

Five years ago in the conclusion to an edited book we challenged stakeholders of Higher Education to be more reflective of the potential consequences (intended or not) of the processes outlined in 'The Marketization of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer (2011). In introducing this special edition on HE and consumer behaviour, we ponder what, taken together, all of the papers submitted and most particularly the six selected to appear here, tells us about the current state of such reflections. What appears most proudly is a schism where we witness a dual position of contagion and challenge. The colonising nature of marketisation (here considered a verb) means that a consumerist discourse is increasingly 'taken-for-granted' in many of the practices and routines of a university. And yet, at the same time, great amounts of energy are deployed in countering the hegemony of the market. Knowing both contagion and challenge co-exist, the HE environment is foregrounded with permanent tension.

This stress generates a meta-response by academia characterised mostly by compartmentalising and constraint, but also, at the margins, by generating counter-narratives. Coping strategies are deployed; marketisation may be ubiquitous but a metaphorical line is created 'not in my classroom, not at the expense of my scholarly subject'. Secondly, academics remind themselves – however reluctantly – that their university needs to attract students or jobs are at risk and thirdly, by focusing on the positive outcomes apparently attributed to marketing actions – from widening participation to shiny new buildings. Resistance also emerges from these tensions where coping is considered too passive as a response instead overt challenge to the status quo has developed.

These somewhat polar positions are clearly reflected in the specific papers in this special edition. We start with a paper from xxxxxx that calls for H.E. to reconcile its future (fate?) to a benign process of marketisation. Indeed xxx argues that a contemporary notion of customer co-creation means we should champion consumer behaviour in our students. The debate, of course, does not stop here. The next three papers offer what might be considered an 'insider' perspective. In essence the starting point for these authors is an established global, commercial H.E sector where useful questions are about *how* we best use, fit and adopt marketing practices to maximise organisational efficiency. Despite different contexts, methodologies and locus of attention, these three contributions bring to the fore how universities are managed as brands and thus *need* to be preoccupied with how their brand reputation and equity responds to prospective student's decision making processes. Read collectively they advocate 'customisation' as a generalised solution in generating student engagement. Whilst this aligns at least superficially with pedagogic notions of personalised learning and 'student-centred approaches,' it also unreflectively privileges individualism as the subject position. The last two papers illustrate potential challenger positions adopted in response to what they consider to be a corrosive effect of the market in H.E. Whilst they too offer recommendations for action – perhaps their most important contribution is in reimagining the space and place that a university could (should) occupy in society. These 'outsider' perspectives in distance themselves from the system and structures of H.E. both offer an innovative vantage point but are also easy targets to those who see impracticality in what they offer.