship between students and their university and their teachers will help answer the research questions.

This activity will take place in September 2014, as the documentation will be readily available in the public domain and ready for the next cohort of students begins studying there. This will provide a useful starting point for framing the case study research.

#### Student questionnaires and focus groups

Students from the chosen courses/programmes will be asked to complete a paper-based questionnaire. Questionnaires are a very useful way of obtaining data from a large sample, particularly during a longitudinal study (Fumagalli et al., 2013). The questionnaires will be used to establish demographic information (age, gender, ethnicity, fee status, place of birth), their educational background, and their families' educational background. These questions will provide a profile of the students on the course and allow analysis to examine trends and patterns in the quantitative data. In addition, Likert-scale questions will be developed in order to explore their perceived role as learners in HE, the perceived role of the university, their aspirations, and their perceived role of teachers. The same questionnaire will be sent out again 12 months later, in order to monitor any potential changes in attitudes.

Each questionnaire will ask the students to provide their name, but it will be made very clear that their identity will be held in confidence, that only the researcher will see their answers, and that their answers they provide will be aggregated as part of the whole sample. This step is necessary in order to compare how attitudes change over time, as the same questionnaire will be used in the first term of each year for a two year period, and descriptive statistics generated to reveal patterns in the data.



Questionnaires are useful for providing comparable data, but the closed nature of the questions means that there is a need for students to have a platform to share their opinions and experiences with open-ended possibilities. Therefore, focus groups will also be organised to take place during their first term of study in 2014 and again 12 months later, in order to make comparisons. The number of focus groups will depend on the number of students enrolled on the course and the number of students willing to take part, but numerous focus groups will be organised to allow as many to participate as possible. Focus groups will allow for open discussion, debate, and also allow for a larger sample to be included as part of the qualitative part of the research. These focus groups will follow a semi-structured schedule and participants will be free to discuss any issues that cover the following broad questions/themes:

- Motivations for going to HE
- The purpose of HE from their perspective
- Their perceived role in HE
- Who is responsible for students' learning ?
- Who should decide what is taught in HE?
- Should students be active or passive in learning?
- Perceived role of teacher in HE
- Relationship with teachers in HE
- Establish perceived power dynamics
- Ideal vision of what HE ought to be
- Aspirations for the future

As long as consent is given, recordings of focus groups will be made so that verbatim comments can be analysed using thematic analysis. No names or identifying information will be included and participants will be fully informed regarding the purpose of the research. If consent is not given to record, then detailed notes will be taken. All data will be stored securely and in accordance with the Data Protection Act of 1998.

#### Semi-structured interviews with teachers

Semi-structured interviews with teachers on the chosen courses/programmes will be developed after the initial document analysis has taken place in September and access approved by senior management. Interviews will take place in 2014 and again with the same individuals (where possible) in 2015, in order to explore if/how things may have changed over time.

The areas/questions aimed at teachers will match, where appropriate, the questions posed to the students, but from the perspective of an educator. This will allow for useful comparisons to be made on similar issues. These areas/questions include:

- Motivations for becoming a teacher
- The purpose of HE from their perspective
- Their perceived role in HE
- Who is responsible for students' learning?
- Who should decide what is taught in HE?
- Should students be active or passive in learning?
- Perceived role of teacher in HE
- Relationship with students in HE
- Establish perceived power dynamics
- Establish perceived power dynamics within the university
- How autonomous are they in the design of pedagogy?
- Ideal vision of what HE ought to be

Verbatim transcripts will be made and thematic analysis will be used in order to establish whether they see students as consumers; what they perceive to be the power dynamics between students and teachers; how ideals and structures in HE shape what they teach; how reality compares with their ideal notion of HE; and finally if/how marketisation is impacting on teaching activities and the design of pedagogy.

#### Semi-structured interviews with non-teaching staff

Key representatives from each institution (that are not teachers) will form part of the sample. These will include a Quality Officer from each university (or representative that normally works with quality assurance measures); and a Student Support representative (for example, someone from a centralised or generic support service).

It is hoped that these key members of staff can provide information regarding:

- how the university functions;
- what their priorities are;
- the perceived role of students (scholar/consumer);
- what the goals and mission of the university is;
- how policies are formulated;
- and how students and teachers act and conduct themselves within the institution.

Interviews with the above staff will only need to take part once during the two-year study, as their insights will be used to provide context and background to issues faced by teachers and students. The interviews will be planned to take place after Christmas and New Year break in February 2015. This period of time usually falls after exams and assignment deadlines, so would be an appropriate time to interview before the next busy period in Easter.

The content of the semi-structured interviews is yet to be fully considered and will be designed once the university documentation has been analysed in September 2014, as the results of this research will inform the direction and content of the questions.

#### Access and gatekeepers

Gaining access to the students and lecturers for this research will require the assistance of numerous gatekeepers. To assist with the facilitation of this process it will be essential to gain support from the relevant members of senior management, as well as programme directors and lecturers. The research project will be pitched as an ideal opportunity to gauge students' perceptions of what HE ought to be like, how the reality compares, and how the relationship between teachers and students can be enhanced through participation in the research.

In return for their assistance in this process, they will be offered the opportunity to use any anonymised research findings to inform initiatives they may wish to engage in at the university (this outcome will of course be articulated to the staff and students that take part in the research). For example, a collaborative blog or website could be developed, which could be used to disseminate appropriate findings.

If support is not forthcoming, then other universities will be identified and approached.

#### Ethical considerations

As part of this research, participants in this research will be informed of the following details regarding the research process:

- participation in the study is voluntary;
- their identity and the institution itself will remain confidential;
- pseudonyms will be used instead of names of people and places when writing up the findings;
- participants may withdraw from the study at any point;
- all data will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act of 1998;
- all recordings will be transcribed by the researcher or by an individual that has signed a strict confidentiality agreement and then securely deleted.

In addition to the above, an information sheet and consent form will be given to every participant.

In the unlikely event that a participant reveals highly sensitive, disturbing or inappropriate information, the researcher will bring the interview/focus group to a close at an appropriate time and will not include any of the data in the final analysis. No further intervention will be made unless absolutely necessary, due to the researcher being unqualified to give advice or guidance on sensitive issues.

All participants will be aged 18 or over, therefore, are not considered vulnerable. Also, CRB checks will not be required, for the same reason.

The researcher will take great care to minimise the time that the field work takes up for the participants. Research will not take place if any participants indicate that the timing or format of the research may have the potential for it disrupting teaching, learning, or timetabled events. If this occurs, alternative times, locations and/or approaches will be developed.

#### References

- BATES, S. C. & COX, J. M. 2008. The impact of computer versus paper–pencil survey, and individual versus group administration, on self-reports of sensitive behaviors. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24, 903-916.
- BELL, E. & BRYMAN, A. 2007. The ethics of management research: an exploratory content analysis. *British Journal of Management*, 18, 63-77.
- BIS 2011. Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System. Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS).
- BOVILL, C., COOK-SATHER, A. & FELTEN, P. 2011. Students as co-creators of teaching approaches, course design, and curricula: implications for academic developers. *International Journal for Academic Development*, 16, 133-145.
- BROWN, R. 2013. Everything for sale? The marketisation of UK higher education, Routledge.
- BRYMAN, A. 2001. *Social Research Methods*, Oxford University Press, Incorporated.
- CAREY, P. 2013. Student as co-producer in a marketised higher education system: a case study of students' experience of participation in curriculum design. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 50, 250-260.
- COLLINI, S. 2012. *What are universities for?*, Penguin UK.
- COWDEN, S. & SINGH, G. 2013. *Acts of Knowing: Critical Pedagogy in, Against and Beyond the University*, Bloomsbury Publishing.
- DARDER, A., BALODANO, M. & TORRES, R. D. 2009. *The Critical Pedagogy Reader: Second Edition*, Taylor & Francis.
- FREIRE, P. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum.
- FUMAGALLI, L., LAURIE, H. & LYNN, P. 2013. Experiments with methods to reduce attrition in longitudinal surveys. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series A (Statistics in Society)*, 176, 499-519.
- GIROUX, H. A. 1988. *Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning*, Greenwood Publishing Group.
- GRAFTON, A. T. 2010. Britain: the disgrace of the universities. *NEW YORK REVIEW OF BOOKS*, 57, 32-32.
- HADFIELD, M., DHILLON, J., JOPLIN, M. & GOFFE, R. 2012. *Teaching that Matters: Modern Universities Changing Lives*. Wolverhampton: University of Wolverhampton.
- HARVEY, L. 1990. *Critical social research*, Unwin Hyman London.
- MCCULLOCH, A. 2009. The student as co-producer: Learning from public administration about the student–university relationship. *Studies in Higher Education*, 34, 171-183.
- MCLAREN, P. & KINCHELOE, J. L. 2007. *Critical Pedagogy: Where are We Now?*, Peter Lang.
- NEARY, M. & WINN, J. 2009. The student as producer: reinventing the student experience in higher education. Continuum, London, pp. 192-210. ISBN 1847064728.
- UCU 2010. *Workload Protection: A UCU Local Negotiating Guide*. University and College Union (UCU).
- UNIVERSITIES-UK 2013. *Patterns and trends in UK higher education 2013*.
- WILLIAMS, G. 1995. The “marketization” of higher education: Reforms and potential reforms in higher education finance. *Emerging patterns of social demand and university reform: Through a glass darkly*, 170-193.

**8.2.1 Appendix M: Tables showing Mann Whitney U Test data for students' questionnaire answers about pedagogy – by university type**

		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Sum of Ranks</b>
I consider myself a customer of higher education	Russell Group	41	63.06	2585.50
	Pre-92	81	60.71	4917.50
	Total	122		
University students obtain knowledge, they do not contribute to producing it	Russell Group	41	58.27	2389.00
	Pre-92	81	63.14	5114.00
	Total	122		
University education should be less academic and more about getting a job	Russell Group	41	60.05	2462.00
	Pre-92	81	62.23	5041.00
	Total	122		
Students at University should not be treated as customers	Russell Group	41	62.94	2580.50
	Pre-92	81	60.77	4922.50
	Total	122		
University education is good value for money	Russell Group	41	55.10	2259.00
	Pre-92	81	64.74	5244.00
	Total	122		
I consider myself a co-producer of new knowledge	Russell Group	41	53.98	2213.00
	Pre-92	81	65.31	5290.00
	Total	122		
My university experience is more important to me than the quality of the job I get at the end	Russell Group	41	63.33	2596.50
	Pre-92	81	60.57	4906.50
	Total	122		
	<b>Mann-Whitney U</b>	<b>Wilcoxon W</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
I consider myself a customer of higher education	1596.500	4917.500	-0.417	0.676
University students obtain knowledge, they do not contribute to producing it	1528.000	2389.000	-0.769	0.442
University education should be less academic and more about getting a job	1601.000	2462.000	-0.354	0.723
Students at University should not be treated as customers	1601.500	4922.500	-0.406	0.685
University education is good value for money	1398.000	2259.000	-1.659	0.097
I consider myself a co-producer of new knowledge	1352.000	2213.000	-1.765	0.078
My university experience is more important to me than the quality of the job I get at the end	1585.500	4906.500	-0.522	0.602

		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Sum of Ranks</b>
I consider myself a customer of higher education	Russell Group	41	32.67	1339.50
	Post-92	23	32.20	740.50
	Total	64		
University students obtain knowledge, they do not contribute to producing it	Russell Group	41	32.49	1332.00
	Post-92	23	32.52	748.00
	Total	64		
University education should be less academic and more about getting a job	Russell Group	41	28.99	1188.50
	Post-92	23	38.76	891.50
	Total	64		
Students at University should not be treated as customers	Russell Group	41	34.29	1406.00
	Post-92	23	29.30	674.00
	Total	64		
University education is good value for money	Russell Group	41	32.40	1328.50
	Post-92	23	32.67	751.50
	Total	64		
I consider myself a co-producer of new knowledge	Russell Group	41	26.65	1092.50
	Post-92	23	42.93	987.50
	Total	64		
My university experience is more important to me than the quality of the job I get at the end	Russell Group	41	33.23	1362.50
	Post-92	23	31.20	717.50
	Total	64		
	<b>Mann-Whitney U</b>	<b>Wilcoxon W</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
I consider myself a customer of higher education	464.500	740.500	-0.124	0.901
University students obtain knowledge, they do not contribute to producing it	471.000	1332.000	-0.008	0.994
University education should be less academic and more about getting a job	327.500	1188.500	-2.160	0.031
Students at University should not be treated as customers	398.000	674.000	-1.236	0.216
University education is good value for money	467.500	1328.500	-0.074	0.941
I consider myself a co-producer of new knowledge	231.500	1092.500	-3.532	0.000
My university experience is more important to me than the quality of the job I get at the end	441.500	717.500	-0.532	0.595

		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Sum of Ranks</b>
I consider myself a customer of higher education	Pre-92	81	52.15	4224.50
	Post-92	23	53.72	1235.50
	Total	104		
University students obtain knowledge, they do not contribute to producing it	Pre-92	81	53.49	4333.00
	Post-92	23	49.00	1127.00
	Total	104		
University education should be less academic and more about getting a job	Pre-92	81	49.27	3991.00
	Post-92	23	63.87	1469.00
	Total	104		
Students at University should not be treated as customers	Pre-92	81	53.99	4373.00
	Post-92	23	47.26	1087.00
	Total	104		
University education is good value for money	Pre-92	81	54.27	4396.00
	Post-92	23	46.26	1064.00
	Total	104		
I consider myself a co-producer of new knowledge	Pre-92	81	49.01	3969.50
	Post-92	23	64.80	1490.50
	Total	104		
My university experience is more important to me than the quality of the job I get at the end	Pre-92	81	52.69	4267.50
	Post-92	23	51.85	1192.50
	Total	104		
	<b>Mann-Whitney U</b>	<b>Wilcoxon W</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
I consider myself a customer of higher education	903.500	4224.500	-0.260	0.795
University students obtain knowledge, they do not contribute to producing it	851.000	1127.000	-0.667	0.504
University education should be less academic and more about getting a job	670.000	3991.000	-2.201	0.028
Students at University should not be treated as customers	811.000	1087.000	-1.171	0.242
University education is good value for money	788.000	1064.000	-1.287	0.198
I consider myself a co-producer of new knowledge	648.500	3969.500	-2.320	0.020
My university experience is more important to me than the quality of the job I get at the end	916.500	1192.500	-0.153	0.878

**8.2.2 Appendix N – A list of all codes generated from the analysis of students' answers regarding what they hope to obtain from university education (outcomes)**

1. A good job/career
2. A degree
3. Meet people
4. Personal development
5. Develop general skills
6. Good degree classification
7. Obtain knowledge
8. Enhance my understanding of my discipline
9. Independence
10. Increase social network
11. A good life experience
12. Enhance life opportunities
13. Continue education
14. Good life experience
15. Critical thinking
16. Extra-curricular activities
17. A placement/work experience
18. Enhance life skills
19. Enhance my understanding
20. Enjoy learning
21. Increase life opportunities
22. Enhance my career
23. Enhance outlook on life
24. Enhance research skills
25. Self-fulfilment
26. A global citizen
27. A professional experience
28. Be better qualified
29. Be happy
30. Change career options
31. Change my life
32. Develop analytical skills
33. Develop thinking skills
34. Develop transferable skills
35. Enhance language skills
36. Enhance my portfolio
37. Have fun
38. Improved writing skills
39. Variety of experiences
40. Make family proud
41. Pay off debts
42. Self sufficiency
43. Understand other cultures

**8.2.3 Appendix O: Tables showing Mann Whitney U Test data for students' questionnaire answers about pedagogy – by type of course**

		<b>N</b>	<b>Mean Rank</b>	<b>Sum of Ranks</b>
I consider myself a customer of higher education	Non-vocational	65	69.45	4514.5
	Vocational	80	75.88	6070.5
	Total	145		
University students obtain knowledge, they do not contribute to producing it	Non-vocational	65	72.58	4717.5
	Vocational	80	73.34	5867.5
	Total	145		
University education should be less academic and more about getting a job	Non-vocational	65	66.18	4301.5
	Vocational	80	78.54	6283.5
	Total	145		
Students at University should not be treated as customers	Non-vocational	65	70.38	4575
	Vocational	80	75.13	6010
	Total	145		
University education is good value for money	Non-vocational	65	67.77	4405
	Vocational	80	77.25	6180
	Total	145		
I consider myself a co-producer of new knowledge	Non-vocational	65	59.17	3846.00
	Vocational	80	84.24	6739.00
	Total	145		
My university experience is more important to me than the quality of the job I get at the end	Non-vocational	65	83.28	5413.5
	Vocational	80	64.64	5171.5
	Total	145		
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mann-Whitney U</b>	<b>Wilcoxon W</b>	<b>Z</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)</b>
I consider myself a customer of higher education	2369.5	4514.5	-0.962	0.336
University students obtain knowledge, they do not contribute to producing it	2572.5	4717.5	-0.113	0.91
University education should be less academic and more about getting a job	2156.5	4301.5	-1.837	0.066
Students at University should not be treated as customers	2430	4575	-0.709	0.478
University education is good value for money	2260	4405	-1.405	0.16
I consider myself a co-producer of new knowledge	1701	3846	-3.678	0.000
My university experience is more important to me than the quality of the job I get at the end	1931.5	5171.5	-2.865	0.004