

**THE DISCOURSE OF THE MARKETISATION OF  
HIGHER EDUCATION:  
A CASE STUDY OF A POST- 92 UNIVERSITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis proposes that the discursive practices of marketisation are transforming and degrading the distinctive educational character, meaning and operations of higher education; that the discourse and habitus of higher education's constitutive elements are being usurped by an economic ethos and an audit vocabulary. The purpose of the study is to demystify marketisation and explore its implications for the people who work, teach and learn in a post-92 university. An examination of the history of higher education reveals that its nature and purpose have always been closely linked to its funding, but marketisation eschews its traditional nature and purpose and focuses on its funding. It shifts the normative discourse of higher education towards a socio-economic imperative and an audit culture. Marketisation is an epistemological veil for a shape-shifting political neoliberal economic doctrine; an ideology that uses state power to impose market imperatives that serve utilitarian individualism and monetary wealth through the discursive strategies and techniques of New Public Management which reconceptualises higher education in the image of a competitive corporate market.

This study adopts a multi-level, multi-method approach and mobilises Critical Discourse Analysis to explore the proliferation, unintended consequences and implications of marketisation in a single university. There is evidence of dissonance, struggle, contradictory and strained life-worlds as the new logics of marketisation displace, subordinate and co-opt existing traditional logics. The findings suggest that the short-term benefits for those in positions of power are outweighed by the negative implications for academics and students. A narrow focus on employability degrades higher education, eviscerates academic professionalism, and damages the soul and sinew of educated society. The recommendations include a change in discursive behaviour so that over time an alternative discourse may emerge and displace the hegemony of the market imperative.

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# DEDICATION

In Loving Memory of

MARIE

*ANAM CARA*



## **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis or any portion of it has not been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification to this or any other university or other institute of learning. This thesis is the result of my own work. All sources are acknowledged and referenced.

## ABBREVIATIONS

CAT	College of Advanced Technology
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfBIS	Department for Business Innovation and Skills
DfE	Department for Education
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DLHE	Destination of Leavers from Higher Education
EMA	Education and Maintenance Allowance
CDP	Committee of Polytechnic Directors
CVCP	Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals
HEFC	Higher Education Funding Council
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council of England
LFHE	Leadership Foundation for Higher Education
NAB	National Advisory Board
NCIHE	National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing)
NSS	National Student Survey
NUS	National Union of Students
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
OIA	Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
PCFE	Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
RAE	Research Assessment Exercise
REF	Research Excellence Framework
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
UCAS	Universities Central Admissions System
UCCA	Universities Central Council on Admissions
UCL	University College London
UCU	University and College Union
UFC	Universities Funding Council
UGC	University Grants Committee
UUK	Universities UK

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Over the last four decades higher education in the UK has undergone a long process of reform resulting in radical marketisation. Following decades of government reform initiatives the process of marketising higher education was consolidated by the Browne Report in 2010 and accelerated in subsequent government policy and legislation resulting in a paradigm shift in terms of funding, restructuring and remodelling the higher education sector. The term 'marketisation' (Williams, 1995) refers to the application of neoliberal economic theory to the provision of goods and services, in this case higher education. Central to the marketisation of higher education is that most of the funding universities now receive comes from student-paid tuition fees rather than government grants which positions universities in direct competition with each other. Brown with Carasso (2013:1) suggest that the marketisation programme is the most radical in the "history of UK higher education" and one of the most radical amongst other well established marketised systems such as Australia, New Zealand, USA and Canada. Its consequences and implications for the internal life-world of a post-92 university are the focus of this study.

Marketisation is the manifestation of a political neoliberal economic agenda which seeks to privatise, or offload, public services to the individual so that they have to be bought at market value rather than have them provided by the state. Neoliberalism holds that the free-market and market led growth are the principle and most important sources of wealth, and that the wealth created by a free market will trickle down from the successful to benefit all members of society. It proposes that the market is intrinsically more efficient than government, and to gain greater efficiency government should be re-designed according to market methods and incentives (Self, 1999:26-8). Neoliberalism is seen by some as a new phase in the evolution of capitalism

(Dumenil & Levy, 2013), but it is also often referred to as the 'market economy' (Saad-Filho and Johnson, 2005), or the 'market society' (Mautner, 2010). Neoliberalism is a multifaceted all-encompassing political ideology. Its most basic feature is the systematic use of state power to impose market imperatives in a domestic process that is replicated internationally (Saad-Filho and Johnson, 2005). Hanlon (2016:186) suggests that its aim is to generate a new form of subject subjectivity, nurtured through constant vigilance and the maintenance of competition and fostered through the market. Neoliberalism is said to transmogrify every human domain and endeavour including politics, economics, society, values, cultures, states, markets, education and discourses whereby all conduct is economic conduct and all spheres of existence are framed and measured in economic terms and metrics (Harvey, 2005; Wendy Brown<sup>1</sup>, 2015:10).

Although Hanlon (2016) proposes that neoliberalism has roots in the industrial revolution, its rise in the UK can be traced to the OPEC oil crisis in the early 1970s which resulted in the conjunction of high levels of inflation and unemployment ('stagflation'). The then Labour Prime Minister Callaghan explained the crisis as a failure of education to generate an 'educated society'. The idea of a market was proposed as a mechanism for reforming what he saw as an archaic, inflexible higher education system in need of a shakeup (Shattock, 2013). That shakeup began with the Thatcher government in 1979 and continued under the Major (1990-97), Blair (1997-2008), Brown (2008-10), Cameron (2010-2016), and May (2016- ) governments.

The need to reform the internal management systems of UK universities was confirmed and detailed in the Jarratt Report of 1985 (CVCP 1985). Since then on-going 'reform' initiatives (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004) reflect Williams (1995) view that "efficiency is increased when governments buy

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<sup>1</sup> There is more than one author with the same spelling of the surname Brown and the same publication year - I distinguish them by including the first name where appropriate.

academic services from producers, or subsidise students to buy them, rather than supplying them directly, or indirectly through subsidy of institutions” (p179). Neoliberalism as an ideological governing rationality requires a distinctive style of policy-making that has come to be known as New Public Management which has dramatic consequences both for the policy environment in which universities work and for the internal life-world of universities (Ferlie, Ashburner, Fitzgerald, & Pettigrew, 1996).

New Public Management (NPM) resolved an apparent contradiction between the neoliberal focus on competitive free-markets and its status as a government instrument. Advocates of NPM, such as Osborne and Gaebler (1993), argued that a competitive environment fostering enterprise, meeting the needs of customers and measuring outcomes was the only way to deal with the evidence of government failure. This meant faster ways of budgeting, managing and the delivery of services, while implementing market mechanisms such as separating purchasers from producers, encouraging user responsiveness, turning citizens into customers and making public services (that is, universities) compete with one another.

NPM replaced the traditional public administration model (Reed, 2002a) and imposed a new focus on the ‘bottom line’, while importing the ‘rational’, ‘productive’, ‘efficient’ and ‘modern’ managerial practices of the business world (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2007: 59) into the management of universities, for example, cutting budgets, freezing appointments, tightening government controls, and emphasising the role of competition to promote efficiency and quality. Deem et al (2008) suggest that NPM details the restructuring of public services delivery, organisation and management in ways that facilitate a flexible and changing balance between ‘strategic control’ and ‘operational control’. Because of its corporate roots it is variously referred to as ‘new managerialism’ (Deem, 2001) or ‘neoliberal managerialism’ (Reed, 2002a) but more generally as New Public

Management (Deem 1998, 2001; Exworthy & Halford, 1999; Meek, 2002; Reed, 2002a; Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2008).

The marketisation of higher education is in effect operationalised by NPM (Lynch, 2014). NPM, as an interventionist management ideology and a mode of governance (Deem et al., 2008), is designed to implement the neoliberal agenda through institutionalising market principles in the governance of public sector bodies (Reed, 2002a). NPM prioritises private 'for-profit' sector values of efficiency and productivity in the regulation of public bodies on the assumption that private sector values are superior to those of public bodies (Kettl, 2000). Through both Thatcherite 'corporatism' and Blairite New Labour 'modernising' NPM has achieved discursive supremacy and contributed in no small way to the hegemony of neoliberal 'marketisation' policy as the dominant political reality in the public sector over the past four decades.

NPM policies and techniques facilitated the gradual shift to a marketised system in higher education. NPM's audit and accountability ideology, culture and discursive strategies and technologies generate their own extensive bureaucratic control systems which are legitimated by reference to the policy priorities of market competition, consumer need, and performance quality (Reed, 2002a). Deem et al (2008:1) suggest that the organisational "re-imagining and reshaping" of UK universities since the mid-1980s have been fundamentally directed by the ideological context and organisational strategy set down by NPM.

A prevailing view in the higher education literature throughout the 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century was that the changes wrought by neoliberalism and NPM were likely to generate all kinds of unintended consequences (Ferlie et al., 1996; Exworthy & Halford, 1999; Deem 2001; Pollitt, 2003; Shattock, 2003) and that the long-term implications of the restructuring and cultural re-engineering of the academic profession were

likely to be profound. This is borne out in recent literature which suggests that while many have benefited, not least the universities themselves, the everyday reality of university life for many academics is one of loss of control over the organisation of their work and their professional culture as marketisation transforms universities from 'communities of scholars' into workplaces' (Trowler, 2001). The unintended consequences and implications of the marketisation of higher education are the focus of this study.

There is a growing literature on the effects of marketisation most of which sees students as customers, academics as deprofessionalised casual labour, and university leaders as without influence, but the literature is scarce on how this is played out in their everyday working lives. Firth (1935:37) makes the case that it is in *discourse*, that is, the use of language in specific contexts that words acquire meaning and views can be expressed. Through discourse new understandings are acquired. Discourses can be appropriated or colonised, and put into practice by enacting, inculcating or materialising them. Asimakou & Oswick (2010) have shown how a business discourse can recontextualise the lifeworld of a research and development unit. In the same way marketisation is recontextualising the habitus of higher education. Recontextualisation has an ambivalent character (Bernstein, 1996). It can be seen as the 'colonisation' of one field or institution by another, and it can also be seen as the deliberate appropriation, or incorporation of external discourses into strategies of particular groups aimed at changing a particular field. Higher education is an example of a field that is being recontextualised as a business whereby the discourse of marketisation is increasingly evident in a distinctive idiom and tone that shifts the traditional normative discourse of higher education towards a socio-economic imperative and an audit culture.

Recontextualising higher education means that market expressions such as 'efficiency', 'targets' and 'audits', imported from the business world of

monetarised exchange become normalised in everyday language. Over time they blend in easily without any indication that their meanings might be controversial or contested, or their connotations misleading, or that the implications of using them might be detrimental to the cultural values constitutive of the domain of higher education. Normalisation tends to eschew meaningful discussion and resistance. It makes alternative views unacceptable and unsayable. Normalisation bestows the current discourse of the market in the context of higher education with an apparently unassailable hegemony.

Marketisation moves higher education away from the traditional idea of a liberal education as a 'public good' towards instrumentalising and monetising it in order to fulfil economic demands. It transforms higher education into a product to be consumed rather than an opportunity to be experienced. It re-positions the function of higher education in society. It shifts the balance of power to students and as such it redefines universities in terms of economic value and customer satisfaction. It impacts higher education at every level, the macro, meso and micro. It has implications for all three estates: students, academics and administration. It challenges the traditional nature and purpose of higher education; the production of public knowledge and ultimately democracy; the governance of universities; the working lives of academics, and the conception of the term 'student'.

The thesis at the heart of this study is that the distinctive educational character, meaning and operations of higher education are being transformed and degraded through the discursive practices of marketisation; that the discourse and habitus of higher education's constituent elements are being usurped by an economic ethos and an audit vocabulary. The study explores how marketisation is proliferated through discursive practices. It examines the unintended consequences and implications of marketisation for students, academics, managers and leaders in a contemporary university.



The study draws on a number of perspectives to provide the conceptual and theoretical approach and framework for an examination of the marketisation of higher education. It adopts a Critical Realist approach which is compatible with the critical stance and methodology of Critical Discourse Analysis (Chouliaraki & Fairclough, 1999) which itself is based on the view that discourse has the power to transform social structures and relationships, both within institutions and in society at large. The discourse of the marketisation of higher education in the UK is interesting not least because of marketisations' recent acceleration, but also because marketisation is poorly understood. An understanding of marketisation, the struggles around it, and the consequences and implications of its discourse make the study of the marketisation of higher education worthwhile.

### **1.1 Research Rationale**

As an academic I have observed a distinct change in the discourse of higher education over the last two decades and experienced ontological insecurity when the point and purpose of higher education seemed to shift on its axes. This research is the result of a deep need to find out what was happening in higher education, in particular the distinct change in its perceived point and purpose. I wanted to understand what was driving the extraordinary non-academic pressures being imposed on me, my colleagues and my students. I needed to develop my own understanding of what the catch-all word 'marketisation' actually means other than better marketing and glossier advertising. I needed to understand the implications of the new discursive practices and control techniques that have gradually become normalised.

In the UK the traditional view of higher education was of higher learning for the purpose of a liberal education, which is associated with Cardinal John Henry Newman's (1852, 1976) *The Idea of a University*, in which he states the purpose of a liberal education is "the cultivation of the intellect as an end which may reasonably be pursued for its own sake" (p170). This view was

partially endorsed more than a century later in the Robbins Report (1963: S25) which states the purpose of higher education as being to: “promote the general powers of the mind”, but unlike Newman he cited Confucian Analects in defending the instrumental value of a university education. Robbins (ibid) said “...there is no betrayal of values when institutions of higher education teach what will be of some practical use [...] what is taught should be taught in such a way as to promote the general powers of the mind. The aim should be to produce cultivated men and women” (1963:6), but otherwise Robbins made no changes to the traditional view of higher education. I have no quarrel with an instrumental approach to education but when enquiry and curiosity are completely replaced with a narrow instrumental focus it undermines the nature and purpose of higher education.

The history of higher education has been a continuous struggle regarding the idea of a university (Barnett, 2016), that is, the nature and purpose of universities, whether they should disseminate existing wisdom or search for new knowledge, or whether they ought to produce knowledge for its own sake or as a means of social change. Rather than the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake the marketised university commodifies higher education. As a commodity higher education is homogenised and constrained and becomes an instrument for training large numbers of job-ready graduates cheaply and in minimum time (Callinicos, 2006:11) rather than educating them to “disentangle and examine critically...” as Moberly (1949:70) put it, or as Nisbet said: “civilising and sensitising [...] them both morally and aesthetically” (1972: 71).

In order to be sustainable as solvent, independent institutions within the sector and in society generally, universities cannot be expected to remain idylls of learning for their own sake; universities have always had to sustain themselves financially, and they have successfully commercialised their products and services for over 800 years. The problem is that marketisation

is not interested in promoting the 'general powers of the mind', and there is an ever widening gap between idyllic learning and universities as wholly instrumental corporate institutions training workforces for the prevailing economic system rather than educating them for life. Wendy Brown (2011:123) reminds us that the proximity of universities to the world of finance is not new, but "what is novel is the degree to which the university is being merged with the corporate world and remade in its image- its powers, needs and values". In the process the very nature of education is transformed. She says:

*"[marketisation] replaces education aimed at deepening and broadening intelligence and sensibilities, developing historical consciousness and hermeneutic adroitness, acquiring diverse knowledge and literacies, becoming theoretically capacious and politically and socially perspicacious, with [forms of] education aimed at honing technically-skilled entrepreneurial actors adept at gaming any system" (2011:123).*

Business schools are particularly prone to these pressures due to the expectation that their income will be sufficient to fund other schools in the university where sources of income from research or executive education may be limited. However, the focus of this research is not the gap *per se*, my concern is with the consequences of the change to a corporate image. Wendy Brown (2011) suggests that marketisation will be complete when all academic knowledge, and all university activity are valued according to their capacity to augment human, corporate and finance capital but it will have cost "the disappearance of an educated citizenry and the soul and sinew of democracy" (2011:24).

Marketisation raises fundamental questions about the nature and purpose of higher education. An inevitable corollary is greater stratification whereby elite institutions seek to differentiate themselves as 'world-class' (Roger Brown, 2015), while success for those at the bottom end of the market is provisional on their ability to attract students and fill places rather than on their attempts to improve the quality of their programmes and their teaching.

Transforming universities into corporates questions the development of public knowledge and ultimately democracy (Wendy Brown, 2015); the demise of collegial governance questions the management and leadership of universities (Shattock, 2013); the transformation of academics into a “managed constituency” (Neave, 2009:20) questions their sense of professional identity, and the re-conceptualisation of students as customers questions their understanding of the point and purpose of higher education (Furedi, 2011). The changes resulting in these questions have been imposed ‘top-down, but they are constituted through discursive practices and behaviours at all levels. This study commences with a review of the traditional nature and purpose of higher education to gain a better understanding of how these changes have come about and to gain a critical perspective on the present.

## **1.2 Aims and Objectives**

The overall research question is how the discourse of marketisation impacts the higher education life-world? The aim is to demystify what marketisation means in terms of higher education in the UK, and explore how it plays out in the everyday university life of people who teach, learn and work in higher education. The empirical part of the study focuses on the unintended consequences for one institution and on the implications of marketisation for the people who work there. The specific research objectives include:

- examine the history of higher education in order to contextualise its current *raison d'être*;
- investigate what marketisation means in the context of higher education;
- examine what ‘marketisation’ means for university management and leadership practice;
- explore the implications of marketisation for academics, managers, students and leaders in a contemporary university;
- make recommendations for the improvement of practice.

The methodology is a qualitative interpretivist one that combines inductive and abductive approaches (Alvesson & Skoldberg 2009). The view adopted is that reality exists independently of our knowledge or understanding of it. Reality and our understanding of it occupy different domains: an intransitive ontological dimension and a transitive epistemological dimension. Rather than uncovering the mechanisms and structures underpinning phenomena this view recognises that the social world is discursively construed (represented) in many and various ways, and that which construals come to have effects depends on a range of conditions (Fairclough, 2010:4). The study engages Fairclough's (1985, 1999, 2006, 2010, 2015) Dialectical Relational Analysis, hereafter referred to as mainstream Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which sees discourse as a form of social practice and focuses on explaining and understanding social phenomena through analysis of texts and interactions.

Unlike linguistic analysts who are generally concerned with language for its own sake CDA is not concerned with analysis of language for its own sake. Although it employs Halliday's (1985,2014) Systemic Functional Linguistics in the analysis of texts which stresses the importance of social and situational context in the production and development of language, CDA's main concern is the way in which language and discourse are used to achieve social goals and in the part this use plays in social maintenance and change. Its focus is analysis of the dialectical relations between discourse and other elements such as the internal relations of discourse, for example, power/control. CDA sees language as a power tool and the understanding is that discourse is an integral aspect of both power and control. At its most basic CDA is concerned with how power is exercised through language.

This study also draws on Critical Management Studies (CMS) as a counterpoint to mainstream management studies (Alvesson & Willmott, 1992b:9). CDA's overall goal of the unveiling and de-naturalising the issue

under scrutiny is suitable for investigating the discursive/linguistic implications of phenomena as multi-layered and with as much social impact as the marketisation of higher education. Despite some overlap CDA fits with CMS's research philosophy of questioning the "taken-for-granted assumptions about contemporary social reality" (ibid:11). The methodological framework is discussed in chapter five.

In order to contextualise the current radically marketised higher education sector and position the case study institution in context the literature review draws on government documents and texts concerning the purpose, structure and function of higher education to examine how the discourse has altered over the decades and to illustrate which issues were considered important or were questioned at certain times, and how and to what extent these issues have contributed to its current total marketisation. The study utilises an embedded (Yin,2009) single case study of a post-92 university to explore the implications of the discourse of marketisation for all three estates. Three semi-structured interviews with senior executives, four discussion groups with academics and students and individual conversations with administrators were conducted with a total of twenty one participants. A mixture of semi-structured interviews, informal conversations and group discussions were conducted using purposive sampling. The research strategy and methods are discussed in chapter six.

The research is UK focused but draws on the literature from outside the UK where appropriate, for example, there is an extant literature on well-established marketised systems from Australia, New Zealand, USA and Canada. The next section provides the background to the research followed by an overview of the remainder of the study.

### **1.3 Background**

Contemporary universities operate in an economically stringent and competitive environment which is shaped by rising student numbers,

globalisation, and government demands to “do more with less” (Waugh, 2003:86). They have become increasingly managerial (Deem, 2001) and are routinely characterised as business corporations competing in an education marketplace. They have been urged to become more “efficient”; and to “make better progress in harnessing knowledge with wealth creation” (DfES, 2003:2). They have been described as “engines of social mobility” (Mandelson, 2009), as “tickets to higher lifetime earnings” (Browne, 2010:2), and as “key institutions in the battle for competitive advantage in the global knowledge-based economy” (Scott, 2009:63). In general, marketisation takes for granted that maximum growth, productivity and competitiveness are the ultimate and sole goals of human activity, and consequently of higher education. The classical notion of equipping students with the tools to critically engage with and change society is replaced by educational values that are determined by market share (Brown with Carasso, 2013). This transformation represents an ideological shift from an academic habitus of scholarship to commercial practices and processes as the discourse of marketisation becomes a central feature of university life (Roger Brown, 2011).

Marketisation required the insertion of radically different modes of institutional governance and managerial control into universities, hence the adoption of NPM techniques which have their roots in hierarchical bureaucratic corporates where the focus is on performativity and top-down management (Trowler, 2001:185). NPM includes the use of internal cost centres; the fostering of competition between employees; the marketing of services and the monitoring of efficiency and effectiveness through the measurement of outcomes and individual staff performances. These techniques change the discourse and culture of universities and alter values to more closely resemble those found in corporates (Deem 1998). In line with general reform in the public sector, demands for accountability and performance measurement in universities have increased the intensity and rigour of administrative procedures (Gendron, 2008).

Vociferous demands from government, industry and media for more 'employable' graduates creates pressure on curriculum development and resource allocation. The corollary is a diminution of academic authority as universities are encouraged and "financially coerced" (Deem et al., 2008:52) to adopt neoliberal economic principles (discussed in chapter three) and come to terms with shifts in funding. Shifts away from traditional collegial donnish management towards corporate-like systems of 'executive power' mean that governing boards consisting mostly of members recruited from outside academia and often with private sector backgrounds tend to be the decision-makers (Shattock, 2012). An example is that boards of governors currently determine senior university managers' salaries, including the performance related element.

Marketisation polarises opinion (Barnett, 2011:39). Defenders of the traditional model claim that the change has contributed to a decline in the overall quality and stature of higher education, whereas advocates of the business-like model claim the change is necessary to enhance the capacities of universities to respond more efficiently to social and economic demands. On the one hand, marketisation is seen as providing the momentum for institutions to compete globally (Ferrara 2015: 137) and play a key role in the creation of a highly skilled, high waged economy by upgrading the education and skills of its workforce, many of whom benefit financially.

On the other hand, the argument is that the adoption of corporate practices has repositioned universities as servants of the knowledge economy, students as 'customers' and academics as service providers. It erodes the vital autonomy of universities by relocating power away from the academy to the marketplace (Kauppinen and Kaidesoja, 2014), changes which transform higher education into a form of 'academic capitalism' (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997), evidenced by a pronounced shift in terms of both what is taught and how it is taught. For example, theory and critique can be



downplayed, if not discarded altogether, in favour of applied knowledge, which is more suited to instrumental aims (Thornton, 2014:9). The term 'academic capitalism', originally coined by Bourdieu (1998) to refer to how the acquisition and expression of knowledge and expertise can be constituted as a form of cultural capital in an unfair and stratified society, is used by Slaughter and Leslie (1997) to refer to free-market capitalism and the commodification of knowledge, labour, and everyday life where specific forms of knowledge and professional expertise become the hard currency of an entrepreneurial university.

Middlehurst (1995:83) explains that the organisational features underpinning the traditional collegial university include consensus decision-making, academic freedom, autonomy, self-governance, and limited hierarchy based on seniority and expertise. Academics see themselves as professional scholars where their intellectual skills are demonstrated through higher education qualifications and professional training; a licence to practice on the basis of specialist knowledge and skills; socialisation into the norms and procedures of the professional group; adherence to the standards and codes of practice of a professional association, and a strong belief in, and need for, autonomy and discretion in directing their own work. Middlehurst (1995: 81) suggests that the success of universities depends on active academic commitment, participation, collaboration, and acceptance of the concept of "academic freedom", which cannot be commanded top-down and relies on being nurtured from the bottom up in a spirit of mutual trust". Collaboration combined with highly valued independence is central to a 'community of scholars' whereby a group of people work together to their mutual advantage in a democratic and cohesive, self-governing fashion.

The adoption of a corporate hierarchical structure of authority as imposed by NPM, first on the post-92 universities and following the Dearing Report (1997) on the pre-92 universities, is detrimental to the concept of autonomy

(Thornton, 2014:2), one of the guiding principles of the academy. It erodes collegiality and it erodes academic freedom (Olssen & Peters, 2005). The routine policing of research and teaching under the guise of excellence, competitiveness and standardisation contributes to the erosion of academic freedom, which itself contributes to the perception of marketisation as having negative consequences for the roles and functions of academics (Furedi, 2011). Constant measurement, monitoring and interference in teaching, along with overly prescriptive course content decisions limit professional autonomy and contribute to the deprofessionalisation of academics (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Neave (2009:29) *inter alia* suggests that the marketisation of higher education occurred largely unexamined and unopposed, which questions how academics, who like other professional workers are not passive objects of change, have supported strategies that are not always in their best interests. Reed (2005) suggests that academics consistently underestimated the threat that marketisation posed to the material and moral foundations on which their autonomy and authority depended. However, Hanlon (2016) would argue that control of academic practice is part of a political neoliberal objective of ‘total subsumption’ of society to capital, whereby the “whole of society is placed at the disposal of profit” (Negri, 1989:78, cited in Hanlon 2016).

Marketisation brings a new focus on the production of ‘world-class research’ to enable universities to enhance their prestige and compete on the world stage while at the same time requiring academics to teach more and more students (Thornton, 2014:5). Furedi (2011) suggests the pressure on academics to perform productively and reinvent themselves according to the dictates of the moment has a profound effect on academic careers causing them to become less fulfilling than they once were. In deprofessionalising and disenfranchising academics (Furedi, 2011; Barnett, 2011; Scullion, Molesworth, Nixon, 2011 *inter alia*) marketisation raises searching questions about academic identity formation and integrity (Brown with Carasso, 2013).

Marketisation conceptualises students as consumers, as agents for change in a competitive market, the advantages for them being increased information and greater transparency (Furedi, 2011). Student satisfaction surveys, such as The National Student Survey (NSS), provide more information on which students can base their choices. Public availability of league tables empower students to challenge, and thereby transform, higher education, which could of course be seen as a form of unwitting manipulation to act in accordance with the logic of the market (Naidoo, 2016). Marketisation changes the pedagogical relationship whereby the student becomes the consumer and the academic becomes the commodity provider, which means previously integrated relationships between academics and students become disaggregated due to opposing interests. Under marketisation students are constantly invited to frame themselves as customers (Barnett, 2011:44) who make rational choices between institutions. Consumerism and by implication marketisation, constructs an idealised version of the 'good student', as one that shops around and compares the market to ensure they receive the 'best value for money' (Naidoo & Williams, 2014).

Advocates of marketisation suggest that good students "know how they want to be taught and have ideas about how techniques can be improved" (1994 Group, 2007:6) but Bok (2003:161) makes the point that students cannot be sufficiently well-informed about universities and their own learning to make enlightened choices. First, students cannot know enough to know what they want; if they already knew what they need to know, why would they incur massive debts coming to university. Second, higher education is an 'experience good' whose value, point and purpose will only be evident once the student fully engages in the experience, and third, universities cannot offer individualised programmes to students.

There is considerable rhetoric around the notion of 'quality teaching', but quality teaching requires students to be intellectually challenged. It does not,

and cannot, always promote customer satisfaction (Naidoo, 2016). Quality teaching requires the teacher to engage *with* the student in order to engage the student in his or her learning experience. The relationship is asymmetrical, with limited mutuality. As Buber (2002) says the “relation of education is based on a concrete but one-sided experience of inclusion” (p118). In contrast to quality teaching, the threat of student litigation and complaint together with requirements to comply with extensive monitoring procedures encourages academics to opt for safe, surface level teaching, which is basically transmission mode with pre-specified content passed on to students and assessed in a conventional manner. The result is that the market rewards superficiality in teaching rather than depth of learning, and as Roger Brown (2015) and Bok (2003:162) remind us, it also rewards institutional reputation rather than academic standards.

The processes of marketisation are not predetermined, they have to be constituted within existing social practices and within particular political, economic and institutional configurations, consequently marketisation has resulted in an explosion of administrative processes and an elevation of the managerial classes (Wendy Brown, 2015; Dumenil & Levy, 2011:77; Enders, de Boer & Leisyte, 2009; Deem et al, 2008). The more competitive ethos between universities and the overt commercialisation within universities encouraged by marketisation challenges the traditional principles of collegial agreements of a ‘community of scholars’ whose primary purpose was to provide an environment for teaching, research and scholarly service. Smyth (2017:19) points out that none of what is occurring in and to universities is innocent; it is happening with the active support and explicit involvement at the highest levels of leadership in universities. The shift to a corporate-like ethos raises questions regarding the style, competency and capabilities required of university leaders and managers, as well as how marketisation is enacted, interpreted and perceived at senior levels in universities.

The experience of highly marketised, commercialised, corporatised American universities is often cited as one of decline in the overall quality and stature of the institutions. Ferrara (2015:1) uses Blake's<sup>2</sup> "marks of weakness, marks of woe" to describe what he calls the destruction of American higher education institutions, due he says, "to the adoption of corporate models of governance, the rise of an audit culture as part of marketisation and NPM with increasing standardisation and vocationalisation of the curriculum, and a forfeiture of the ideal of higher education as a public good". This research investigates whether similar marks of weakness and marks of woe are evident in a post-92 English university.

The underpinning focus of this study is how marketisation is played out through discourse. The word 'discourse' is used to refer to different things such as conversation and talk, the formal treatment of a subject, an expanded piece of reasoning and argument, or a unit of text (Mills, 2004:2). In Foucault's (1969) view, language and signs do not denote objects, instead they constitute these, and as such refer to areas of knowledge and knowledge production. Fairclough's (2010) view expands on this but sees discourse as a form of 'social practice' whereby the focus of analyses is on the dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event, such as marketisation, and the situation, institution, and social structures which frame it; the event is shaped by them but it also shapes them. Fairclough's view is the approach adopted in this study.

A consequence of discourse in reciprocally shaping our world is that it constitutes our perception of the status quo, which in turn determines who we vote for, who we hire and promote, to whom we grant authority, and to whom we turn in times of turmoil and uncertainty. Discourse shapes our perception of what higher education is and what it should be; of how it is

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<sup>2</sup> William Blake "London" in *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed David Erdman (Princeton: Princeton UP 1991) 26.

conceived, organised and understood. It shapes our perception of what business is, and it shapes students' expectations of their university education. Discourse is a particular way of representing the world through language and practice. To borrow from Fairclough (1993:5) one cannot "just use words" without them having any impact on the perception and creation of social reality, and particularly so in positions of authority or power. Grint's (2001) work on the paradoxes of leadership found that reason and rationality are not always as effective as persuasive discourse.

Where discourse becomes hubristic, that is, where those in positions of authority become intoxicated by power, fuelled by success, and/or contemptuous of the advice and criticism of others, it has the potential to destroy careers, wreck organisations, undermine institutions, threaten societal well-being and destabilise global security (Claxton, Owen and Sadler-Smith, 2014:2). An example is the extreme hubristic discourse of the Bush and Blair alliance which resulted in the invasion of Iraq in 2003. However, the concern of this research is not hubristic discourse *per se*, it is the discourse of market values and principles applied to higher education.

This study proposes that the shift from academic values to those of a market philosophy and a corporate ethos is facilitated sometimes by hubris but often by subtle forms of control, such as shifts in terminology whereby the language of economics, business and markets overwhelms the discourse of higher education and scholarship and over a period of time becomes naturalised and a "normative order of reason" (Wendy Brown, 2011:9-10) which ultimately transmogrifies higher education.

The problem is that the discourse of market values and principles homogenises and constrains the everyday discourse of social reality. Over time the use of legitimate market vocabularies "marginalises, stifles and eventually obliterates alternative ways of expression" (Meyer and Rowan, 1992:31). It becomes difficult to talk differently and given the fundamental

dialogue between language and social reality it then becomes difficult to act differently. Seldon (1991: 58) points out that the discourse of marketisation “washes over and overwhelms the language of collectivism, humanism, egalitarian Christianity and the ethical discourses of the professions”. Trowler (2001) warned that discourse can “disguise the nature of social reality partly by denying the language needed to be able to think about and describe alternatives” (p186). In other words, to quote Shakespeare’s Hamlet (cited In Alexander, 1971:78) the “wit is diseased” referring to his lost capacity to reason due to the imposition of degraded standards [at the court of Denmark].

The literature on the impact of marketisation on students, academics and management is growing. Students are seen as consumers and/or customers (Naidoo & Williams, 2016); academics as deprofessionalised casual labour (O’Donnell, 1998:169); management processes as corrosive and destructive (Klikauer, 2013), and university leaders as powerless and without influence (Bolden & Gosling, 2006). Marginson and Considine (2000:9) talk of a “new kind of executive power, characterised by a will to manage”, and open hostility to any form of criticality. The literature suggests there is a subtle form of institutionally sanctioned violence marked by the discourse of ‘survival’. Palfreyman and Warner (1996:5) warned of a clear fault line having appeared between those who manage and those who are managed, and a ‘them’ and ‘us’ mentality” having emerged in the academy. Slater and Tonkiss (2001) suggest that marketisation threatens established values:

*“Market mediation has often been perceived as inexorable or irresistible, indeed as epitomising the globalising power of modern western capitalism. If anything can be bought and sold, then there is constant movement from cultural or other social values to economic value. On this basis alone, market society has been widely understood as corroding other value systems” (2001:25).*

This research is concerned with the value systems of the people who work, teach and learn in a post-92 university, and their perceptions of the

unintended consequences and implications of marketisation on their everyday working lives. The rationale for the choice of a post-92 institution is that the polytechnics were among the first to display manifestations of marketisation when transformed as independent corporations following the 1988 Higher Education Act and then as fully fledged universities following the 1992 Act. As former local-government regulated institutions they brought with them a tradition of hierarchical line-management of all staff, of considerable bureaucracy and a different tradition of university governance.

#### **1.4 Outline of the Remainder of the Thesis**

There are three distinct parts to this study, the first part consists of a review of the relevant literature and encompasses chapters two, three and four. Part two consists of the methodological framework and consists of chapters five and six. Part three consists of chapters seven, eight and nine, which present the empirical elements of the study along with the analysis and discussion. Chapter ten concludes the study.

The next chapter, chapter two, examines an abridged literature on the history of higher education in the UK in order to develop an understanding of its current nature and purpose and to determine how and why marketisation came about, and at what point the discourse changed to an economic imperative. Chapter three investigates the literature on markets, marketisation and its underpinning ideologies neoliberalism, managerialism and NPM. It examines how NPM facilitates the implementation of the neoliberal agenda in higher education. Chapter four examines what the literature has to say on the meaning of marketisation for university governance and its impact on higher education institutions, their leaders, managers, students and academics. Chapter four concludes the literature review with the conceptual framework.

Chapter five introduces the methodological framework. It explains discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA) as well as the approach



adopted in this study. This chapter sets the scene for the research strategy and data collection methods which are explained in chapter six.

Chapter seven begins the empirical part of the study. It critically analyses the discourse of the three main government documents that constitute the total marketisation of higher education in England. The empirical part is continued in chapter eight where the case study is presented and analysed along with the embedded case and four units of enquiry. Chapter nine discusses the findings in light of both the literature and the central research question.

Chapter ten concludes with a reflection on the relationship between the literature and the findings. It includes contributions to both knowledge and practice and makes recommendations for practice. It identifies areas for further research and concludes with an evaluative account of my own work.

The next chapter presents an overview of the history of higher education in England since its inception in the twelfth century until its re-conceptualisation as a market in the Browne Report in 2010.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HIGHER EDUCATION IN ENGLAND

This chapter charts the issues and policies that moved higher education through revolution and industrialisation to expansion, socio-economic change and ultimately to the Browne Report (2010) and radical marketisation. The aim is to determine the current 'nature and purpose' of higher education and thereby contextualise the discourse of marketisation.

The literature on contemporary higher education suggests the pace of change is unprecedented but the history of UK higher education is one of extreme turbulence and shifting priorities. Discussions and debate regarding the nature and purpose of higher education in England can be traced to its foundation in the twelfth century. Universities have always been at the centre of change due to their proximity to power in serving the state and/or the church. Having survived the Reformation and the Civil War, nineteenth century industrialisation saw universities reformed and developed as agencies of social cohesion, forming an elite intellectual aristocracy (Anderson, 2006:1). Since 1945 higher education policy has been dominated by social and economic issues such as equality of opportunity, social mobility, and widening access, as well as its contribution to national manpower. Many of the issues that arose during its long history remain in the higher education of the twenty first century but they are now joined by ferocious economic competition and a business ethos in the form of marketisation.

For over 600 years Oxford and Cambridge were the only two universities in England and their legacy is evident in the politics and ramifications of twenty first century higher education. Rather than linear development higher education in England is complex and intertwined in politics, competition,

cooperation and other forms of interaction (March & Olsen 1996:256). Shattock (2012:5) asserts that the system is enmeshed in the machinery of state at many levels and it is this that contributes to an ongoing debate regarding its nature and purpose.

Over the years the formulation of policy was achieved through a network of interrelated bodies including but not limited to the Crown initially, and later the Minister responsible for Higher Education, the Treasury and intermediary bodies such as the University Grants Committee (UGC), National Advisory Body (NAB), Universities Funding Council (UFC), Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFE), the Higher Education Funding Councils (HEFCs), and between 2001 and 2004, the Prime Minister's Office (Shattock, 2012: 2). In addition, there are universities, polytechnics and colleges themselves, whose interests, according to Shattock (2012:2) did "not always coincide", and whose representative bodies include the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP), the Committee of Polytechnic Directors (CDP), Universities UK (UUK), the 1994 Group, The Million Plus and the Russell Group, as well as the National Union of Students (NUS).

## **2.1 Early Higher Education in England**

When founded in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries, Oxford and Cambridge were modelled on Paris as a 'university of masters' which was established shortly after Bologna in 1088 (Anderson 2006: 2). In Bologna the focus was on law and medicine whereas in Paris the focus was on philosophy and theology. In the Middle-Ages University education was vocational. Its primary function was to provide future servants for the church and state (Anderson, 2006:4). Although they needed sanction from the Pope, and later the Crown, Oxford and Cambridge were never purely religious bodies. They depended on the protection of the state and served secular interests but they were not subject to the direct control of the bishops. They enjoyed autonomy and privilege as property-owning corporate

bodies with their own legal rights, including exemption from the jurisdiction of the towns in which they were situated. These exemptions lasted well into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries (Anderson, 2006:2).

The universities were communities of study and learning comprised of independent colleges, such as King's Hall at Cambridge (c1317, later Trinity College), and New College at Oxford (1379). As corporate bodies they had legal status and they usually had permanent financial endowments in the form of land provided by the founder and often added to by wealthy benefactors such as Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of King Henry VII<sup>th</sup> (Anderson, 2006:4). The colleges provided the teaching, controlled admissions and decided who was allowed to present themselves for a degree. Over time, new colleges were founded and old sites and buildings absorbed by the colleges which benefited hugely from the abolition of the monasteries following the Reformation (Anderson 2006:4).

When King Henry VIII<sup>th</sup> broke with Rome in 1535 the universities, as well as the church, came under close scrutiny. Expected to adhere to royal policy, enforced by Thomas Cromwell as chancellor of Cambridge, the universities experienced continuous reforms and purges (Anderson 2006:7) which continued in subsequent years as policy swung towards a more explicit Protestantism under King Edward VI<sup>th</sup>, then shifted to Catholicism under Queen Mary 1<sup>st</sup>, and back again under Queen Elizabeth I<sup>st</sup>. In 1571 the universities had their corporate status confirmed by an Act of Parliament, and from 1604 onwards they were given two seats each in parliament (Anderson, 2006:9), thereby strengthening their ties with the state. However, they had to conform to the new state religion; from 1581 all Oxford undergraduates over the age of sixteen had to subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles. This did not apply to Cambridge until 1616 when a royal mandate demanded that degree recipients at both universities had to subscribe to the

Book of Common Prayer and the Thirty-Nine Articles<sup>3</sup> (Lawson and Silver, 1973:102). These restrictions limited access to Anglicans and were not lifted until the second half of the nineteenth century.

Compared to the upheavals of the Reformation the reign of Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> was comparatively peaceful. In 1559 the queen visited the universities in person and attended disputations. King James 1<sup>st</sup> also required Cambridge officials to account for the enforcement of royal instructions, and both James and Charles I<sup>st</sup> monitored Oxford in the same way. It could be argued that the QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) is its modern equivalent in terms of inspections. However, closer ties with the Crown strengthened the political and social position of the universities which meant that academic posts were a favourite for royal and aristocratic patronage (Anderson, 2006).

Royal interest was accompanied by the growth of oligarchic government within the universities, replacing the self-government of the medieval masters. According to Stone (1964:69) the heads of colleges or heads of houses became the effective power ruling through the Hebdomadal Board (Oxford) and the Caput (Cambridge). The chancellor, who had formally been elected by the masters, was usually a royal nominee, and likely to be a nobleman with influence at court. Although it was not yet a purely ceremonial office, they did not live on the spot and everyday administration was left to the vice-chancellor who was normally a head of house. According to Stone (1964) during the reign of Charles I<sup>st</sup> Archbishop Laud at Oxford was exceptional in being a clerical chancellor, and a former don. His ecclesiastical policies led to his eventual downfall and execution but the statutes and policies he introduced in 1636 governed Oxford until the Victorian Age.

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<sup>3</sup> The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion (or the XXXIX Articles) are the historically defining statements of doctrines and practices of the Church of England and form part of the Book of Common Prayer which resulted from the English Reformation and excommunication of Henry VIII in 1533 and Elizabeth 1<sup>st</sup> in 1570.

An Act of Parliament in 1571 confirmed the universities corporate status and privileges, and their right to elect Members of Parliament (MPs) granted in 1604 was not abolished until 1948. “*The universities*”, said Charles I<sup>st</sup>, “*were the seminaries of virtue and learning from whence the better part of our subjects by good education may bee disposed to religion, virtue and obedience of our lawes, and enabled to do service both in church and commonwealth*”, (cited in Lloyd-Jones, 1981:152). In return for patronage the Crown expected the universities unquestioning support for political and religious authority, and for the hierarchical social order. The purpose of the universities was to uphold the then theological orthodoxy and they were expected to follow its twists and turns (Anderson, 2006). Oxford was more sympathetic to the old religion, but Cambridge was a stronghold of reformers, and later of the Puritan wing of the Church of England (ibid).

In the mid seventeenth century religion and politics caused division and the universities again experienced successive purges. Unlike the sixteenth century visitations, these purges showed relatively little interest in changing what was taught, or in reforming university constitutions; their main effect was to eject, replace or reinstate college fellows. The Grand Remonstrance of 1641 proposed to “*reform and purge the fountains of learning*” (Twigg, 1990:60) and in 1644-45 a parliamentary visitation at Cambridge ejected about half the heads of houses and fellows, and replaced them with scholars who had more sympathetic religious views (Anderson, 2006:10). Although the personnel changed, the property and corporate privileges of the colleges survived. Similar measures followed at Oxford, and both universities underwent further extensive purges during the most radical phase of the revolution (Twigg, 1990). When Oliver Cromwell was in power a degree of stability returned despite the appointment of reforming commissions for each university in 1653. Wider university reform was advocated including the idea of a university in London and a college to serve Northern England, at Manchester or Durham.

The Durham project had the support of Cromwell, but the radicals were more concerned to impose their own religious preferences than to change the social basis of education, and they had little support within Oxford or Cambridge. Thinkers like Thomas Hobbs argued that the expansion of education before 1640 had itself been a cause of great upheaval “*the Universities have been as mischievous to this Nation, as the Wooden Horse was to the Trojans*”, (cited in Gasgoine,1989:18). “*Not only did they teach dangerous ideas, but too many men had been encouraged in ambitions which could not be satisfied, and as professions like the church became overcrowded their frustration turned into political and religious radicalism*”. Curtis (1962:33) says this was “*not the last time that alienated intellectuals were to be blamed for revolution*”.

Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 there were fewer purges and those who had suffered for their loyalty to king and church were restored to their posts, but according to Anderson (2006:11) university numbers never fully recovered to their previous levels. He suggests this reflected a deliberate policy to discourage recruitment from classes outside the wealthy and the landed. Religious orthodoxy was more narrowly enforced than before and former dissidents within the Anglican fold were redefined as ‘Dissenters’ or ‘Nonconformists’ and excluded from the universities (Anderson, 2006:12). When the Roman Catholic James II<sup>nd</sup> came to the throne he was determined to extend tolerance to his coreligionists and attempted to appoint them to university posts. Magdalen College Oxford resisted the intrusion of Catholic fellows, an event that was celebrated in the nineteenth century as a ‘heroic episode in the making of the 1688 revolution’ (Anderson, 2006:11). After 1688 the sanctity of property, including the privileges of corporate bodies, became entrenched in English political thinking, and this provided a form of defence for university autonomy.

The Whigs who dominated politics after 1688 were relatively moderate and the last real university purges took place after 1715 when Oxford was

suspected of Jacobite resistance to the Hanoverian succession. For a time politicians contemplated new 'visitations' of the universities "*to reform and correct all excesses and defects so that these places of public education may be made in the best manner to ...*" account for their institutions, (Prideaux cited in Gascoigne, 1989:411) and there was a parliamentary Bill in 1719 but these plans were dropped. It was the view of Speaker Arthur Onslow at that time that the purpose of universities should not be the defence of orthodoxy, but the "*search for knowledge, which can only be had by the freedom of debate*" (ibid:417). However, Anderson (2006) suggests a more common reason for leaving universities alone was that both Whiggish Cambridge and Tory Oxford could now be relied on to toe the party line and sustain the social order.

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries attitudes to university education changed; it was considered to be an indispensable attribute of a gentleman (Brockliss, 2016:137) and student numbers soared. First the aristocracy and then the landed gentry became enthusiasts for university education as a way of training their sons for leadership of their local communities, or for service in the expanding state bureaucracy (Searby, 1997: 566). Increasingly the role of the universities was seen to offer a moral and cultural education and to provide the aristocracy and gentry with a set of common experiences and values (Anderson 2006:8). Known as the 'educational revolution' the balance within the universities shifted away from the higher vocational faculties towards a liberal education which remained a feature of higher education (Anderson, 2006) until the rise of marketisation in the late twentieth century.

By 1800 universities had been established in Dublin, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, and Manchester and in 1828 the University of London was established as a joint-stock company. It had no charter and no ties with either church or state (Whyte, 2015:41). It did not have religious tests for either students or staff. In response, the church founded the rival Kings



College London in 1831 (Anderson 2006:27), which had a charter and staff had to conform to the Church of England articles. Both universities were open to students irrespective of religious denomination but unlike Oxford and Cambridge (Whyte, 2015:45) neither of the new universities had degree awarding powers. In 1836 the state founded a new non-sectarian University of London as a solely degree awarding, non-teaching institution. The former University of London, since renamed University College London (UCL), and King's College became the first affiliated colleges. Over the years the number of affiliates grew and in 1898 the university was given a federal structure whereby many of the existing colleges in London became schools of the University, making the state funded UCL decisive in the development of higher education in England.

The University of London was influenced by what came to be known in 1900 (Anderson, 2006:19) as the 'Humboltian university' whose key principle was the 'union of teaching and research'. The idea was that professors should be both teachers and original scholars, and teaching itself should not be simply the transmission of facts, but a creative process in which the student learned through discovery and was trained in the techniques of original research. Student and teacher were seen as a 'community of scholars'. Humboldt saw teaching as sterile and elementary if it was not based on research, but research itself lacked life if it was not subject to the test of teaching, and transmitted personally to students.

The Humboltian view of the union of teaching and research is not endorsed in Newman's (1852;1976) approach. He saw liberal education in *The Idea of a University* as one which develops a 'philosophical habit' relating to the individual's studies, to the 'pure and clear atmosphere of thought' fostered by the university as a community of learning: a habit of mind, which lasts through life, of which the attributes include freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation and wisdom. Newman's 'idea' was to teach the student "to see things as they are, to go right to the point, to disentangle a

skein of thought, to detect what is sophistical, and to discard what is irrelevant” (p60). It is not incompatible with either teaching or research, and until recently a loose combination of both views regarding the purpose of the university remained orthodox as the foundation of an academic way of life. However, as mentioned earlier the ‘pursuit of knowledge simply for its own end’ is certainly incompatible with financial survival. Individuals, like universities, have to survive financially.

### **2.1.1 New Universities**

In the late 1870s there was only four universities in England, Oxford, Cambridge, London, and Durham, but by 1910 the number had nearly tripled. Several of the new industrial centres established universities. For example, in 1851 Owens College at Manchester was founded as a non-denominational institution and colleges were established in Newcastle (1871), Leeds (1874), Sheffield (1879) and Birmingham (1880). At first these institutions could not award their own degrees and depended on the University of London. University colleges were also founded in Nottingham (1881), Reading (1892), Exeter (1901) and Southampton (1902), and several of the established colleges were given university charters including Birmingham (1900), Sheffield (1905), and Bristol (1909).

The new universities founded in the nineteenth century marked a seismic shift in higher education. Rather than a focus on a liberal education in classics and philosophy they focused on technology and science (Halsey & Trow, 2009:84), thereby espousing a different educational ideal from Oxbridge. Some of them established links with local industry and provided subjects such as chemistry, metallurgy or textiles, which brought higher education closer to the people. In addition, they increased the number of university places. For example, from 1900 to 1938 the number of students at British universities increased from about 20,000 to 50,000 (Robbins Report 1963: Table 3). Although state scholarships were introduced in the 1920s and numerous teacher training and technical colleges catered for

students from lower-middle and working classes, a class bias remained (Anderson 2006:118). In addition there was a strong gender bias whereby women were denied access to universities, a situation that changed only gradually over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### **2.1.2 Two Powerful Committees: UGC and CVCP**

In 1889, according to Vernon (2001:259), the Treasury provided a grant of £15,000 a year to be distributed to 11 colleges depending on the amount of education they provided at university level and depending on how much extra funding they could be expected to generate. The grants were earmarked for vocational courses, technical education, or teacher training, and they helped the colleges to become universities. The then Board of Education also supplied grants for technical education and teacher training. Initially supervised by a series of ad hoc advisory committees, in order to avoid conflict between the Treasury and the Board, and with the advice of several Advisory Committees, the University Grants Committee (UGC) was set up in 1919.

The UGC was directly responsible to the Treasury. Its purpose was to allocate the state grants to the universities and university colleges, including Oxford and Cambridge, but, according to Shattock (1994:3) although the UGC reported to the Treasury, it was independent enough to act as a “buffer” and to secure the relative autonomy of the universities as well as protecting them from direct government interference. Under a system of quinquennial planning, the universities put forward detailed needs and the block grants they received for the next five years could be spent as they wished, (Anderson, 2006:114). The grants made the universities dependent on the state, since the state was then their main funder.

The UGC, comprised mostly of retired academics and administrators with an average age of seventy due to a ban on active university practitioners, worked closely with university heads who, around the same time, had

organised themselves for the purposes of mutual consultation as the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals (CVCP). Since the CVCP's inception in 1918 there have been many changes in its organisation. A review of the role and structure of the CVCP completed in 1988 led to the creation of an elected council, and in 1992, following the 1988 Education Reform Act, membership increased to over 100 institutions.

The CVCP played a pivotal role in the development of higher education in the UK. At a joint meeting in 1944 the CVCP confirmed its support for the UGC's continuance of its role as "the central and authoritative coordinating body" (CVCP Archive 1944). The UGC was dissolved in 1989 by the Thatcher government, but the CVCP remains. In 2000 the CVCP changed its name to become Universities UK (UUK). UUK is currently one of the most powerful bodies in UK higher education.

Throughout the Second World War, state grants had been maintained at 1938-39 levels despite the absence of many university staff on War duties and as a consequence some universities had been able to build up substantial financial reserves (Shattock 2012:9). Higher education was then held in very high regard, for example, when Beresford, then Secretary of the UGC, met with the Treasury in 1942 to discuss the continuation of the peace time level of funding he reminded his opposite number in the Treasury that the "universities stood for Civilisation with a Capital C" (cited in Shattock 2012: 9).

Following the War and despite the poor state of the government's finances, the parliamentary grant had risen from 33.6% in 1920/21 to 57.7% in 1946/7 (Halsey and Trow 2009:97). But despite a growing consensus that higher education needed to expand to accommodate ex-service men and women there was no reform at the tertiary level, and there was considerable resistance to the notion of expansion. Many passionate advocates for a

research culture and of the university as a community, such as Truscot and Moberly, did not see any need for expansion.

## **2.2 Expansion**

Post-War planning for higher education had begun in 1943 under the Inter-Departmental Committee on Further Education and Training (Shattock, 2012). Early in 1944 the Committee predicted that there would be a 50% increase in demand for places above the 50,000 recorded in 1938-39. The UGC asked the treasury to provide 75% of the cost of the additional numbers on the grounds that it would be “less injurious to academic independence than to have to be dependent on local authority contributions” (Shattock 2012:11). The Treasury responded generously with an increase in recurrent grant from £2.149m to £5.950m over the next two years (Shattock, *ibid*) and in 1946 its Labour successor further increased it to £9.450m.

Although there was no reform at the higher education level, there was reform at secondary level. The Butler Education Act (1944) raised school leaving age to 15 and provided free and universal secondary education (Jones and Lowe, 2002:113-4). It meant that thousands of working class men and women could avail of a secondary education and many stayed until age 18 and qualified for university entry (Shattock, 2012). Expansion at the tertiary level came indirectly as a result of the Butler Education Act (1944).

The War brought recognition of changing economic and technological needs. Numerous committees were appointed to investigate the provision of higher education in particular subject areas, and to make suggestions for future development. The Goodenough Report (1944) advised on medical education, the McNair Report (1944) on teacher training, the Percy Report (1945) on technology, the Barlow Report (1945) on manpower, the Teviot Report (1946) on dentistry (1946) and the Clapham Report (1946) on social

and economic research (Shattock 2012:12). These reports, sponsored by a range of Government departments, provide testimony to the enthusiasm for new developments and to the demands that were placed on universities and their finances.

### **2.2.1 Percy and Barlow Reports**

The Percy Report, *Higher Technological Education* (1945) and the Barlow Report, *Scientific Manpower* (1946) were commissioned by the Government to “consider the needs of higher technological education in England and Wales and the respective contribution to be made thereto by Universities and Technical Colleges” (Percy Report 1945:S1). The Percy Report recommended the designation and development of a number of Technical Colleges to offer full-time courses at a standard comparable to university degree courses as well as the creation of a National Council of Technology to coordinate and advise on policy and to secure standards in technical education (Percy Report 1945: S29, S35, S53). It focused on the non-university sector to provide “*technical assistants and craftsmen*” (Percy Report 1945:S4).

The Barlow Report, although supporting the call for strong technical colleges, was more concerned with scientists and university expansion. Asked to “consider the policies which should govern the use and development of our scientific manpower and resources during the next 10 years” (Barlow Report 1946:S1), the Barlow Committee recommended increasing the number of science graduates to double (Barlow 1946: S23).

The Percy and Barlow Reports agreed that the number of students in science and technology needed to increase. The Percy Report in particular claimed that:

*“The position of Great Britain as a leading industrial nation is being endangered by a failure to secure the fullest possible application of science to industry and second that this failure is partly due to deficiencies in education”* (Percy Report, 1945: S2).

The Barlow Report declared that:

*“If we are to maintain our position in the world and restore and improve our standard of living, we have no alternative but to strive for that scientific achievement without which trade will wither, our Colonial Empire will remain undeveloped and our lives and freedom will be at the mercy of a potential aggressor”.*

*“The problem of scientific manpower during the next decade falls into two distinct parts. The immediate tasks are to bring back our qualified scientists to civil life from the Forces and from innumerable civilian occupations in which they have been serving the Forces [...] The longer term problem is to provide sufficient qualified scientists to meet the nations’ requirements during the reconstruction period and thereafter”* (Barlow Report, 1946:S2).

The CVCP responded by issuing two policy documents, the first addressed the universities immediate financial needs (Shattock, *ibid*), the second entitled *A Note on University Policy and Finance in the Decennium 1947-56* (1946) states:

*“The universities themselves have been, both individually and collectively, fully alive to the facts, first that the incidence of total war has revealed chinks in the armour and shortages of intellectual manpower, often where that manpower is most needed, and secondly that the aftermath of war presents a field in which old methods, the methods of gradual, piecemeal and laboured developments are not enough”* (CVCP, 1946:2).

The document reads partly like a defence against the government commissioned reports. It quotes from the Barlow Report which had been published earlier that “whatever happens the quality of our university graduates must not be sacrificed to quantity”. However, it sets policy that remained orthodox until the Robbins Report (1963), and states:

*“The first duty of the universities is to maintain and improve the level both of their teaching and of their research: and they would ill serve the national interest if they were to allow a quantitative enlargement to imperil the quality of their service”* (CVCP Archive, 1946).

The CVCP’s *A Note on Policy...* makes a number of demands, including: support for the projected increase in student numbers; an increase in the duration of some studies; the provision of new courses for new categories

of students; the provision of more generous staff/student ratios to free up time for research; higher salaries; greater provision for research and the need to undertake the necessary building programme in which residences must be included as they were of great educational benefit" (CVCP, 1946). The *Note on Policy*... suggests the universities were committed to playing their own part in planning the whole university system but, according to Shattock, (2012:17) "there was no common voice".

Although the number of students in science and technology rose over the next years the increase was not considered satisfactory and the White Paper *Technical Education* (1956) suggested further expansion. The White Paper (1956) quoted the then Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, as arguing that:

*"The prizes will not go to the countries with the largest population. Those with the best systems of education will win [...] If we are to make full use of what we are learning, we shall need many more scientists, engineers and technicians. I am determined that this shortage shall be made good"*. (Ministry of Education 1956:S1).

It went on:

*"The management of full employment, with its much greater need for a responsible attitude to work and its challenge to greater output per man as the only way further to raise living standards, has brought a sense of our dependence on education as the key to advance"*  
(ibid:1956: S159).

Like the Percy Report the White Paper focused on the non-university sector and argued that:

*"...the bulk of full-time or sandwich courses should be carried on in colleges which concentrate on advanced courses of technological level"*  
(ibid:1956: S65).

Following the 1956 White Paper ten Colleges of Advanced Technology (CATs) were designated, which, in contrast to universities were under the control of the Local Education Authorities (LEAs).



What is interesting about the Percy and Barlow Reports is not only that they were the forerunners of expansion but also the shift away from the discourse of higher education. The focus is clearly on economic performance. For the first time, higher education is framed economically and nationalistically. The dominant argument in both reports is that education and training are crucial for economic performance, which in turn is vital to secure a high standard of living as well as Britain's position in the world. Another interesting observation is the element of fear-inducing language. The world itself was conceived of as a "fierce competition" between nations. The White Paper (1956) speaks directly of the danger that Britain might be "left behind the USA, Russia, and Western Europe" (Ministry of Education 1956: S3).

The Butler Education Act of 1944 created the conditions for expansion in higher education and it gave rise to the Robbins Report of 1963 but it was the Percy and Barlow Reports that consolidated and accelerated the need for expansion through technological and manpower demands. They shifted the discourse to the nations' economic performance rather than the pursuit of knowledge through research or goals of social justice. Scientific and technological education were deemed crucial for survival. Repeatedly the Percy Report (1945) refers to the "demands of industry" (S41) the "needs of industry" (S5) and "the demands of the engineering industry" (S7). The Barlow Report (1946) speaks of "the nation's requirements" (S3) and the "demand for scientists" (S5). Likewise the White Paper (1956) concerned itself with the "rising demand for scientific manpower" (1956:S6).

In response to the two reports the government raised the UGC grant from £2.1 million in 1945 to £16.6 million for 1950/51 (Benn and Fieldhouse 1993:311). Student numbers increased from 69,000 in full-time higher education in 1938/39 to 122,000 in 1954/55 of which 50,000 and 82,000 respectively studied at universities (Robbins 1963:Table 3). Although the governments of the 1940s and 50s refrained from reforming higher education, the situation changed radically in the 1960s. Neither the Percy

nor Barlow reports discuss funding but concern regarding the rising costs of an expanding higher education is evident in the commissioning of both the Anderson Report (1960) and the Robbins Report (1963). These two reports opened the floodgates for the massification of higher education.

## **2.3 Massification**

### **2.3.1 The Anderson Report (1960)**

The purpose of the Anderson Report (1960) was to: “consider the present system of awards from public funds to students attending first degree courses at university and comparable courses at other institutions and to make recommendations” (Anderson Report 1960:S1). The official title of this report was ‘*Grants for Students*’. Commissioned by government and chaired by Sir Colin Anderson, from whom it took its name, it recommended replacing the existing uncoordinated grant and scholarship arrangements with a national system in which the state paid fees for home students and supported them with means-tested maintenance grants (Tapper, 2005:202). The Report was accepted by the government of the day, meaning that from 1961-62 those offered a place in higher education would automatically receive support for tuition fees and, subject to a means test, maintenance support.

Prior to the Anderson Report (1960) students had to apply for grants but could not rely on being awarded one. Although the grant was means tested against parental income, higher education was now effectively free for most students (Anderson Report, 2006:139). The maintenance grants had a major impact on student life. Although the number of students studying away from home had risen in the 1950s (UGC 1957:para 13), the introduction of universal grants encouraged this, so-much-so that leaving home and living an independent life became an integral part of being a student (Beloff 1970:29).

The primary concern of the Anderson Committee was to solve the problem of the grant system and to make administrative procedures more efficient but the introduction of universal grants fostered expansion. Despite the Report arguing against free education without parental contribution “as this would make cheap what should be held valuable” (Anderson Report, 1960: S183), and warning that university education should not be understood as a “kind of national service to which all good students must aspire” (ibid: S184), in general it approved of the expansion of higher education. Therefore, grants were said to be vital in order to “ensure that those qualified to take advantage of these costly facilities are not deterred from doing so”, (ibid: S168). By guaranteeing that access to the universities did not depend on the financial background of the prospective students, the Report also fostered equality.

The Report rejected the idea that the prime function of a university education was to supply the nation with manpower. Although it recognises a shortage in particular categories, it emphasises that the “nation should not depart from the ancient and sound tradition that young men and women go to university to become all round citizens and not merely to learn a special skill” (Anderson Report, 1960: S12). It sees university as an academic community where “much of the value of higher education lies not only in the instruction the student receives but also in the contacts he makes and the life he leads within the student community outside the lecture room and the laboratory”, (ibid 1960: S20).

Unlike previous writers, such as Moberly and Truscot, the Anderson Report endorsed heterogeneity and claimed that universal grants allowed students from various backgrounds to enter higher education. It regarded the heterogeneity of the student body as being of educational value because “to get the full benefit, it is important that the student body at a university or other institution of higher education should not be drawn from too narrow a field: it will gain richness from a wider one” (Anderson Report 1960:S20).

Maintenance grants not only allowed students from different socio economic backgrounds to enter higher education and mix, but they also encouraged students to leave home and move elsewhere. This principle of 'delocation', as Carswell (1988:26) called it, meant that the student might leave a diverse community in order to enter one which consisted of people "similar in age, attainments and aspirations". Paradoxically, while considering it worthwhile to bring students from different social backgrounds together, the Report indirectly supported the ideal of a homogeneous community cut off from wider society, which is a form of social engineering.

In removing financial constraints the Anderson Reports' universal grant system allowed students to choose their preferred higher education institution more freely, and in this regard it gave the student a much more central position – a direction that the Robbins Report continued, and one that has become the *raison d'être* of marketisation.

### **2.3.2 The Robbins Report (1963)**

The Robbins Report (1963) was published under the title: *Higher Education: Report of the Committee on Higher Education*. It was commissioned by the then Prime Minister under the chairmanship of Lord Robbins from whom it has taken its name. The Robbins Committee was set up "to review the pattern of full-time higher education in Great Britain and in light of national needs and resources to advise Her Majesty's Government on what principles its long term development should be based" (Robbins, 1963:S1).

Even though student numbers were rising following the Butler Education Act of 1944, the Robbins Report recommended further expansion from 216,000 full time students in 1962/63 to 558,000 in 1980/81 (Robbins, 1963: Table 30). It also recommended the creation of a council for National Academic Awards; the granting of university status to the CATs, the foundation of six entirely new universities, the establishment of several Special Institutions

for Scientific and Technological Education and Research, and the alignment of the teacher training colleges to the universities, and hence to the UGC.

The significance of the Robbins Report lay not only in its support for further expansion, but in the way expansion was argued for. Although the report also took manpower demands into account and considered expansion vital for economic growth and for the defence of Britain's position in the world (1963:S32) it justified increased places on the basis that:

*“courses of higher education should be available to all who are qualified by ability and attainment to pursue them and who wish to do so” (1963:S31).*

This principle, commonly known as 'the Robbins Principle', established a kind of 'right' to higher education as it claimed that everybody who had shown him or herself "qualified" ought to be granted access to higher education. In order to determine whether someone was indeed qualified, the report proposed that in the future the "assessment of performance" should receive more attention next to "the usual estimate of character and general intelligence" (ibid: 229), and in doing so it also places the student at the centre of the system. The report defined the aims of higher education as:

- instruction in skills suitable for the general division of labour;
- the promotion of the general powers of the mind;
- the production of not mere specialists but rather cultivated men and women, and
- the transmission of a common culture and common standards of citizenship.

The emphasis on the transmission of culture was not only a result of what was taught but also a product of "the atmosphere of the institutions in which the students live and work" (ibid:S28). As the report explained, institutions of higher education were "not merely places of instruction" but "communities" (ibid:S585). The report supported the collegiate system of

Oxford and Cambridge as it united “senior and junior members in a common way of life” (ibid: S585) while pointing out that it did “not wish to see closed academic communities with staff and students forming a kind of world within the world” (ibid: S586). It recommended that the proportion of students living in residential accommodation provided by the universities should rise from 32% in 1961 to 54% in 1980 (ibid:S594). Although it recognised that the traditional halls of residence “may seem unduly restrictive” to some students, it emphasised that these halls could offer a “sense of real community” (ibid: S591).

The Robbins Report made a few proposals about reformed courses but it did not propose any fundamental changes to the nature of higher education. Its idea was to provide *more* higher education, but ultimately, as Barnett, (1999:303) says, it meant “more of the same”. It is considered the landmark of the post-war expansion of higher education, but its stress on the economic benefits of higher education has been criticised as the beginning of a move away from the liberal humanist view (Anderson, 2006).

Since the Second World War the higher education sector had not changed much but during the 1960s there was an explosion of expansion. Seven new universities were founded, 30 polytechnics were created, and the Open University was given its charter in 1969 and offered degree courses via distance education. When the University of Sussex received its charter in 1961, it was the first of seven entirely new universities, including East Anglia (1963), York (1963), Lancaster (1964), Essex (1965), Kent (1965) and Warwick (1965). Like the older ‘redbricks’ these universities had grown from local initiatives (Dormer and Muthesius 2001:147). But in contrast to the nineteenth-century foundations, the new universities of the 1960s were constructed from scratch with university status right from the start. They were thus “born free” (Beloff 1970:26) and through the introduction of near universal maintenance grants they could immediately recruit students on a national basis.

The seven new universities were not only founded at roughly the same time, they also shared numerous other characteristics. They had a strong focus not only on the pure sciences and the arts but also on the social sciences, which were still not well established in England at that time (Beloff 1970:40). All seven tried to establish what Asa Briggs (1961;60) called “new maps of learning”, whose aim was not to produce specialists but people able “to compare, to relate and to judge” (ibid:63). Graduates needed to be experts in a particular field but instead of becoming mere specialists they ought to become “experts who see their expertise in perspective”. All of them moved away from the traditional honours, or combined honours, degree, whether it was through overlapping major and minor subjects (for example, York, East Anglia, Lancaster, and Warwick), broad-based preliminary courses that shifted specialisation to a later stage (for example, Essex and Kent), or the replacement of departments with schools that put the core subject in a context of other subjects (Sussex), (Rich, 2001:50).

The most striking commonality between the seven was their architecture and location. They used architecture as an educational device; it was “part and parcel of the institutional and academic concept” (Dormer & Muthesius 2001:48). The use of concrete and glass earned them the name ‘Plateglass Universities’ (Beloff, 1970) and transmitted a modern ethos in tune with the architectural styles of the post-war period. Their location and spatial organisation suggested a revival of more traditional ideals of university education. All seven universities were established not in major urban areas but in less industrial if not rural spots of England such as Colchester or Norwich (Rich 2001:49) and due to UGC demands, they were built as campus universities located out of town. The remoteness was supposed to help build strong communities and to prevent students from commuting (Sloman 1964:14) but it also separated the universities from wider society. As Crick (1979) argued, the campus universities:

*“represent an idea of a university as a refuge from the world of productivity, partly monastic in origins and partly arising from*

*Matthew Arnold-like scorn for the common culture and for the new technologies that fed him and his pupils" (1979:59).*

With 'new maps of learning' and 'plateglass' architecture, the campus universities tried to bridge the old and the new. They represented the idea that the university was a community of its own that was detached from the rest of society. Being a student meant being a member of a 'total community', the implication being that students were young, full-time people for whom higher university marked a specific period in life. This notion was challenged by the establishment of the polytechnics and the Open University.

### **2.3.3 Increased Expansion: The Polytechnics**

The Robbins Report was accepted by the Labour government of the day but not all of its recommendations were implemented. Although it had anticipated the creation of 15 new universities by 1980, no new universities were founded as a result of it (Godwin 1998:171). In contrast, the polytechnics eventually resulted in thirty new universities in 1992. The polytechnics were distinct higher education institutions under LEA control and without degree awarding powers (Palfreyman and Tapper, 2009:43-4), they represented what came to be known as the 'binary policy' which was in situ for more than 20 years.

The binary policy was first announced by the then Secretary for Education and Science, Anthony Crosland, in 1965. He dismissed the Robbins Report because it allegedly favoured a higher education system based on a "ladder principle" (Crosland, 1974b:204). Calling on his listeners to leave behind the "snobbish caste-ridden hierarchical obsession with university status", Crosland suggested that what was needed instead was to strengthen the non-university higher education sector (ibid). This was necessary, he claimed, because of an "ever increasing need and demand for vocational, professional and industrially based courses" that the universities could not fully satisfy but which needed to be met in order "to progress as a nation in



the modern technological world” (ibid). He saw a binary system to be less depressing and degrading than a ladder principle. He claimed that it was “desirable in itself that a substantial part of the higher education system should be under social control, and directly responsive to social needs” (ibid). And pointing to other countries where a relatively strong non-university sector already existed, he asserted that Britain would: “not survive in this world” if it downgraded its professional and technical non-university sector (ibid).

Criticisms of the binary system were strongly rebutted by the DfES White Paper: *A Plan for Polytechnics and Other Colleges* (DfES 1966a: S28).

Fowler (1972) claimed in retrospect that the aim of the binary policy was:

*“Not to create a depressed, second-class, and under-financed sector of higher education [...] but to give recognition to the possibility that there might be more than one valid philosophy of higher education, or such differences of emphasis within a philosophy as to require more than one institutional model”* (1972:271).

The polytechnics were expected to provide a different idea of higher education and to a different type of student. Crosland claimed that the non-university sector was much more comprehensive than the universities as far as the provision of higher education and student intake were concerned (Crosland,1974b:207) . He spoke of “two categories of student, whose importance to the nation can hardly be overestimated, but which were not taken care of by the universities: full-time students below degree level and part-time students at various levels” (Crosland, 1974a:211). By providing courses for these students as well as degree courses, the Polytechnics would not only supply the nation with manpower but also provide “opportunities for educational and social mobility” (ibid:211). The polytechnics recognised a type of student who had so far been largely ignored in the debate in higher education and hence broke with the idea that there was only one proper form of higher education.

Crosland's White paper maintained established boundaries and subscribed to the division between vocational and academic education, but one of his advisors, Eric Robinson, a strong supporter of the polytechnics, formulated a vision of higher education that challenged the common distinction between academic studies that focused on the search for truth and the discovery of knowledge and vocational studies, which concentrated on applying knowledge and developing skills. These two forms of education had traditionally been seen to be diametrically opposed, but Robinson (1968) claimed that only an integrated approach would reflect the demands of modern society. He says:

*"It is indefensible that so many students in higher education are prepared for no occupation and that so many are prepared for one and only one. If liberalism in education means the development of the individual to establish and maintain his own values and to be equipped to hold his own against the pressures around him, there has never been a greater need for it than now. But to assume that it is best pursued by ignoring the world as it is and the need to earn a living in this imperfect world is a great mistake. The most illiberal education is the one which makes a student mere fodder for the industrial machine; but the man most vulnerable to the industrial machine is the one who must enter it without knowing or understanding anything about it. To pretend that the real world of 'muck and brass' does not exist is the worst disservice higher education can do to a student" (1968:116).*

The polytechnics as Robinson envisioned them were not offering a second type of higher education next to universities, but they were bridgeheads to changing the whole system. They were not supposed to "merely fill a niche" that had been neglected by other institutions of higher education but they had the task to "change the patterns of higher education", he said (ibid:117). Crosland emphasised the need to provide higher education for a particular type of student, but Robinson's aim was to establish "higher education for all" (ibid:12). As he explained, the aim was "to find a new idea of a university and to create new comprehensive universities, much bigger, much less exclusive, much closer to the community as a whole and much less 'academic' than the present universities" (ibid:231).

According to this, higher education had to be fundamentally rethought. The elitism of the university as well as its isolation from the whole community needed to be broken down. For Robinson, “the popular university ideal of abstracting the student into an academic community for long continuous periods” was “irreconcilable” with the idea of mass higher education and ongoing education as both meant that higher education needed to have “a large urban and part-time element” (1968:47). Instead of following the ideal of the “boarding school university”, the polytechnic as Robinson saw it, ought to be the “urban community university” (1968:48). It should become the “people’s university” (1968:49). Robinson wanted the polytechnics to endorse a new educational philosophy and recognise that “students should come before subjects, before research, before demands of employers and before demands of the state” (1968:117). He argued that institutions of higher education needed to design the courses to suit the student” (1968:158) and “establish firmly that the college exists for the benefit of students, not *vice versa* (1968:159).

The debate regarding the purpose of higher education coalesced in Brosan’s (1971) pro-polytechnic argument (cited in Anderson, 2006:157) that “Britain has two traditions of higher education, the ‘autonomous’ and the ‘service’ traditions. The former prizes its detachment from society and is aloof, academic, conservative and exclusive; the latter ‘explicitly expects higher education to serve individuals and society and justifies it in those terms, and is responsive, vocational, innovating and open”.

#### **2.3.4 Higher Education For All: The Open University**

Proposals for a university that used modern technology like radio or television were not new (MacArthur 1974:3) but the idea gained ground in the 1960s. Harold Wilson, then Prime Minister, highlighted the impact of scientific and technological global developments and argued that without the full embrace of the scientific revolution Britain would become a “stagnant backwater, pitied and condemned by the rest of the world” (1963:2). The

Labour Party Manifesto of 1966 claimed that the University of the Air (as it was then called) would “mean genuine equality of opportunity for millions of people for the first time” (Labour Party, 2002:144). The rhetoric was fear inducing and cajoling in equal measure.

The Open University was founded in 1969 and admitted its first students in 1971. Its existence altered the traditional image of the student as young, full-time, middle class with A levels. It offered an experience that was radically different from traditional universities because face-to-face interaction between tutor and student was limited. It did not provide the student with the experience of ‘going to university’, but its perception as a ‘second chance’ or kind of ‘safety valve’ university inadvertently supported the traditional view. It represented competition for the polytechnics.

The new universities combined with the polytechnics and the Open University tipped university participation from an elite to a mass system. Sociologist Martin Trow (cited in Anderson 2006:162) proposed 15% as the tipping point, which was reached in the 1980s. The funding implications for the state were substantial.

## **2.4 Funding**

Throughout the period 1946 to 2011 the growth in student numbers far exceeded the growth of the national economy (Shattock, 2012:103) but the issue of fees was dormant until the publication of the Anderson and Robbins Reports in the early 1960s. The two quinquennial between 1962 and 1972 represent what Shattock (2012:122) refers to as the ‘Golden Age’ of university funding. At the end of the War universities did not think it timely to raise fees from pre-war levels (Shattock, *ibid*:157) which had been set on an individual institutional basis. In addition, there was little incentive to raise fees because the UGC was operating on a deficiency grant basis so a rise in fees would only have led to a reduction in grant.

A central argument of the Robbins Report (1963) was that the expansion of science and technology in higher education would transform the economy, but by the mid-1970s this promise had not been fulfilled and the impact of the oil crisis of 1972-74 heightened concerns regarding the cost of expansion. A growing criticism at that time was that Robbins espousal of expansion created financial commitments for the state that were ultimately unsustainable. As the national economy struggled throughout the 1970s, the issue of university funding gathered pace.

#### **2.4.1 The 1981 Funding Cuts**

The Thatcher Government came to power in 1979 with a mandate to reform the economy, and according to Anderson (2006:163), a particular set of views and prejudices against social sciences that made universities and their values natural targets. A 1980 White Paper proposed that public expenditure was at the heart of Britain's present economic difficulties. "Public spending" it said, "has been increased on assumptions about economic growth which have not been achieved". In terms of higher education this was a direct criticism of the Robbins Report (Anderson, 2006).

The Thatcher Government ended the funding of international students which produced £100m in savings beginning in 1980-81. A further 3.5% was cut from the UGC's budget for 1981-82 and further rounds of cuts of 5% were announced for 1982-83 and 1983-84 (Shattock, 2012:105). The government did not apply free market solutions to university funding issues at that point (Anderson, 2006:168), instead it continued to squeeze resources and exerted intense pressure to save money through greater efficiency and stronger, more business-like management, which gave rise to the Jarratt Report (1985).

#### **2.4.2 The Jarratt Report (1985)**

The media impact of the 1981 cuts suggested that universities could benefit

from the Financial Management Initiative that was taking place across Whitehall departments (Shattock, 2013). The CVCP made a bid to the government for funding for such a review and then appointed Lord Alex Jarratt, former head of Reed International, as chair of the committee. The purpose was the promotion and coordination of “a series of efficiency studies”. The *Report of the Steering Group on University Efficiency* (Jarratt Report, 1985) sought to bring industrial and business management structures and decision-making processes into the higher education sector in order to create greater efficiency and effectiveness in the operation of universities. It examined whether management structures and systems were effective in ensuring that “decisions were fully informed; that optimum value was obtained from the use of resources; that policy objectives were clear, and that accountabilities were clear and monitored”. The committee found:

- little strategic planning which was generally regarded as too difficult;
- resource allocation occurs largely on a historical base and changes only incrementally. No explicit account is taken of the relative strength of departments nor is there any systematic use of performance indicators;
- resource allocation mechanisms are generally fragmented and there is no clear view of the whole;
- the quality and extent of management information, including basic financial data, is inconsistent and generally under-developed;
- committees and the structures which deal with resource allocation issues are not effective and the division of responsibilities between the Senate and Council are often unclear. There needs to be a “single unifying body which can integrate financial and academic policies” across the two; and
- budgetary control arrangements are under-developed and there is little formal accountability for the use of resources.

Jarratt evaluated university management on business lines and treated universities as “first and foremost corporate enterprises” (Jarratt,

1985:S3:1). He viewed their prime task to be to generate “value for money” (ibid:S2.4). The report endorsed strategic and long-term planning and called for clearly defined “objectives and aims” (ibid:S3.30); “the use of performance indicators” (ibid:S3.30); “stronger measures of output” (ibid:s3.33); and, “monitoring procedures” (ibid:S3.37). What was perceived to be the collegial ‘laissez-faire’, approach to leadership in universities was severely criticised, and the report noted that “the management structure of some universities led to a response which was a mixture of equal misery and random misery”.

Jarratt (1985) depicted university leadership as inadequate and compared it unfavourably with the leadership of corporations. He proposed that traditional administrative and governance structures be replaced by a top-down approach with professional management as a means of governance instead of academic consensus. Vice-Chancellors needed to be seen as chief executives as well as academic leaders, and they ‘should be selected through a proper process involving lay Council members’, the report says. Clarity was required in the definition of duties, responsibilities and reporting lines of Pro-and Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Heads of Department. Academic staff should have a system of appraisal to aid recognition of their contribution and to assist with their development as well as ensuring the most effective deployment of staff. For Jarratt the university was not a place of culture and learning, but a business that had to perform.

Following the publication of the report Taylor (1987:24) noted that “greater efficiency and effectiveness are seen as requiring leadership of a kind to which universities were unaccustomed in the days of plenty”. He goes on to make the point that “resource constraints have increased power at the centre not only of systems, but also of institutions. Rectors and Presidents and Vice Chancellors, as well as Deans and Departmental Heads, are being called upon to exercise new responsibilities for which they may not feel themselves well fitted by previous experience” (1987: 24).

The Jarratt Report (1985) gave rise to a fundamental shift in the underlying cultural values and discursive forms through which 'public services' were conceptualised, represented and legitimised (Reed, 2002a). It heralded the corporatisation of higher education (Brown with Carasso 2013), and particularly what came to be known as NPM. What the Report makes clear is that universities were facing a period of rapid change, a position they shared with big organisations in the private sector (Shattock, 2012). It urged Government to think through what it expected from universities and to give them a longer planning horizon. It urged universities to adjust their planning to be less reactive and incremental and more strategic in their long-term planning.

As Shattock (2012:219) points out, what caught the imagination was the designation of the vice-chancellor as 'chief executive', rather than the additional role of 'academic leader'. The Report invited councils "to reassert their responsibilities in governing their institutions" and reverse the weakening in their role which was evident over the previous thirty years (Jarratt Report, 1985: paras 5.5 and 3.5). Shattock (2012:220) suggests the Jarratt Report came to symbolise a central drive towards a new corporate management but it was not yet a government blueprint for a new approach to university management. Instead, it urged a fundamental change in self-government in the light of the 1981 cuts and the realisation that the state could no longer be relied on as a funding partner, and that the universities themselves needed to construct new mechanisms to confront a much more unstable future.

#### **2.4.3 Education Reform Act (1988) and Funding Councils**

The Jarratt Report (1985) was followed by a Green Paper (1985), a White Paper (1987) and legislation in 1988. The Education Reform Act (1988) abolished the UGC and replaced it with a Universities Funding Council (UFC) which would distribute funds, but control of policy would remain in government hands (Shattock, 2013). The Act gave the polytechnics



freedom from local government as independent corporations and it created a Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC) to oversee the public sector. The Act included the abolition of 'tenure' for university staff which was seen to stand in the way of restructuring and redundancies. This caused alarm about academic freedom, since tenure protected staff from dismissal for unpopular views (Anderson 2006:172), but Max Beloff in the House of Lords succeeded in introducing a clause giving constitutional protection to academic freedom. Academics should be free "to question and test received wisdom, and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without fear of repercussions" (Salter and Tapper, 1994:69). Beloff's move was designed to protect academics, not against the state, but against the university that employed them.

The 1988 Act was unstable and asymmetrical (Anderson, 2006) because the UFC covered Scotland and the PCFC did not. This was amended in The Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, which abolished the binary system. All polytechnics were now able to take the title of university and to award their own degrees, including postgraduate degrees. The Act raised the number of universities in the UK from forty-seven to eighty-eight (Shattock, 2012). They were financed through separate funding councils for England, Wales and Scotland. From a critical perspective Halsey (1995:129) suggests the abolition of the binary system was intended to save money by driving all universities down to the level of polytechnics, with disastrous results for the quality of education and research and for the international reputation of the British system. Shattock (2012:130) suggests the decade between 1985 and 1995 was defined by the search for an alternative to public funding to finance the growth in the system. Thirty five years after Robbins and twelve years after Jarratt, the Dearing Committee was tasked with finding a solution for financial stability.

## **2.5. The Dearing Report (1997)**

Under the auspices of the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher

Education (NCIHE), known as the Dearing Committee, the largest review of higher education since the Robbins Report (1963) was conducted. Unlike the Robbins Committee, the Dearing Committee members were drawn from industry and banking as well as from higher education, a reflection of the change of higher education in society (Barnett, 1999:293). The purpose was to examine the possibilities for funding higher education. The Committee reported shortly after the Blair New Labour Government took office in 1997.

The Dearing Report (1997) supported further expansion and a stronger commitment to widening participation, greater investment in the provision of Communications and Information Technology, the foundation of an Institute for Learning and Teaching, and the continuation of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) with a number of reforms, (NCIHE 1997: Annex A). The Report saw the purpose of higher education as to:

- inspire and enable individuals to develop their capabilities to the highest potential levels throughout life, so that they grow intellectually, are well-equipped for work, can contribute effectively to society and achieve personal fulfilment;
- increase knowledge and understanding for their own sake and to foster their application to the benefit of the economy and society;
- serve the needs of an adaptable, sustainable, knowledge-based economy at local regional and national levels;
- play a major role in shaping a democratic civilised, inclusive society.

(Dearing (NCIHE) 1997: S5.11)

It identified a number of common values underlying higher education, such as, “a commitment to the pursuit of truth”, “freedom of thought and expression”, and “a willingness to listen to alternative views and judge them on their merits” (Dearing 1997:S5.39). The Report claimed that higher education was also about self-fulfilment, the search for knowledge for its own sake, as well as the shaping of “a democratic, civilised, inclusive society”. It says:

*“The purpose of education is life-enhancing; it contributes to the whole quality of life. This recognition of the purpose of higher education in the development of our people, our society and our economy is central to our vision. In the next century, the economically successful nations will be those which become learning societies, where all are committed through effective education and training, to lifelong learning” (1997, S1.1).*

The view is that education has multiple functions as it contributes to the quality of life, the development of the people, society and the economy. The predominance of the economy is explicit where Dearing argues that the creation of a learning society was vital not only because it enhanced “the quality of life” but also to “sustain a competitive economy” (1997:S1.10). Dearing’s vision of the learning society was primarily an economic one, in which people appeared as the nation’s “only stable source of competitive advantage”, but Dearing’s proposal of an alternative to public funding was insufficient.

### **2.5.1 Tuition Fees**

By far the most significant proposal of the Dearing Report was the introduction of tuition fees of about 25% of the cost of a first degree (approximately £1000) to be paid directly by students on an income contingent basis balanced by the retention of maintenance grants. The report devoted several chapters to the funding of higher education in general, but only one in particular to the question of who should pay. The proposal that students should make a direct contribution to their education represented a new approach but it fell far short of what was required to fund expansion.

Many of Dearing’s recommendations were not implemented. Shattock (2012:102) suggests that Blunkett, then New Labour’s Secretary of State, failed to grasp the chance offered him by the Dearing Report to make effective reforms to the funding regime, and that this provoked the need to review the system again in 2003 leading to the introduction of an increased tuition fee and income contingent loan arrangements. Blair says in his

autobiography (2010:479) that by 1999 he “realised that a reform of the universities was necessary”. But his interest was not in the system of higher education, instead he was interested in a restricted range of institutions that could compete with America and China. He says: “the Tories have converted so called polytechnics into universities... which was fine except that it fuelled the myth that all universities were of the same academic standing, which produced a typical egalitarian muddle” (Blair 2010:480). He goes on to say that “working with Lord Adonis, by the beginning of the second term:

*“We had fashioned a template of the reform: changing the monolithic nature of the service; introducing competition; blurring distinctions between public and private sector; taking on traditional professional and union demarcations of work and vested interests; and in general trying to force the system up, letting it innovate, differentiate, breathe and stretch its limbs” (2010: 481).*

The introduction of tuition fees was part of this process; a “troubled process”, he calls it, “but it is the structure on which the future reforms will be built” (Blair, 2010:481). The debates in the House of Commons regarding higher education funding, featured highly fraught arguments between the then Chancellor, Gordon Brown, and Prime Minister Blair. Brown was opposed to ‘top-up’ fees in light of a forthcoming General Election but the arguments ascribed by Blair (2010) to Balls, on behalf of Brown, was that moving to variable fees represented a trade-off between equity and markets and that this took marketisation too far. Against that, Blair argued that it made higher education more accountable to consumers and that this was where public services were heading in other advanced industrial nations (Blair, 2010).

To add to the heated debates, nearly two decades following the Jarratt Report and despite its severe criticism and subsequent efforts to implement its recommendations, The Lambert (2003) *Review of Business-University Collaboration* states that “government did not seem to have enough confidence in the way universities run themselves to give them extra funding

without strings attached” (para 7:23). Lambert (2003) levelled specific criticism at Deans and Pro-Vice Chancellors “who often lack a sector-wide strategic view” and also “often lack experience of managing large budgets” (para 7:23, and 7:25). The Lambert Review did not inspire confidence on the issue of tuition fees.

There was a degree of resolution when Blair’s new Secretary of State, Charles Clarke, in collaboration with HEFCE, abolished up-front fees and replaced them with an income contingent Graduate Contribution Scheme from 2006 under which institutions were free to charge up to £3,000 per annum to be initially funded by the Government as a student loan but to be repaid after graduation. This decision represented the culmination of a campaign by the CVCP (now renamed UUK) for a better structure (Shattock, 2012:165), but it was a complete overturning of the Robbins funding framework where higher education was regarded as sufficiently a public good to warrant full government subsidy.

The House of Commons debate over fees pulled higher education “irrevocably into the political arena because the decision was essentially political” (Shattock, 2012:165). Blair had persuaded the party to vote for his vision to create a market in which institutions would charge differential fees to match their different quality or reputation, and the enhancement of the ‘best’ universities so as to be more internationally competitive. The subsequent White Paper made recommendations about differentiation between research and teaching but it was unsuccessful in the creation of a market because when invited to establish their tuition fee levels, post-92 universities behaved exactly like pre-92 universities – all but two opted to charge the full £3,000 fees (Shattock, 2012:166).

The strong focus on skills in the Dearing Report (1997) marked a shift in thinking about higher education. Robbins had included “instruction in skills” as one aim but otherwise ‘skills’ was not a prominent term in the report. In

contrast it was used much more frequently in the Dearing Report. Although it was always positioned next to 'education', or 'knowledge' such as "skills, knowledge and understanding", Barnett (1999) suggests the change in language indicates that higher education shifted from being understood:

*"...as a process that has its location in a given culture that lends itself to 'instruction or guidance', to a culture in which teaching acts will now be made explicit, formal and routine, so that they are susceptible of training and skills" (1999:299).*

New Labour's White Paper (DfES, 2003) spoke almost exclusively of skills as a means of fitting students into the world of work. Universities were asked to develop more sophisticated ways of measuring "value added" (DfES,2003:48). Learning was considered as a measurable process, and continuing the line established in the Jarratt Report (1985), students were seen as objects within a performativity regime for the development of "skills for the workplace" (ibid:41). Almost all of the discourse in the DfES justifies the imposition of fees. The DfES (2003) assumed that students would "choose good-quality courses that will bring them respected and valuable qualifications and give them the "higher level skills that they will need during their working life" (DfES, 2003: 47). The implication of the focus on skills and qualifications needed in the labour market was that universities were required to react to student choice by offering courses that the economy needed. The DfES (2003) not only positioned students at the centre of the system, it empowered them to act as agents on behalf of the economy whose evaluations through the National Student Survey (NSS) could influence provider behaviour.

### **2.5.2 Full Tuition Fees: The Browne Review (2010)**

Following the financial crisis of 2008, the Gordon Brown Labour Government established an independent commission to review higher education and appointed as its chairman, Lord John Browne, former chief executive of BP and a Blair confidante (Shattock, 2012:166). The report of the review was delivered to the renamed Department for Business,

Innovation and Skills in the new Conservative and Liberal Democrat Coalition Government, where the new Higher Education Minister, Rt Hon Willetts, MP, had strong market credentials and was an ex-Treasury official. The report, entitled “*Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education: An Independent Review of Higher Education Funding & Student Finance*” (Browne 2010) recommended shifting all funding from government to the student.

The Browne Report (2010), which is analysed later in chapter seven, leaves no doubt that the purpose of higher education is economic. Having discarded central planning as a means of driving up quality the Browne Report (2010:8) argued that only a complete market, in which the funding of teaching depended entirely on fees, could ensure that quality improved. The assumption was that student choice in an open market would drive up quality. However, as will be explained in the next chapter, a market is not a market where there is no price differential. That the ‘market’ did not function properly does not mean that the ‘marketisation’ project itself failed. On the contrary, as the next chapter explains, it tightened its grip.

## **2.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter contextualised the field of current higher education. The issues and policies that moved higher education through revolution and industrialisation to expansion and ultimately to marketisation are briefly outlined. The history of higher education reveals the extent of the involvement of the state in determining its nature and purpose which have always been closely linked to its funding. It also reveals a great deal of paradox, not least in the concept of academic freedom and autonomy in the face of unquestioning support for political or religious authority. There is a distinctive change in the idiom and tone of discourse following the Second World War, but despite fear-inducing and cajoling discursive rhetoric the traditional nature and purpose of higher education remain dominant until the Browne Report (2010).

Subsequent to the Anderson Report (1960) an omnipresent concern over funding mostly focused on which government department, local authority, or DfES budget that funding would be drawn from. Half a century later, although the concept of funding through a market mechanism is evident in policy documents and in the autobiographies of key players, it was considered a step too far until the Browne Report (2010).

The next chapter explores what marketisation actually means and how it is operationalised, and is followed by a review of the literature on its impact on the constituent elements of higher education.



## CHAPTER THREE

### THE MARKETISATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION

According to Hussey & Hussey (1997), a successful literature review is dependent on three important factors. First, it should show an improved knowledge of the subject area, second, it needs to demonstrate understanding and third, have a significant impact on the research process. In meeting these criteria this chapter aims first, to examine why the market as proposed by government did not function properly and is really not a market, and then to demystify marketisation and its underpinning ideologies, Neoliberalism and New Public Management (NPM).

#### 3.1 Markets and Quasi-markets

In economic terms, a market is “a mechanism through which buyers and sellers interact to determine prices and exchange goods and services”(Samuelson and Nordhaus 2010:26). It is an exchange mechanism for commodities that matches supply and demand mostly through price adjustments. Price adjustments influence the behaviour of both consumers and providers, so that they eventually come to agree on the terms of the exchange. Price adjustments encourage competition between providers, which in turn impacts supply and demand. However, for a market to exist there has to be commodities and irrespective of the many arguments (Apple, 2001; Barnett, 2000a *inter alia*) regarding the transformation of higher education into a commodity, when applied to higher education the term ‘market’ is not straightforward. On the contrary, its meaning in terms of higher education is far from self-evident. It does not necessarily mean the creation of a market in the sale and purchase of academic education; it is not always clear what is being bought and sold, and it does not mean marketing, branding and advertising, which are considered normal ‘marketing’ activities in all manner of institutions and domains.

In general, the term 'market' tends to be ubiquitous and invoked in numerous different ways, such as 'watching the market', 'being in the market', 'market failure', 'market sentiment' or 'market forces'. Neoliberalism is often encapsulated as 'rule, 'discipline' or 'tyranny' by markets, or as a process of marketisation, or indeed as the making of a market society (Bourdieu, 1998, 2003; Harvey 2005; Brenner, Peck & Theodore, 2010; Mautner, 2010; Peck, 2012). Marx and Engels (1998:36, [1848]) spoke of industry having "established the world market". However, the concept of the 'market' is not unproblematic; there are many assumptions, discourses and practices associated with the concept. Carrier (1997) suggests that the notion of 'market' operates within a conceptual universe that helps shape meanings, such as freedom, individualism, choice and competition, and that it is frequently defined in opposition to other major categories that are claimed to lack the qualities of a market including for example, 'the state', 'bureaucracy', 'politics', 'society', 'hierarchy' and 'socialism'.

Some of the neoliberalism literature draws a theoretical split between bureaucratic states and markets. The traditional liberal explanation for government economic involvement focused on 'market failure' leading to suboptimal provision (too little or too much production) requiring government intervention through regulation, taxes and subsidies (Saad-Filho and Johnson, 2005) to remedy the problem. In a market economy not only does the state have a role to play in remedying the problem, it is a provider of essential services, and it plays a critical role in stabilising the business cycle through fiscal and monetary policy as well as being needed to support optimally efficient outcomes. For example, unregulated markets can produce bribery and if one agent bribes while others do not, that agent is better off while others are left to suffer. As a result all agents have an incentive to bribe. Left to itself the market therefore generates a bad equilibrium in which all agents pay bribes. The good equilibrium in which none pay bribes can only be supported by government laws supporting penalties that deter bribery (ibid:27).

Critics of neoliberal theory point out that markets rely on the authority of the state, that is, its legal, coercive and ideological powers, to secure the reproduction of free and equal exchange, but as Graeber (2011:11) makes clear, relations between the state and markets are historically connected, both institutionally and personally. Hanlon, 2016:193) argues that from a neoliberal point of view there is a constant need for state intervention to ensure the “institutions of society” are subject to competition”. He says:

*Intervention is ultimately aimed at morally reconstructing the individual so that he or she embraces the need for ‘self-care’, seeks out individualism, accepts competition, and values both work organisations and the market as institutions that could fulfil his or her ambitions, desires and daily experiences (p193).*

The view is that the institutions of the market and the state are central to moulding and modulating behaviour. This study sees the state and the higher education ‘market’ as inextricably intertwined, and particularly so since the introduction of the Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) in 2017, which is discussed later in chapter seven.

In terms of higher education, the term ‘quasi-market’ is a more appropriate description. Quasi-markets are sometimes described as planned or internal markets (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993). A quasi-market is an exchange system that aims to emulate the self-adjusting characteristics of competitive markets that influence both consumer and provider behaviours, but they are quasi-markets because they have characteristics on both supply and demand sides that differentiate them from conventional markets (ibid).

On the supply side, there can be competition between many providers but unlike conventional markets providers do not seek profit maximisation. For example, in the public sector providers can be nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) or departments or sectors of a single organisation that trades their services internally, but not necessarily for profit. They are not open markets. On the demand side quasi-markets are designed to create consumer choice which motivates providers to respond to those

choices. However, again unlike conventional markets, consumers do not pay directly for the service or commodity they choose, (an example is the UK health service), so price only plays a marginal role in consumer choice. In private-sector internal markets, pricing has a direct influence on internal resource allocation but it does not directly influence a company's bottom line (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993).

In a quasi-market, providers are expected to respond to purchasers' demands for low price and/or value for money as well as to consumers' demands for quality, and/or availability. This implies that the necessary information is available to purchasers and consumers for them to make rational choices between providers. The transaction costs involved in this process are meant to be compensated for by increased efficiency. Brown with Carasso (2015:2) argue that higher education in the UK "has increasingly been provided on quasi-market lines", which raises the question of what marketisation actually is and how it works.

### **3.2 Marketisation of Higher Education**

The term 'marketisation' in relation to higher education has blurred boundaries (Furedi, 2011). It is linked to globalisation and it is underpinned by Neoliberal Economic doctrine. It is operationalised by NPM, which itself is theoretically underpinned by models of corporate managerialism, public choice theory, new institutional economics, agency theory and transaction cost analysis (Terry, 1998; Shattock, 2012). It is not a simple process. A further complication with the term 'marketisation' is that it is used interchangeably with globalisation, financialisation, commodification, and/or commercialisation. These terms are interrelated but they are not the same, and their discrete impact on the higher education sector is very different.

Marketisation is defined by Roger Brown (2015:5) as the application of market theory to the provision of higher education whereby "the demand and supply of student education, academic research and other university

activities are balanced through the price mechanism”. Brown (ibid) uses the term ‘marketisation’ to refer to the process as if it were an economic market, but there is a distinction between the term marketisation and privatisation. Where they cannot be privatised, state-owned suppliers such as hospitals and schools are increasingly made subject to market-like disciplines; their services are offered at market rates.

A market basis implies that consumers choose between the alternatives on offer on the basis of perceived suitability for them in terms of price, quality and availability. Proponents of this view hold that organising economic relations along these lines is the best use of society’s resources. Markets are said to provide greater ‘static efficiency’, that is, the ratio of outputs to inputs at any point in time, and greater ‘dynamic efficiency’, which means sustaining a higher rate of growth over time through product and process innovation and better management of resources (Brown 2015:6). A fundamental tenet of neoliberal economic doctrine is that markets balancing supply and demand through the price mechanism are much better at generating and allocating resources than government.

In higher education, and at face value, the concept of the market can be understood as the transfer of goods and services from the public realm into the realm of the market (Crouch, 2009) for the purposes of relieving the state burden of funding and for improvements in efficiency and effectiveness (Brown, 2011). Irrespective of the view that the market is not an acceptable model for the delivery of either education or health services because it commodifies them, and a broad concern for a loss of public service ethic (Walzer, 1984) the marketisation of higher education is a growing worldwide trend (Wendy Brown, 2015). Increasingly, market steering has replaced government steering. Tuition fees have increased at the expense of state grants to institutions. Grants for students are replaced by loans. Commercial rankings and league tables designed to guide student choice proliferate,

with institutions devoting increasing resources to marketing, branding and customer service as a result (Cuthbert, 2010).

Roger Brown (2015:4) says the “shift of higher education to marketisation was a gradual process” that began with the abolition of the subsidy for overseas students in 1980 and continued with the funding cuts in 1981. Alvesson and Willmott (1996:21) support the view of the process as gradual and refer to it as “the creeping commercialisation and commodification of everyday life”, evident in the transfer of business discourse to higher education. The rationale for marketisation rests on the belief that the best use of resources is obtained where universities interact directly with students as customers, rather than with the government or a government agency acting on students’ behalf (Roger Brown, 2015:5). Endorsing the Browne Report (2010) then Minister for Higher Education, Willetts, was convinced that a private contribution was necessary if quality was to be maintained, and that “unleashing the forces of consumerism” was the best way of restoring high academic standards (DfBIS, 2011).

The ideology at the heart of marketisation is neoliberalism. The literature suggests that one of the best ways to clarify the concept of marketisation is to explain neoliberalism and its sister ideology NPM. Together these two represent what has come to be understood as the marketisation of higher education (Reed, 2002a; Deem et al, 2008; Lynch, 2014).

### **3.3 Neoliberalism**

A growing literature on neoliberalism illustrates confusion as to what it actually is; there is no universally agreed definition. For example, it is often confused with the term globalisation, but globalisation, or the internationalisation of the world economy, is not new. It was referred to by Marx in the middle of the nineteenth century as an inner tendency of capitalism (Dumenil and Levy, 2005:10). The term became popular in the 1990s in describing the intensification of socio-economic and political

interconnections across national borders. According to Colas (2005) some see globalisation as the compression of time and space in social relations, whereas others emphasise the growing power of political rule above and beyond nation states, that is, through the devolution of political authority to multilateral agencies, such as the ‘pooling’ of sovereignty in the European Union” (p70). A prevailing view is that globalisation involves the relative decline of nation states and the expansion of transnational flows in all sorts of things such as “narcotics, money, human beings, ideas, musical rhythms or toxic pollutants” (Colas, 2005:71).

In terms of higher education the ‘Bologna Process’ represents globalisation. The aim of the Bologna Declaration of 1999 was to create an ‘area” (it does not use the term market) in which students could choose from a range of “high quality compatible and comparable courses and that they could move freely between countries” (ec.europa). Essentially a top-down initiative driven by EU politics, ‘Bologna’ has increased student mobility and has come to stand for a scheme that reaches across borders. Abendroth and Porfilio (2015) suggest that there is little doubt that the process of globalisation aids the momentum of neoliberalism, but what is neoliberalism?

Self (2000) explains it as follows:

*“Neoliberalism assigns a central role to the market system along three interconnected dimensions—economic, social and political. Economically, capitalist markets are seen as a rational system of resource allocation and as the dynamic engine of prosperity in an increasingly globalised world. Socially, the market system is claimed to underpin a robust individualism which defines individual rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Politically, the theory requires the state to provide an efficient legal framework for market operations, but otherwise to confine itself to those limited functions which must be provided collectively rather than as the outcome of individual market choices” (2000:159).*

As a generic descriptor the above implies that it is a unitary concept, but Harvey (2005), while endorsing Self’s overall view, sees it as a complex,

contested and “often contradictory” phenomenon whose scope extends far beyond the economy of the free-market to a complicated and antagonistic relationship between the individual, the community and the state. He explains:

*“Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices...Furthermore, if markets do not exist (in areas such as land, water, education, health care, social security, or environmental pollution) then they must be created by state action if necessary. But beyond these tasks the state must not interfere” (2005:2).*

The withdrawal of the state, leaving the market to self-regulate, is not straightforward. On the contrary, the relationship between neoliberalism and the state is extremely complex, and as mentioned above, Hanlon (2016:193) sees the institutions of the market and the state as central for the control of behaviour. Although a limited role is envisaged for the state, in practice neoliberal policies require a strong state role in order to be effective (Harvey, 2005). The creation of markets does mean the actual withdrawal of the state from many areas of social provision, for example, services formerly met by public agencies, such as health care, are now met by companies selling them in a market. Similarly, markets have been created for things whose commodification was once unthinkable, such as drinking water, body parts, social welfare, and of course, higher education.

Boas and Gans-Morse (2009:138) are among those who see neoliberalism as a contested concept, one “whose strong normative character, multidimensional nature, and openness to modification over time” has fuelled the debate over its meaning and application. Fraser & Taylor (2016: 3) associate it with “multiple underlying concepts including sets of policies, a development model, an ideology and an academic paradigm”. Thurbon (2010:5) says that the word ‘neoliberalism’ is one of the most overused and misapplied concepts that has come to be understood as a catch-all



explanation for anything negative. It certainly has a negative press, which is not helped by the lack of a clear definition nor by its openness to modification (Boas and Gans-Morse, 2009). From a critical perspective Thurbon's (2010) view of it as misunderstood could be challenged by those who see it as 'economic fundamentalism', and equally challenged by those who see it as productive of social relations, ways of living and even productive of their values and sense of self.

Bourdieu (1998) argued that the discourse of neoliberalism is based on a conviction that:

*"The economic world is a pure and perfect order, implacably unrolling the logic of its predictable consequences, and prompt to repress all violations by the sanctions that it inflicts, either automatically or more unusually through the intermediary of its armed extensions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the policies they impose, reducing labour costs, reducing public expenditure and making work more flexible" (1998:1).*

Reducing public expenditure and making work more flexible are not as innocuous as they may sound. Bourdieu (1998) stresses that beyond the policies and rhetoric there is a near spiritual commitment to the principles of the private market that drives the neoliberal discourse. Abendroth and Porfilio (2015:7) add that there is an entire ecosystem of institutions, including the IMF, the OECD, and the World Bank, supporting the claims made by neoliberalism, all of whom hold that the market and private institutions are preferable and superior to alternative forms of governance. On the other hand, critics of neoliberalism see it as a global trend that works to provide a universal framework for the benefit of private interests.

### **3.3.1 Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction**

Neoliberalism is not a totally new idea. Its predecessors include classical and economic liberalism, both of which advocate a minimalist view of state intervention and promote individual liberty to participate in free and self-regulating market exchanges (Harvey, 2005). The difference and distinction

of neoliberalism from neo-classical economy is that it is constructed around a market-driven rationality with an emphasis on individualism and ruthless competition (Giroux, 2010) and with a subtext that promotes a logic of privatisation, efficiency, flexibility, the accumulation of capital and the minimisation of state actions (ibid). It is in stark contrast to Keynesian political economic policies that were widely accepted following the Second World War, and that enabled governments to focus on full employment, economic growth, and the welfare of its citizens, as well as the belief that governments could intervene to achieve these ends. By the end of the 1960s the Keynesian system began to break down, both internationally and within domestic economies (Harvey, 2005:12). Unemployment and inflation rose which resulted in a global phase of 'stagflation' that lasted throughout much of the 1970s. The result was fiscal crises in various countries, low tax revenues and high social expenditures which created the conditions for an alternative economic approach.

Neoliberal economic theory had been developed years previously by a small group of academic economists, including von Hayek (1899-1992) and Friedman (1912-2006), who were opposed to state interventionist theories. They depicted themselves as liberals because of their commitment to ideals of personal freedom, and the neoliberal label depicted their adherence to the free-market principles of neo-classical economics (Harvey, 2005:15). They endorsed Adam Smith's view that the 'hidden hand of the market' was the best device for mobilising even the "basest of human instincts such as gluttony, greed, and the desire for wealth and power for the benefit of all" (Harvey, ibid:20). Reducing public expenditure to only a very basic level of protection from ill-health, unemployment, or disability, required everything else to be marketised, including education.

What Harvey (2005:9) refers to as the 'neoliberal turn' involved a move away from the Keynesian 'embedded liberalism' (Ruggie, 1982) which most

countries had practised after 1945. Crouch (2011) summarises the process as follows:

*“Full employment was rejected as a direct object of policy rather than as a by-product of a sound economy; instead, governments and central banks focused on achieving stable prices and bearing down heavily on inflation. More generally, powerful sections of opinion considered that the entire social democratic experiment with running markets and government intervention alongside each other had failed. Governments could not be trusted to put the soundness of the economy ahead of short-term popularity by risking interventions that weakened the ability of the market to do its work of rewarding success, punishing failure and allowing consumers to make choices”* (2011:15).

The main barrier to economic growth was not seen as lack of demand but producer inefficiency and lack of responsiveness (Harvey, 2005:14). The view was that government intervention in the economy should be confined to measures that improve the supply side, rather than use fiscal policy to regulate demand. Over the last four decades neoliberal policies have become ubiquitous with many governments around the globe ‘freeing’ businesses by lessening or abolishing controls over banking, controls over currency exchange and controls over capital movement. The basic tenets of neoliberalism, summarised by Nef and Robles (2000), include:

- re-establishing the rule of the market;
- reducing taxes;
- deregulating the private sector;
- reducing public expenditure;
- privatisation of the public sector; and
- elimination of the collectivist concept of the “public good”.

The aim of neoliberal macroeconomic policy is to reduce inflation, if necessary at the cost of higher unemployment. The process has entailed much “creative destruction” (Schumpeter, 1883-1950, cited in Harvey, 2005:9) of prior institutional frameworks, traditional forms of state sovereignty, divisions of labour, social relations, welfare provisions, technological mixes, ways of life and thought, reproductive activities,

attachments to the land and even, according to Harvey (2005:9), “habits of the heart”. The reduction in the power of the trade unions is a key element in labour market deregulation resulting in very limited protection of workers’ ‘rights’, so that one’s working life is radically altered. The austerity regime imposed on the economy since the financial crises of 2008 represents a continuation of the approach. In other words, neoliberalism gets into our minds and our souls, into the ways in which we think about what we do, into our working relationships and into our social relations with others. As Hanlon (2016:186) says neoliberalism is “ultimately a political rather than an economic project”, and its aim is to “generate a new form of subjectivity”.

Under neoliberalism, market exchange is valued as an ethic in itself, capable of acting as a guide to all human action, and substituting for all previously held ethical beliefs, consequently it emphasises the significance of contractual relations, that is, positive social and cooperative bonds (Hanlon, 2016). Harvey (2005:4) says that it “holds that the social good will be maximised by maximising the reach and frequency of market transactions, and it seeks to bring all human action into the domain of the market”. McMillan and Cheney (1996:4) claim that neoliberalism reifies the ‘market’. It treats it as if it were something “out there”, completely beyond human hands, dictating our behaviour, which supports Hanlon’s (2016) view that it moulds and moderates our behaviour. This is a short step from representing the market as human, which contributes to its construction as an entity with a will of its own.

Neoliberalism first gained political dominance in Chile under the right-wing Pinochet dictatorship which came to power by coup in 1973 against the democratically elected government of Allende (Silva, 2007). Promoted by domestic business elites the coup was backed by the CIA and US Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger and advisor to Pinochet, Milton Friedman (1912-2006). It violently suppressed political organisations of the left, and the labour market was “freed” from regulatory restraint, that is, from trade union power.

The strategy for the restructuring of the Chilean economy was devised for the Pinochet government by Milton Friedman who was then teaching at the University of Chicago, and a group of economists known as the 'Chicago Boys' because of their attachment to Friedman's neoliberal theories. They negotiated loans with the IMF and working alongside the IMF they restructured the economy according to their theories (Harvey, 2005:8). They reversed nationalisations, privatised public assets and opened up natural resources, such as fisheries and timber to private and unregulated exploitation, privatised social security, and facilitated foreign direct investment and free trade.

Harvey (ibid:9) says the immediate revival of the Chilean economy in terms of growth rates, capital accumulation and high rates of return on foreign investments was "short-lived". It went sour in the Latin American debt crisis of 1982 which resulted in a more pragmatic and less ideologically driven application of neoliberal policies (Harvey, ibid). In the UK the Thatcher government of 1979 turned to neoliberalism as a means of restructuring the economy following the fiscal crisis that lasted throughout much of the 1970s. Margaret Thatcher came to power determined to change the social democratic institutions and policies that had been consolidated after the Second World War. She confronted trade union power, attacked all forms of social solidarity, including the associations of many professionals. She dismantled the commitments of the welfare state, privatised public enterprises, reduced taxes, encouraged entrepreneurial initiatives and created a favourable business environment. All forms of social solidarity were dissolved in favour of individualism, private property, personal responsibility and family values. Harvey (2005:23) cites Thatcher's mantra as being "Economics are the method, but the object is to change the soul", In other words, the object was to control the worker through his or her conscience and a hierarchical culture, or as Hanlon (2016: 186) argues, to generate a "new form of subject subjectivity". Thatcher's catch-phrase "There is no Alternative" (TINA) is often invoked to persuade people to

submit to new ways of working or new lines of authority and power. It could be argued that she achieved her objective; four decades later, all spheres of existence, every human domain and all human conduct, including “who we fall in love with, are framed and measured in economic terms and metrics” (Wendy Brown, 2015:10).

As mentioned earlier the literature suggests that she had a particular prejudice against higher education. The cuts she imposed in 1981 were ‘more savage’ (Anderson (2006:169) than any that had gone before. Her adoption of the Jarratt Report (1985) in the subsequent Green Paper (1985) is notable for its crude espousal of economic instrumentalism, its business oriented rhetoric, and its refusal to acknowledge the wider cultural role of universities. It has to be noted that the world economy was in a particularly acute state of crisis at the time, however, her approach added to the demoralisation of academic staff following the 1981 funding cuts (Anderson, 2006:170).

### **3.3.2 The Diffusion of Neoliberalism**

Harvey (2005:13) says “the world stumbled towards neoliberal hegemony... it converged as a new orthodoxy with what became known as the “Washington Consensus” in the 1990s”. The Washington Consensus refers to a set of free market economic ideas such as free trade, floating exchange rates, free markets and macroeconomic stability, encompassing low government borrowing, competitive exchange rates, and privatisation of state enterprises, and, as mentioned above, supported by the IMF, the World Bank, the OECD, the US and the EU.

Brown (2018:7) notes “it is difficult to distinguish neoliberalism and its effects from other major contemporaneous developments such as globalisation, and financialisation”, which may explain why it is used interchangeably in some of the literature. Harvey (2005:33) says what *is* clear, is that it has financialised everything, and Brown (2018:17) says that it “facilitated the

financialisation, commodification and commercialisation of everything by removing barriers to the free movement of goods, services and capital and by weakening the regulation of the financial markets". Neoliberalism's tendency to deregulate is evident in the restructuring of higher education to embrace the 'freedoms' of entry, supply, pricing, resourcing, and consumer choice, as part of the 'reform' programme accelerated by the Browne Report (2010).

As a political, economic and social theory (Self, 2000:159) neoliberalism is predicated on the idea of freedom of both the market and the individual from "the welfare or protectionist state" (Peters 2011). Braedley & Luxton (2010) see it as a political force that seeks to re-establish the conditions for capital accumulation and to restore the power of economic elites. Hanlon (2016) also sees it as a political project. Mudge (2008) describes neoliberalism as an ideology based on the view of humans as rational economic actors driven by competitive self-interest, and since they are held to be 'rational utility maximisers' by Buchanan's (1978:17) public choice theory, they are in constant pursuit of wealth, power, status and other personal gains (Williamson,1985). This supports Harvey's (2005) view that neoliberal discourse affects every aspect of our valuation of worth and reason, even our spiritual lives. In this respect it is not only an ideology at the macro level, but also at the level of our individual micro worlds.

Bourdieu (1998a: vii) discussed neoliberalism extensively and critically in his political writings. For example, in *Acts of Resistance*, neoliberalism is described as a prevailing "scourge" that is presented as "taken for granted" and "self-evident" with nothing to oppose it (p29) and as a "strong discourse which . . . has behind it all the powers of a world of power relations" (p95). In his article in *Le Monde Diplomatique* Bourdieu characterises neoliberalism as "A programme for destroying collective structures which may impede the pure market logic" (1998c). For Bourdieu, neoliberalism is not a neutral discourse. Beyond Bourdieu's own position on the political use

of neoliberalism, several scholars have also used his theories to analyse neoliberalism. For example, Wacquant (2012:73) draws on Bourdieu's notion of a bureaucratic field, which he describes as "the set of organisations that successfully monopolise the definition and distribution of public goods" to consider the role of the state under neoliberalism.

Wacquant (ibid) describes the neoliberal state as..."a space of forces and struggles over the very perimeter, prerogatives and priorities of public authority, and in particular, over what 'social problems' deserve its attention and how they are to be treated" (ibid). He describes neoliberalism as involving the shifting of state concerns and measures "from the protective (feminine and collectivising) pole to the disciplinary (masculine and individualising) pole of the bureaucratic field' (ibid), a view which echoes Giroux's (2012:597) idea of the neoliberal state as a "punitive state".

The overall picture, according to Saad-Filho & Johnson (2015:3) is that "the most basic feature of neoliberalism is the systematic use of state power to impose financial market imperatives in a domestic process that is replicated internationally by globalisation". Saad-Filho and Johnson (2015:1) see it as a "hegemonic project concentrating power and wealth in elite groups around the world, benefiting mostly the financial interests within each country while influencing the lives of billions of people in terms of economics, politics, international relations, ideology, and culture". In terms of the individual the goal was to regulate behaviour through external rules, rewards and punishments, and to instil new values and ways of being internally so as to engineer a new subject. "Although it is difficult to define", according to Saad-Filho & Johnson (2015), "it is not difficult to recognise neoliberalism...when it trespasses into new territories, tramples on the poor, undermines rights and entitlements, and defeats resistance, through a combination of domestic political, economic, legal, ideological and media pressures, backed by international blackmail and military force if necessary" (2015:2).



Saad-Filho & Johnson (2015) suggest neoliberalism is a particular way of organising capitalism, which has evolved to protect capital(ism) and to reduce labour power. Neoliberalism achieves this through social, economic and political transformations imposed by internal forces, for example, coalitions between financial interests, leading industrialists, traders and/or exporters, media barons, local politicians, the top echelons of the civil service and/or the military and their intellectual and political proxies. It casts a new light on constant restructurings, particularly in higher education institutions where constant restructurings mean constant job cuts.

The main arguments in favour of neoliberalism promoted by politicians like Reagan and Thatcher, economists like Hayek and Friedman, and authors such as Jay and Buchanan, were that its policies would improve the performance of the economy (Saad-Filho & Johnston, 2005:5). As an economic approach, system, and ideology, obsessed with measurement, audit and control, the performance of neoliberalism on a global scale leaves a lot to be desired. Brown (2018: 10) says that “on virtually every measure of economic performance: growth, unemployment, investment, productivity, innovation, and debt, the record of the main Western economies since the late 1970s has been worse than in the preceding era. The only economic indicator better than before is inflation.

Economic inequality, child poverty and insecurity have increased under neoliberalism (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009), and levels of trust have declined (Edelman Intelligence, 2018). The IMF and the OECD accept that there has been a massive transfer of income and wealth away from the lower and middle classes in the Western economies towards the top 1% of the population, and especially to the top 0.1% (Brown, 2018). In the UK, the share of income taken by the top 1% has risen from 5.93% in 1977 to 10.36% in 1993 and 13.88% in 2014. The US percentages at the same dates were 7.9%, 12.82%, and 20.20%. For the top 0.1%, the share in the UK rose from 1.27% in 1977 to 3.09% in 1993 and 4.8% in 2011; the US

percentages were 2.04%, 4.72%, and 7.38% (Brown, 2017a). The concentration of wealth is even greater. According to a recent Office of National Statistics (ONS) report, the wealth held by the top 10% of households in the UK is about five times the wealth of the bottom half of all households combined.

### **3.3.3 Marketisation and Neoliberalism**

Neoliberal doctrine and policy underpin marketisation. Higher education is seen in economic rather than educational terms with an emphasis on education as a growing market and a lucrative export (Giroux, 2002), which rests on the idea that “all goods and services can and should be treated as if they have an exchange value” (Gunzales and Nunez, 2014). Fraser & Taylor (2016) suggest it is tied to positivist, quantitative epistemologies, and marginalises other forms of knowledge, for example, that which is not produced by white, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied males. Hawkins, Manzi & Ojeda (2014:331) note that the neoliberal university considers certain bodies ‘*out of place*’ (original italics) and prioritises ‘productive bodies’ over nurturing ones. Productivity is placed in opposition to nurturance, a category of emotional labour expected mostly from women and often expected to be undertaken ‘for love not money’.

The commodification of anything, particularly higher education, demands institutional and cultural change, and Gonzales, Martinez and Ordu (2014:1098) found that universities are engaging in “market-like behaviours at unprecedented rates and from an offensive rather than a defensive position”, suggesting an appreciation of the financial benefits of market-like behaviour, but their unquestioning compliance with the imperative to ‘cut budgets and remain flexible’ as noted by Bourdieu (1998), is producing a growing class of casual academics. The profit-focused corporation is promoted as the admired model for public sector organisations, with schemes of organisation and control imported from business to universities. In an ‘audit society’, universities have to make themselves auditable on the

imported model, so cost cutting is inevitable. The literature suggests that in the marketised neoliberal university any notion of 1970s representative bureaucracy and/or industrial democracy have been replaced by a new ethos of managerialism and executive power, which means staff are without protection.

Neoliberal policies and principles are mostly drafted at the macro level but they require implementation at the meso and micro levels which demand a change in the traditional *modus operandi* not just for the operation of universities but for all marketised public institutions. Managerialism and its public sector variant NPM are the operational arms of neoliberalism, and hence marketisation.

### **3.4 Managerialism**

Managerialism refers to a general ideology or belief system that regards managing and management as being functionally and technically indispensable to the achievement of economic progress, technological development, and social order within any political economy. It regards management as a generic activity, group and institution that is necessarily, technically and socially superior to any other form of social practice and organisation such as craft, profession or community (Deem et al, 2008). It is an ideologically determined belief in the importance of tightly managed organisations, as opposed to collegial approaches, and consists of a set of ideas and practices that, under the direction of managers, arrange organisational activities in efficiency-minded ways, and a *doxa* that legitimates the need for control in all settings (Peters, 2010:13). However, more than the application of management practices, it is a belief that all organisations can only work properly if decision-making is centralised in the hands of professionally trained and “objective” managers. Hanlon (2016) sees modern management as a ‘neo-liberal project (p23) necessary for the safeguarding of competition, moral rejuvenation and capitalism. Even in situations where an organisation purports to be “post bureaucratic”

(Heckscher and Donnellon, 1994) and less hierarchical, managerial authority is necessary to maintain productivity and institutional guidance. Managerialism holds that organisations have more similarities than differences, and therefore the performance of all organisations can be optimised by the application of generic management skills and theory (Klikauer, 2013:5). In other words, there is little difference in the skills required to run a university, an advertising agency, or an oil rig. Experience and skills pertinent to an organisation's core business are considered secondary.

Managerialism embraces different strands of thought including agency theory and transaction cost analysis (Shattock 2012). Agency theory focuses on the problem of how to get people to do what their managers want through contracts. Transaction cost analysis is concerned with concepts and principles for analysing and controlling transactions though, for example, transparency, goal specification, clear allocation of resources, incentives, contracts and the credibility of commitments (Terry, 1998). It is also concerned with an examination of the comparative costs of planning, organising, adapting and monitoring task completion (Peters, 2013:16). In discussing the proliferation of managerialism Hancock and Tyler (2008) note "the managerial assault on the symbolic and linguistic domain of the lifeworld", and argue that:

*"what has been increasingly noticeable over the last 20 years or so has been the almost direct transference of the imperatives, logics and values associated with management expertise, exemplified via the work of management consultants and various associated gurus, into the realm of "everyday managing" (2008:39).*

Hancock & Tyler's "managerial assault on the lifeworld" is evident in words such as 'efficiency and effectiveness', of 'quality assurance', 'accountability and 'cost savings' (Anderson 2006:579) which now pervade academe. Although its origin is open to debate, managerialism has a long history; it is associated with Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution*, published in 1941 (cited in Terry, 1998:196). Managerialism is more than just techniques;

Diefenbach (2009:129) sees it as a “belief system”; Dar (2008:95) as an “ideology”, and Costea, Crump, and Amiridis (2007) as “an increasingly hegemonic discursive regime with all-encompassing ambitions as a formula of governance in neoliberal societies” (p245).

Managerialism distanced itself from the professional bureaucracies that had dominated previous strategic policymaking, institutional administrative management and localised operational coordination and control in the UK since the early decades of the twentieth century (Clarke and Newman, 1997). The model of service user adopted by early managerialism was that of a relatively passive, and ill-informed client who lacked the knowledge and expertise necessary to develop an informed judgement of what they needed and how they needed it to be provided (Deem et al, 2008). The knowledge/expertise gap was filled by a ‘professional manager’ working under the tight prescriptive guidelines that bureaucratic logic and protocol demanded (Reed, 2002a).

#### **3.4.1 New Public Management (NPM)**

From the late 1970s/early 1980s a second form of managerialism emerged as a coruscating critique of the endemic weaknesses of the existing public administration model of managerialism (Reed, 2002a). Essentially new public management (NPM) was anti-state/pro-market, anti-provider/pro-consumer, and anti-bureaucracy/pro-network (Reed, 2002a) in relation to its underlying ideological principles, allocative norms and organisational logic (Deem et al, 2008:8). It promulgated a form of market populism in which ‘free markets’ and private business enterprise were regarded as infallible solutions to the governmental and organisational problems that beset capitalist societies (Deem et al, 2008). The prevailing view was that the imposition of market mechanisms and disciplines on the design, delivery and management of public services would drive strategic effectiveness and operational efficiency lacking in the sclerotic professional monopolies and bloated corporate bureaucracies that then dominated public life (Osborne

and Gaebler, 1993; Du Gay, 2000, Deem et al, 2008). NPM's underpinning ideology and political rationale began to make its presence felt during the Thatcherite government of the mid-1980s and gathered pace with the Blairite government of the 1990s culminating with the Browne Report (2010) and subsequent policy and legislation.

Dar (2008:105) sees NPM as the second wave of managerialism which "does not admit of alternatives". In other words, it relies heavily on discursive closure. Ozga (2008:144) holds that it "can be understood as doing fundamental ideological and transformational work", and that:

*"it ...carries the message of reformation of professional, public sector work cultures. That reformation redefines the public out of the public sector, and seeks to create institutional homogeneity that mirrors private sector forms"* (2008:144).

All of the techniques, tactics and devices of the private sector are imported into the public sector in the name of reform (Hood, 1991) so that public sector institutions mimic private organisations and the term 'managerialism' morphs into NPM (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007) which is the term that differentiates the approach in the public sector.

The ideas of NPM coincided with the rise of neoliberal governments around the world (Pollitt, 2003) in the mid-1980s. Public expenditure advocated in the Keynesian model was out of control due to ever-increasing demands on the state. In addition, advocates of neoliberalism considered public expenditure to be an impediment to the expansion of markets, corporate profit, shareholder value and general economic growth (Dean, 2008: 35). Keen to control government spending all public bodies were required to restructure the way they conducted themselves in order to become more "incentivised" and efficient (Hood, 1991; Palumbo, 2001). Under the direction of government (Hood, 1991) a number of NPM 'reforms' were introduced into public bodies. The first was a shift to private sector managerialism which emphasised improvements in productivity. The Jarratt Report (1985) on higher education, mentioned earlier, was part of the review

of requirements for the overhaul of higher education. Subsequently the market principles and managerial reforms established by the Education Reform Act (1988) and the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) aligned with the then governments' developing focus on the economic purposes of higher education (Waring, 2015) and implemented many of the tenets of NPM, such as a shift to competition, measurement and quantification, and a preference for lean, flat organisational structures.

Reform programmes and policy initiatives generated by NPM from the late 1970s and 1980s onwards were intended to produce multi-sector, multilevel, systemic, transformational change (Ferlie et al 1996; Reed 2002a; Deem et al, 2008) that would replace the producer-dominated bureau professional ideology with a 'customer-focused and performance-driven culture supporting a 'leaner and fitter' delivery system (Pollitt, 2003), but Freidson (2001) argues that the intention was to weaken, if not destroy, the regulatory ethic and machinery that had protected professional and administrative elites under the previous model of administration. The Blairite 'New Labour' government of the late 1990s introduced a much stronger technocratic orientation into the ideological and policy equation by imposing market forces and business disciplines across the full range of public service provision (Deem et al 2008). Paradoxically the Blairite 'spin' on NPM had more faith in metrics rather than in markets; underpinning the modernising policy paradigm and agenda was a focus on comparative metrics deemed necessary to drive the delivery, organisation, management, and governance of public service providers.

As a system of reform NPM generated a move towards a more detailed, intrusive, and continuous regime of micro-level work-control in which combinations of audit, performance, and accountability technologies were constructed and implemented (Child, 2005). The neoliberal political agenda and the cultural control it engendered radically reconstructed professional service identities in a way that made market-based conceptions of

enterprise, entrepreneurialism and innovation the dominant values and symbols (Alvesson and Willmott, 2002). Ackroyd, Kirkpatrick and Walker, (2007) suggest that the cumulative effect of NPM reform means that public service professionals now operate within multilevel and highly complex 'transparency regimes' that much more tightly and intensively monitor and control their work performance. In higher education both the Research Excellence Framework and the Teaching Excellence Framework well as the recent Higher Education Research Act (2017) are evidence of progressive NPM control.

NPM is not a coherent clearly specified body of theories or practices, instead it refers to a sustained set of reforms driven by government across a wide range of public services. It marks a shift away from the traditional form of public administration (Hood 1991) to management (Lawler and Hearn 1995). It is not a single phenomenon and there was no simple shift from public administration to NPM, but rather a whole series of reforms designed to implement neoliberal ideology and give public sector organisations a new orientation and change the way they operate (Hood, 1991). Enders, De Boer, & Leišytė (2009:30) view NPM as a theory and practice for the governance of public sectors. Since governance is concerned with the regulation of behaviours in society NPM has become fused with the neoliberal ideology and naturalised as a preferred way to run public sector institutions. Enders et al (ibid) suggest NPM includes strong and visible elements of a normative theory of 'good governance'.

In terms of the provision of public services NPM is radical in both its scope and intensity (Diefenbach, 2007). Gordon and Whitchurch (2010) conceive of NPM in a higher education context as having six main characteristics, the first three of which relate closely to the ideological tenets of managerialism, the remaining three with roots in neoliberalism:

- a greater separation of academic work and management activity;
- increased control and regulation of academic work by managers;



- a perceived shift in authority from academics to managers and consequent weakening of the professional status of academics;
- an ethos of enterprise and emphasis on income generation;
- government policy focused on meeting socio-economic needs;
- more market orientation, with increased competition for resources.

Enders et al (2009:36) agree with the above and see NPM as a means to multiple ends, including making savings in public expenditure, enhancing the processes in delivering public services, and making the organisation of service delivery more efficient and effective. Gordon and Whitchurch's (2010) characteristics are evident in Pollitt's (2003) description of the key elements of NPM which provide a clearer outline of how it works:

- a shift in the focus of management systems and efforts from inputs and processes towards outputs and outcomes;
- a shift towards measurement and quantification, especially in the form of 'performance indicators' and/or explicit 'standards', and away from 'trust' in professionals and experts;
- a preference for more specialised, 'lean', 'flat' and autonomous forms of organisation rather than large, multi-purpose, hierarchical ministries or departments;
- a widespread substitution of contracts (or contract-like relationships) for what were previously formal, hierarchical relationships;
- a much wider deployment of markets (or market-type mechanisms) for the delivery of public services and use of mechanisms such as competitive tendering;
- an emphasis on service quality and a consumer orientation (thus extending the market analogy by redefining users of public services as 'consumers').
- a broadening of the frontiers between the public sector, the market and the voluntary sector (for example, through the use of public private partnerships and/or contracting out).
- a shift in value priorities away from universalism, equity, security and resilience, towards efficiency and individualism, (Pollitt, 2003: 27–28).

NPM implements these changes, or reforms, through reorganisations and restructurings, but in order to fully understand how they are operationalised Reed (2002:166) argues that a multi-level perspective is necessary. Each level has specific attributes and dynamics that through nesting effects are mutually interdependent. At the systems level NPM can be seen as a generic narrative of strategic change which includes its underlying rationale, and which addresses the legitimacy of exercising managerial prerogatives (Enders et al., 2009:38). In other words, the perceived inefficiencies of universities lend legitimacy to the adoption of radical change. At the organisational level NPM represents the distinctive forms, structural arrangements and practices that provide the administrative mechanisms and organisational processes necessary to bring about a generic narrative of strategic change. For example, new rules and procedures for the acquisition of resources such as funding, infrastructure or human resources.

The organisation of services in terms of authorities, responsibilities and accountabilities leads to a tightly integrated regime of managerial discipline (Enders et al., *ibid*). At the operational level NPM can be regarded as a practical control technology through which policies can be transformed into practices, techniques and procedures. Performance based management with annual appraisals and various other monitoring and outcome evaluation methods are examples of procedures at the operational level (Enders et al., 2009:38).

Kettl, (2000:1) says NPM emphasises the use of “market-style incentives to root out the pathologies of government bureaucracy”. In some cases this involves creating competition between top-level public managers for available funding, which results in large salaries for high-ranking favoured officials. An example is the “superheads” created in the early 2000s to lead underperforming schools (Ward, 2011). A clear measure of the scale of ‘executive power’ is that managers’ salaries and bonuses, in both the private and the public sector rose to unprecedented levels. For example, top

university managers can earn up to £1 million a year, which is publicly defended on the grounds that school and/or corporate managers are paid even more. In other cases, incentivisation involves privatising government owned property and public enterprises (Ward, 2011). It also involves creating a competitive and entrepreneurial environment throughout the public sector. For example, employees, unlike agency heads, are not paid higher salaries, instead either competition or surveillance and assessment techniques are employed to promote internal competition.

NPM introduced a series of customer service measures into the public sector, in order to create greater public accountability by providing better “consumer choice” and “customer satisfaction” and by making all types of public organisations “friendly, convenient, and seamless” (Kettl, 2000: 41). As part of these changes in customer relations, NPM nudged public organisations to become more “public relations savvy” by utilising the same marketing techniques as corporates. These techniques involve both the use of public relations methods for “handling” and placating customers and sophisticated “branding,” marketing and advertising campaigns that seek to project the organisation in “a good light” (Ward, 2011:210). From a critical perspective, if designed as labour-saving devices these techniques can be used in lieu of maintaining the overall number of workers in an organisation. Some public relations tactics allow organisations to downsize by deflecting attention away from the “content”, such as the number and quality of the professionals or worker/management relations, toward a crafted organisational simulacrum. Tactics like these are evident in the way universities promote particular programs and produce glossy promotional materials.

NPM mobilises a kind of institutional devolution in the form of decentralisation, which involves outsourcing auxiliary functions and devolving budgets to departments (Clarke & Newman, 1997). This shift often entails a paradoxical “autonomy for accountability” trade-off that

grants greater managerial power to local agencies to make decisions, while demanding that those agencies adhere to more elaborate auditing mechanisms instituted by the state or the center, so that the state, or the center, becomes the manager that moves the cost of supervision to the local level while maintaining control over the functioning of the agency (Clarke and Newman, 1997).

In public institutions this strategy can take the form of a replacement of centralised budgeting with a departmentalised “user pays” system (Arshad-Ayaz, 2007: 86) or “responsibility center management” (Zemsky, Wegner and Massey, 2005:18). Units, departments, schools within the institution are required to be self-sustaining, which helps senior management identify those that are most productive and have the “lowest overheads”; information which is subsequently used as leverage to eliminate, or threaten to eliminate, departments with low productivity levels, or as a mechanism to spur competition between departments for a larger budgetary allotment, or alternatively smaller budget cuts (Ward, 2011).

NPM emphasises the outsourcing of supporting functions, such as catering, maintenance and cleaning services. Outsourcing enables institutions to “unbundle” and privatise some of their functions and, as a result, save money. This creates a “bare bones” operation where only the central tasks of the organisation are conducted by a diminishing pool of full-time employees. Outsourcing supports the casualisation and peripherisation of labour (Du Gay,2006:160) and treats certain jobs within the institution as temporary. This concept has relevance to the growing number of casual academics in higher education.

### **3.4.2 Operation of Higher Education under NPM**

In the public higher education sector NPM is the organisational and operational arm of neoliberalism and hence of marketisation. Lynch (2014) sees NPM as stripping public services of moral and ethical values and

replacing them with the market discourse of costs, efficiencies, profits and competition. Anything which is not easily quantified is undervalued or abandoned. NPM promotes the decentralisation of budgetary and personal authority to line managers, and project-led contract employees rather than permanent staff. It endorses strong market-type accountability in public sector spending. The net effect is that meeting financial and other targets is a priority, and success in meeting targets is measured through public audits. In higher education the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the new Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) the National Student Survey (NSS), and the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) are examples of public audits. Rankings such as these fuel the development of quasi-markets, a key goal of NPM, and internal markets operate as a further form of control through competition and public surveillance of public sector services.

The devolved management style created by NPM is one where the managed becomes the manager, or to use Foucault's (1991) phrase, "the self-governing governed", whereby staff in public institutions are under increasing pressure to be "more accountable" while also having to report on themselves through various auditing systems. Just as the government devolved its welfare functions to local agencies, centralised managers in public institutions devolve management tasks to the staff they oversee (Ward, 2011). Until the introduction of NPM, professionals were able to remain outside the direct control of management due to their ability to organise into autonomous, and in some cases legally protected, disciplines and professions, promote their interests through unions and professional bodies and use the power obtained from their professional bodies to insulate themselves from excessive managerial control.

In this new arrangement "principle-agent line management chains replace delegated power with hierarchical forms of authoritatively structured relations" (Olssen and Peters, 2005: 324). The corollary is that professions

are managed and steered just like any other type of work or self-interested group; professionals become de-professionalised. NPM accomplishes management and leadership through the establishment of objectives and output goals rather than regulations (Schimank, 2005: 366), and it is the objectives and the goals, rather than physically present managers or regulations, that become the means through which professionals are managed. Decisions are made and imposed through faceless “third person” accountability systems designed to insure efficiency and timeliness (Ward, 2011:208).

Under NPM, accountability systems operate by reworking internal practices such as self- and peer-review into external accountability systems. Rather than self- and peer-review being used as a gate-keeping device into or through the profession, they are used to rank and reward individuals, departments or agencies (Ward, 2011:209). Examples include the ranking of individual academic departments and universities in the REF, the TEF and the NSS. As a result of NPM, trust in professional ability “to do the right thing” is replaced by assessment at a distance, and autonomy is replaced by management from above or even from within. Trust is no longer to be trusted as the central mechanism that promotes adherence to the institution. Schimank, (2005: 372) found that autonomy was recast as “irresponsibility”; as the harbinger of the “unmanaged” and hence the unproductive, undisciplined and unknown. Ward (2011:212) says “unmanaged people and areas are considered to represent a risk to the organisation and even to the rationality of neoliberalism and NPM themselves”.

NPM can be seen as a government strategy “to replace the old regime which was dominated by state-regulated professions, with a new regime, dominated by the market” (Schimank, 2005:366). Advocates of NPM, such as ex-Prime Minister Blair, maintain that the changes it introduced to the public sector were inevitable transformations made necessary by global competitiveness, the need for reduction in public spending and the public’s

distrust of bureaucracies and the professions. The necessity of these 'needs' called for a new, more efficient system of public management (Ward, 2011). The presentation of NPM as an inevitable and necessary outcome of the need for economic efficiency and to root out inefficiency, laziness, waste and complacency, ignores its political nature and neoliberal policies. NPM de-politicises decision-making and mutes opposition by presenting all decisions as prudent and inevitable outcomes arrived at by rational management. Along with opposition to any form of criticality inherent in neoliberalism, the suggestion is that there can be no questioning of NPM or the neoliberal economic doctrine which it implements since the decisions are simply rational economic calculations reflecting market realities.

Despite the political rhetoric about its effectiveness Kellis and Ran (2015) identified NPM-based reforms as an explanation for systemic failures in the American public sector over several years. They cite a long list of 'wrongdoing' in Federal agencies that derive from NPM reforms, much of it fitting under the rubric of what Adams and Balfour (2009) term 'administrative evil' such as: *inter alia* alleged sexual and physical abuse by the Immigration and Naturalization Service; incompetence, disorganisation and even 'extra judicial killing' (p.615) in response to Hurricane Katrina; inappropriate targeting of certain political groups by the Internal Revenue Service; and a 'corrosive culture' (ibid) of fraud and mismanagement of the Veterans Health Administration resulting in the deaths of veterans.

Reed (2012:188) describes "administrative evil" in the public sector as systems in which well-intentioned people participate in the blind pursuit of organisational goals, and unwittingly cause harm to others. He attributes its prevalence to the diffusion of information, division of labour, role specialisation and compartmentalisation that separate individuals from the consequences of their actions. Reed (ibid) points out that environments in which 'evil' occurs are often built on a technical rationality which is

particularly characteristic of NPM (Adams, 2011), and which underlies much of traditional leadership theory. This includes a focus on hierarchical leader-centric and value-neutral leadership, outcomes-based measurement of efforts, and an organisational, as opposed to an individual, leader orientation (Newman, Guy, and Mastracci, 2009:12), “allowing evil to occur as subordinates learn not to apply values to leaders’ directives”. Subordinates learn to justify means by the ends they achieve, and see themselves as simply a cog in an organisational wheel (Kellis and Ran (2015).

Bao, Wang, Larsen & Morgan, (2013) propose that the transfer of a business ethos to the public sector via NPM reforms without a strong relationship to core values leads to questionable management and leadership decisions. Smyth (2017:7) uses the metaphor of ‘diseased reasoning’ to describe what he calls “pathological organisational dysfunction” in reference to an ‘incapacity’ and ‘inability’ to make decisions based on anything other than the bottom line (similar to Hamlet’s “diseased wit). Apple (2016:880) suggests that neoliberalism and NPM operate because of the “epistemological veil’ that is spun in the discourse of those in dominant positions, because he says, “what goes on under the veil is secret and must be kept from public view” (ibid), a tactic that facilitates the constant shifting of milestones, decreased trust and increased competition between individuals and departments.

Removing the veil reveals that in terms of higher education marketisation is actually the marriage of neoliberalism and NPM. A more appropriate term to describe how higher education is being reshaped would be ‘neoliberal marketisation’. Neoliberalism along with NPM weaken collective values and ways of working in favour of competitive markets, and aggressive entrepreneurial individualism in the cause of greater efficiency and better value for money, but in reality transferring resources and power to those that are already well placed. Together they contribute to the degradation of



the traditional educational character, meaning and operation of higher education.

### **3.5 Chapter summary**

This chapter demystifies marketisation. The conclusion is that the term 'marketisation' in relation to higher education is misleading. At face value it suggests the simple use of markets and market mechanisms applied to higher education, which is not the case. The term 'neoliberal marketisation' would be more appropriate since neoliberal economic policies have deregulated the system and constructed higher education as a quasi-market. Having arisen out of the fiscal crisis of the 1970s and 1980s the implementation of a neoliberal political ideology and agenda gradually transformed the provision of higher education culminating in its acceleration from 2010 onwards. The traditional discourse of higher education including 'truth', 'culture', 'the general powers of the mind', and 'intellectual growth', is increasingly usurped by a discourse that emphasises 'efficiency', 'value added', 'choice', and 'competition'.

Classical liberalism regarded the state as the supervisor of the market and intervened as little as possible but neoliberalism turns this on its head, so that the market becomes the organising principle of the state. Unlike classical liberalism the assumption is that markets do not arise naturally, instead they must be artificially constructed. Without NPM, it is unlikely the state would have succeeded in taking the neoliberal ideology, and hence the marketisation of higher education, from paper to practice. As in Chile and elsewhere, neoliberalism uses creative destruction as a means of implementing reform. Higher education is no different.

The next chapter examines the literature on what marketisation means for the constituent elements of higher education, namely structure, staff and students.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### THE MARKETISED UNIVERSITY

Competition, both within and between universities, is fundamental to the marketised university, which is increasingly managed through NPM according to corporate models (Olssen & Peters, 2005). This shift has come about partly from the bottom-up as a result of the expansion in higher education, discussed in chapter two, and attempts to cope with the withdrawal of government funding (Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2011), and partly from the neoliberal and NPM policies that constitute marketisation. Advocates of marketisation assert that competition drives universities to be more efficient, innovative and entrepreneurial, and leads to higher quality teaching and research. Neoliberalism's ideological beliefs and NPM's practices and techniques are employed to justify actions as natural, neutral, necessary and commonsensical and therefore exempt from criticism.

#### 4.1 Restructuring and Reorganising

As discussed in chapter three, marketisation implements its reforms through institutional reorganisations and restructurings. Shattock (2013) refers to it as 'reorganising mania' said to account for expansion, but it is actually driven by NPM and it usually means department closures, job cuts and dismissal notices (Hill, Lewis, Maisuria and Yarker, 2013). Restructurings are normally accompanied by changes in internal resource allocation and variations in budgetary devolution. Hogan (2012) found that 65% of the 72 universities he studied had undergone significant academic restructuring in the five years 2002 to 2007, resulting in unstable workforces. Hogan (2012) found that a common organisational structure emerged whereby teaching units were organised into 15 to 30 departments or schools within three-to-seven faculties or colleges. It had the effect of pushing academic staff further away from central decision-making and, where departments were

merged into schools, it encouraged a weakening of traditional disciplinary based relationships, a tendency that was reinforced by modular based teaching programmes (Hogan, 2012).

Hogan (2012) also found that the collegiality of working within a disciplinary-based framework was replaced when academics work as individuals within larger open systems managed by a core group of non-academic personnel answerable to an appointed academic head. He found restructuring to be uniformly imposed top-down, often with only cursory consultation with academic staff, which emphasised the distance that had developed between staff at the periphery and staff at the center of the university.

Deem et al (2007) suggest that the creation of teaching units, sometimes with an external appointee as Executive Dean or Pro-Vice-Chancellor, is often accompanied by the dissolution of the predecessor faculty board(s), thereby simultaneously imposing what Deem et al (2007) refer to as a 'manager-academic' who can have significant resource allocation and other powers. This substantially reduces the participation of academics in the management of academic matters regarding their subject field. External appointees on short-term contracts and without a departmental base are more likely to view their prime loyalty as being to the center rather than to the academic areas where they serve so that in sensitive issues, such as subject rationalisation or department mergers, they are more likely to be bringing messages downwards than carrying them upwards.

In a marketised university, previously flat, collegial decision-making structures have been replaced by hierarchies where initiative at the periphery is either pre-empted or severely constrained by a strong center (Deem et al, 2008). Hogan (2012) makes a point regarding the devolution of authority that as institutions expand, the center can suffer from decision-making overload. Devolving decision-making to those closer to the coal face would improve the sensitivity of the decisions in relation to the conditions on

the ground, but Shattock (2013) suggests the argument for subsidiarity would have been more convincing if it did not involve the importation of new leadership cadres from outside the university to the exclusion of internal participation, and if the implementation of such structures had been restricted to large universities where real problems in the management of size were apparent. Hogan (2012) found that arguments proposed for restructuring small institutions were sometimes motivated by a wish to follow management fashion for restructuring or alternatively a desire for a tidier model, rather than a real need.

In contrast to Clarke & Newman's (1997) view, increased marketisation has had the effect of re-centralising decision-making. Enders et al (2009) suggest this is a result of the uncertainty of the funding situation. Withdrawing decisions from the periphery to the center for finance, student recruitment, or resource allocation, and the creation of mechanisms that make devolved financial decision-making subject to central influence and approval neutralises peripheral centers, or schools (Hogan, 2012), but the link to the center empowers managers whose role is to bureaucratise, monitor and report to the senior executive (Enders et al., 2009).

#### **4.2 University Leadership and Governance**

The Jarratt Report (1985) gave post-92 institutions a bureaucratic hierarchical corporate board-like governing body and a senior executive, and the Lambert Report (2003) encouraged university governing boards to behave more like company boards (Shattock, 2013). The constitution of the post-92s encouraged a top-down governance structure unlike that of the pre-1992 universities. According to Shattock (2013) this was to equate governing bodies with company boards of directors in creating and driving institutional strategy, as distinct from being the guardians of accountability. One of the governing board's responsibilities was to determine the institutions future direction (HEFCE, cited in Shattock, 2013). The assumption being that well-informed lay governors were likely to be more

experienced and effective at determining the future than those actually working in the institution (Shattock, 2013).

Shattock (2013:220) says "governing bodies have never been able to play a serious role in determining strategy for research or for RAE submissions despite funding and reputational outcomes being so important for many institutions". The reason for this, he says, is that "they lacked the necessary expertise and a sufficiently detailed understanding of the research environment" (2013:225). Following the financial crisis of 2007 the idea that private sector governance structures and practice were somehow automatically superior to university governance became highly questionable. The breakdown of governance at Leeds Metropolitan, London Metropolitan, Cumbria and Gloucestershire Universities and the University of East London cast doubt on the effectiveness of governing boards. The role of governing boards is further undermined by marketisation because it strengthens the initiating role of the executive where the expertise is thought to lie (Shattock, 2013:221).

Shattock (2013) proposes that governing boards have been entirely dependent on the recommendations of their vice-chancellors and executives for determining tuition fees and bursary levels, and on their assessment of the market in which their universities operate. A report to the LFHE based on a selected interview sample conducted in 2011–12 by Jameson & McNay (2013) found that governors "were mostly sidelined by most top management interviewees". One interviewee made the point that many governors did not understand "higher education" and were therefore reliant on senior management; another noted that "three to four days a year does not allow intelligent engagement with a complex organisation", yet another "dismissed governing bodies across the sector as both too small to be representative, and too big to be efficient" (Jameson and McNay, 2013). An unstable policy environment breeds institutional uncertainty and

Shattock (2013) suggests the effect is to reduce the role of governance and greatly enhance that of the leadership executive.

Since the introduction of the UK Education Reform Act (1988) there have been repeated calls from Government for improved leadership in universities. For example, the white paper on *The Future of Higher Education* (DfES, 2003:76) cites the necessity for “strong leadership and management” as an essential driver for change in the sector. According to the Rt Hon Charles Clarke, MP “*The grit in the oyster is leadership, we need leadership at all levels*” (NCSL, 2004:2). HEFCE (2004:34) identified “developing leadership, management and governance” as one of its eight strategic aims. In 2004 the LFHE was established to support and develop leadership in the sector. Promoters of strong leadership of universities argue that reforms of governance are needed to achieve modernisation (European Commission, 2011), but critics of the reform movement describe it as ‘rampant managerialism’ (Kolsaker, 2008) aligned to the political ideology of neoliberal marketisation (Olssen & Peters, 2005).

As a result of the establishment of the LFHE there is now a large literature on the leadership of universities. It reveals a highly contested construct that questions the idea of university leadership in terms of its purpose, its function, its roles and processes, its theoretical underpinnings and its impact. There is a great deal of ambiguity around its existence, purpose and practice. For example, Lumby (2012:1) found “a yawning divergence in leaders’ espoused values and beliefs about who and what universities are for”. She says: “some treat higher education institutions in the same way as commercial businesses, whereas others reflect the belief that universities are not businesses” (p1). Kok, McClelland and Bryde (2010) found that post-1992 universities were more comfortable with the business stance. Smith, Adams & Mount (2011) treat universities as commercial businesses and argue that as multi-million pound businesses universities should be led as such, but other research (Bolden et al., 2012) reflects the belief of many

that, while being run in a business-like way is necessary, universities are not corporates, because they have a different mission, they have longevity (Guest & Clinton, 2007), and unlike corporates they are vulnerable to changing government policy.

The LFHE research also reflects contradictions and ambiguities among vice-chancellors and senior university leaders concerning the leadership of their institutions. For example, the respondents in Bolden et al's (2012) research rejected the idea that those in formal leadership roles were engaged in leadership. In many cases, heads of department felt they did not have sufficient control of resources and direction to be perceived as engaged with and influencing academic work. Ball (2007:74) found that the "presence of formal leaders does not necessarily mean that leadership will occur", and Kennie and Woodfield (2008) report contradictory perceptions of the impact of leaders on others, with some respondents claiming that leaders were an impediment to progress.

Some of the research uses the term 'leadership' to include the functions and actions of management, for example Ramsden (1998), whereas others make a distinction between academic management and academic leadership. Bolden et al (2012) suggest that the former has an institutional focus and is about academic tasks and processes whilst the latter, academic leadership, is concerned with academic values and identities. Much of the research positioned leadership as values-based, focused on the academic work of teaching, research and enterprise, rather than the institution-focused processes of managing the day-to-day operations. Whitchurch (2007) found a belief that those in formal leadership roles, even the most senior, are essentially engaged in institutional management and not leadership, because they lack influence on the majority of staff in any significant way, but her research does not say what that influence could, or should be.

Tuson's (2008) respondents rejected the idea that academics either wanted or needed leadership. An emphasis on the degree and intensity of autonomy of academic staff, described in the literature as professionalism, is argued to create a context that negates leadership from others. The notion that a different kind of leadership or no leadership at all is needed in organisations staffed primarily by professionals, that is, those who have a very high level of expertise and who are guided by a code of practice, is not unique to higher education. An example is the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK. Bryman (2007) found that a research and/or teaching mission drives staff strongly without the input of leaders. The view is that academics produce the outputs of the core business and only institutional management, rather than leadership, is required from those in formal authority roles to enable individuals and the organisation to flourish.

Paradoxically, although academics do not want leadership, a frequent reference in the LFHE research to what academics want from leaders is 'vision'. Numerous studies (Breakwell, and Tytherleigh, 2008; Burgoyne, et al, 2009; Fielden, 2011; Gibbs, et al, 2009; Powell and Clark, 2012; Quinlan, 2011; Smith, et al, 2011), each with a different research focus on universities, found their respondents referred to vision as a key attribute of leadership. While references were frequently made to the need for leaders to create a vision, examples of the creation and communication of vision and how it is received are far less so. Where the practice of vision-setting was probed, it emerged as an expression of general goals.

Rozyski (2004:94) compares vision to "happy talk" at best enrolling all in unrealistic, general aspirations, "the effect of which is to deaden the acuity of shaping goals, rather than the opposite". Respondents state that they or others create, or should create, vision, but this appears to evaporate when what this means in practice is probed. For example, Gibbs et al (2009:16) found that it "revealed itself in more prosaic ways", such as presenting the need to solve a practical problem, and Tourish (2012) argues for



encouraging leaders to set explicit goals rather than visions. The research suggests that there is a conviction that leaders should construct and communicate vision, but there are doubts about what vision is, and the literature reflects criticism of the unsatisfactory nature of the content and ownership of vision.

The LFHE research exposes not only diverse goals but also tensions in the value base that underpins them. Hall's (2012:16) research depicts the long-time ambiguity of higher education institutions that "provide life-changing opportunities" but also act as "gatekeepers, maintaining differentiation by exclusion and ranking, and contributing to enduring inequalities". Bebbington's (2009) review of diversity in higher education, cites Morley's (1999) evidence that "widening participation [is] perceived as dilution, or pollution" (p39) by some. These views are expressed by leaders in terms of not dropping standards or wanting to recruit only the 'best' staff and students, an implicit assumption being that increased diversity of socioeconomic class, gender, ethnicity or disability must involve recruiting students of lesser ability (Lumby, et al, 2005). The same implication is evident in assertions that excellence matters more than social mobility.

The LFHE research is interesting because although it does not reveal daily choices made by university leaders, it provides an overview of the current state of leadership in contemporary marketised universities. For example, although many roles have job descriptions referring to leading, including vice-chancellors, pro-and deputy vice-chancellors, heads of a range of professional services, deans and heads of school or departments, and many others are formally designated as leaders, the degree to which they are perceived as exercising leadership is debated (Lauwreys, 2008:3).

A huge literature on the leadership of universities shows significant disagreement about its nature and purpose although it is largely accepted that leadership should be treated as a real, empirically distinctive entity. The

wider literature suggests that leadership is beneficial for individuals and organisations (Martin & Learmonth, 2012) and there is no doubt that the popular, policy and academic literatures see leadership as a key component in the success of organisations, not just in the private but also in the public sector. Gilmartin and D'Aunno (2007:408) suggest "leadership is positively and significantly associated with individual and group satisfaction, retention and performance".

In a marketised university leadership takes on a new perspective, particularly where governing boards have been left behind as proposed by Shattock (2013). Governing boards, he suggests, have spent too much time on effectiveness reviews and process reform and not enough on adjusting to the new market imperatives. The consequence is that they have become reactive to the proposals of their executives and are much less able to play the role of the 'critical friend'. In a marketised university strategy and executive action are intrinsically linked (Schofield, 2009), and the governing board is too far away from that action and too lacking in expert knowledge to contribute effectively to the policy decisions that have to be taken. With little or no links with the academic community there is a heavy dependence on the leadership of the executive and an overreliance on a single source of advice and information.

### **4.3 University Administration- Middle Managers**

Increasing NPM reform shifted the term 'administration' to management (Hood,1991). Over the past decades large scale reform in the public sector fundamentally altered the role of administration (Helms, 2017). NPM reforms based on the view of 'more and better management' as a means of resolving institutional problems liberated "the right to manage" (Pollitt, 1993) from institutional constraints. It enhanced the range and scope of managerial power in the pursuit of corporate excellence, effectiveness, efficiency and the 'bottom line', in other words profitability. The result is a new class of administrator/manager whose role is to implement procedures

and practices in line with NPM structures. Willmott (1993) sees the empowerment of middle managers as a method of increasing senior management control, but Ledema, Ainsworth & Grant (2008) see middle management as ideally placed to capitalise on changes in structure and processes where they can contribute to strategic change and business planning processes, be entrepreneurial and innovative and assume greater responsibility.

From a NPM perspective the goal of middle management is to ensure the procedures are in place to maximise profit. Germic (2009:144) sees the managerial tools of “standardisation”, “quality assurance” and “efficiency” as representing an insidious takeover of a university’s goals of academic enlightenment by box ticking and form filling. Germic (2009) states:

*“With standardised curricula, continuous self-audits, and numerical measures attached to virtually every aspect of our jobs, we express great nostalgia for universities without deans and deanlets of ‘institutional effectiveness’ whose principle lifework seems to be the invention of yet another form to contribute to yet another report to demonstrate compliance with some invariably vague mission or objective” (2009:146).*

In a marketised university an ever widening group of middle managers tend to be the ‘inventors of the forms’ that contribute to the reports to demonstrate compliance with one thing or another.

The number of middle managers has increased almost beyond comprehension. In 2012 American universities reported two non-academic employees for every full-time (tenured) academic (Marcus, 2014). The UK universities’ 2013/14 returns to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) reveal that support staff were in the majority at 111 out of 157 institutions. They made up 60% or more of all staff at 27 institutions. Among larger institutions, that is, those with at least 500 academics, the highest proportion of support staff, 63%, was recorded by the University of Bradford. The national average in 2013/14 was 53% (Jump 2015), casting doubt on the NPM claim that centralised administration is more efficient.

Shattock (2013) suggests this is a reflection of institutional size and the development of the technical business of university management that has emphasised the contribution of specialist professional expertise in, for example, student record systems that are outside academic control. Morgan (2010) uses HESA data to show that the numbers of professional managers rose by 30% between 2004–05 and 2008–09. Hogan's (2012) data shows that between 1994–95, and 2008–09 the proportion of university expenditure on administration and central services had grown from 12% to 14.8% at the expense of a decreasing percentage of academic departments. The size of the administration which in some instances is over 50% of the total work force, represents a change in the balance of power within institutions. Increasing numbers of middle managers reporting to a central executive reflect the neoliberal focus on reshaping, monitoring and controlling employee behaviour while combining the mobilisation of highly managed staff with increasing emphasis on self-governance and responsabilisation.

#### **4.4 Responsibilisation**

Neoliberalism, and consequently marketisation, increases a sense of responsibility for oneself. The neoliberal focus on the individual normalises personal responsibility for risks such as illness, unemployment, poverty, and lack of education or lack of career progression (Amsler & Shore, 2017). Responsibility refers to the notions of free choice, personal initiative, innovation, good conduct and the authority to speak, act or decide on another's behalf. In contrast irresponsibility implies risk taking behaviour, such as speaking up or out of turn, neglect, lack of care, or even fanaticism (Smyth, 2017). The notion of responsabilisation has roots in Foucault's (1978-79) work on biopolitics and governmentality in which he focused on the origins of neoliberalism as exemplified by the Chicago school. Under neoliberalism, Foucault's '*homo oeconomicus*' is constructed not as a partner in an exchange but as a responsible exemplary citizen, employee and individual. He is, according to Foucault (2008:226), "an entrepreneur of

himself, being for himself his own capital, his own producer... the source of his earnings". Foucault (ibid) states:

*"...homo oeconomicus, that is to say, the person who accepts reality or who responds systematically to modifications in the variables of the environment, appears precisely as someone manageable. Homo oeconomicus is someone who is eminently governable" (p270).*

Homo oeconomicus is eminently governable because he, and she, is made responsible for his and her behaviour by the taken for granted economic vocabulary that establishes objectives, standards, performance targets, and administrative procedures whereby individuals compete with one another for limited resources. In the marketised university governments' role is to protect and enable entrepreneurial capitalism, populated with tangible goods, intellectual property, performance-related salaries, and 'flexible' workforces (Amsler & Shore, 2017), rather than the provision of support or welfare.

Amsler & Shore, (ibid: 124) suggest the term 'responsibilisation' "operationalises the condition of rational, autonomous 'self-care' as the standard for civilised, law-governed, rational society as the behaviour 'expected' by government, institutions, employees, and individuals" under marketisation. In other words, individuals are 'free' to act within this system, but their behaviours are evaluated and generally recognised only in respect of economic and/or institutional interests. Individuals, not collectives, are the units of the marketised workforce. A person's education, skills, demeanour, dress, interactions, workspace, and energies are organised to enhance the bottom line. The person is defined by his or her entrepreneurial effort and economic contributions.

The discourse of responsibilisation in higher education is evident in the neoliberal language of entrepreneurial subjectivity whereby individuals are encouraged to take charge of their own circumstances in order to benefit themselves and society at large. The paradox is that the discourse of responsibilisation including words such as: 'responsibility', 'initiative',

'innovation', 'opportunity', 'results', and 'improvement', which see individuals as autonomous selves with decision-making power, is at the same time foreclosing opportunities for cooperative work or collegial decision-making. Responsibilisation discourse organises the conduct of behaviour through benchmarks, standards, and targets established by a strategic plan, implemented by 'managers' (previously administrators) and executed by staff who are monitored and audited for performance and results (Power, 1999). In this way responsibilisation functions as a meta discourse for constructing responsible staff.

Shamir (2008:7) uses the notion of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) to define responsibilisation positively as "expecting and assuming the reflexive moral capacities of various social actors". He argues that the moralisation of markets "sustains rather than undermines neoliberal visions of civil society, citizenship and responsible social action" (ibid:1), and argues that CSR policies provide the incentives to behave in morally responsible ways. However, not everyone agrees with his assessment of CSR, and in addition neoliberalisms' focus on individuality negates any sense of shared responsibility, collective knowledge creation, collegiality or humane planned action.

In higher education responsibilisation is sometimes euphemised as 'distributed leadership' which is increasingly seen as a technology of indirect management (Amsler & Shore, 2017) and the word 'leadership' as a code word for self-managed, entrepreneurial managers and academics. Responsibilisation addresses academic and administrative functions in a similar fashion to a production system that stipulates what is 'expected' of each worker in order to integrate academic work into an administered scheme for recognising and rewarding responsible, successful conduct.

Paradoxically while NPM operates through autonomous, self-interested individuals, the moral hazard associated with self-interestedness evokes a

distrust in the 'self-governing' governed" (Duncan, 2003: 472). In other words, although NPM values the autonomous, "responsibilised" individual whose self-interestedness leads them to entrepreneurialise themselves, it fears that individuals' self-interest might not be in alignment with the organisation (Ward, 2011) so auditing systems, such as appraisal and performance related pay are constantly developed and redeveloped to keep the supposedly free and autonomous, but ultimately selfish, individual in line. In direct contradiction the system that responsabilises individuals is the same system that deprofessionalises them.

#### **4.5 Deprofessionalisation and Casualisation**

In the traditional university, academics were seen as capable of directing their own performance (Ward, 2011). Neither administrators nor consumers determined what constituted "adequate performance", "good work" or a "distinguished career", instead it was the professional body to which the individual was aligned that was the arbiter of one's performance. In this way the profession itself was insulated from external influences that sought to absorb it into a marketplace (Beck and Young, 2005). In the marketised university academic work is decoupled and broken into segments as a result of restructuring. Some segments can be casualised, some deprofessionalised, and some deskilled. Either way, there is less opportunity for casualised staff to act collectively, so the profession itself is reduced in size and power.

Under bureaucratic professionalism groups were able to negotiate their collective rights and responsibilities as a whole *vis-a-vis* their organisations. Equity was defined in terms of the "going rate" and compensation was standardised (Bailey, 1994), but marketisation's focus on individualism advocates a decollectivisation that promotes an individualistic form of labour relations and pay. Market-based incentives through direct awards made to individuals who are considered favourably, such as 'Teacher of the Year', contribute to an internal competitive environment. Like the entrepreneurial

environment of the marketplace these initiatives are meant to promote motivation, while punishing and shaming the lazy and the unmotivated. Marketisations' segmentation of professional work and the casualisation of labour makes collectivisation difficult, if not impossible.

NPM uses techniques such as "high commitment management" (Geare, Edgar and McAndrew, 2006:1193) to create the illusion that both the workers and the organisation's best interests are in alignment and being taken care of by senior management. As in the corporate sector, this is meant to encourage workers "to expend high levels of discretionary effort towards the organisation" (Geare et al., *ibid*: 1194). Under the traditional professionally controlled system failure to live up the standards of the professions meant marginalisation and lowered status within the profession. Under the NPM model failure means punishment for the whole department and possible removal of the individual or the entire department for perceived lack of productivity, the knowledge of which normalises a permanent low level of stress.

#### **4.6 Health and Well-Being**

Hall (2014) talks of the marketised university as an "anxiety machine" to illustrate his argument that when higher education becomes "just another commodity in the market serving a narrow conception of 'economic growth'", everything is contingent on the production of value, which includes money from student fees and research grants, as well as symbolic forms of value such as 'status', 'rankings' and 'citations'. The volatility of the funding régime over the last decade and the threats implicit in the NPM restructurings, as well as their actual impact, impose tensions within institutions that reinforce hierarchical and authoritarian structures. Where the focus is finance and profit there is constant cost cutting and restructuring. Berg, Huijbens & Larsen (2016) suggest the production of 'anxiety' behind the veil of economic rationality is driven by notions of efficiency, viability and institutional survival.



In a letter to *The Guardian* Newspaper in 2015, 126 senior academics in the UK spoke of:

*“Unprecedented levels of anxiety and stress among both academic and academic related staff and students abound, with obedient students expecting, and even demanding, hoop-jumping, box ticking and bean-counting, often terrified by anything new, different or difficult”.*

(6/07/2015)

Their letter suggests that stress is induced top-down from management and bottom-up from students. Combined with what Berg et al (2016:176) term job “precariousness, audit-induced competition”, as well as research income targets sometimes built into contracts, and never-ending work, the result is high anxiety. Horton & Tucker (2014) provide a concise summation of the situation:

*“...academic workplaces are frequently characterised by isolated, individualised working practices; intense workloads and time pressures; long hours and the elision of barriers between work and home; anxieties around job security and contracts (particularly for early career staff); and processes of promotion and performance review that effectively valorise individual productivity and reward and institutionalise each of the above-listed characteristics” (2014:85).*

Long hours and the elision of barriers between work and home fits with what Smyth (2017:9) refers to as an “ever receding horizon” whereby the work is never completed, never finished. The goalposts move constantly; before one deadline is achieved another one has landed, resulting in an on-going circle of anxiety, stress and frustration. Smyth (ibid:14) suggests the ‘glue’ that allows this to happen is ‘fear’. In the higher education sector fear can be reinforced at the national, institutional and individual levels. The basic message is that “if we do not play the only game in town” (ibid) catastrophe will befall us collectively and individually. At the national level the fear is about not being able to compete; at the institutional level the fear is failing to recruit enough students to survive; for academics the fear is failing to jump through the NPM hoops and lose the job, and for students the fear is failing to get the right grade and therefore failing to get a job (Zipin, 2006).

Berg et al. (2016:176) found a tendency in universities to interpret government mandates vigorously and institute them intensely, which provides legitimacy for 'command and control' approaches, which is in keeping with NPM. NPM uses fear as a control tactic. Davis (2011) found that the spectre of fear is infused into neoliberal ideology and NPM practices. She describes the anxiety associated with the fear of retribution for speaking out, and the fear of being judged negatively for drawing attention to anything that needed changing. Although this sounds like bullying Zipin (2006:30) suggests that fear inducing tactics are buried in an "organisational logic" and workplace practices designed to "limit academic autonomy and agency", rather than direct bullying.

However, Saunders (2006:15) is far less generous when describing highly marketised Australian universities. He argues that managers frequently hide behind passages from their university's grievance policy, procedures or regulations. He is scathing in his assessment of institutional bullying masquerading as management practices; he says "since the 1990s to be an academic in Australia is to some extent ...a living lie [...] tertiary education doesn't simply foster bullying, but it *is* bullying..."(p17, italics in original).

The literature on bullying in English universities is growing. For example, *Academic FOI.com* reports that between 2007 and 2009 at least 1,957 university staff asked for advice or support due to bullying. Professor John Gus, writing in *The Guardian*, says that

*"Vice-chancellors, provosts and principals are running institutions that see themselves more and more as corporations or conglomerates. They are not understanding that financial management and brand leadership should not displace the fact that universities are first and foremost learning communities – and that the principal function of education is to humanise society".*

(16/12/14)

Gus (2016) goes on to say that "these corporations believe that no one could hold them to account on issues to do with employment law, employee

relations and their compliance with equality and human rights legislation. So they bully staff in respect of organisational goals and in the process contravene the very laws that are in place to protect people from such abusive conduct". Dismissals were rarely cited as follow up actions to proven cases of bullying. Only 20 staff were dismissed out of 234 proven cases. No dismissals took place at Million+ universities whilst 13 staff were dismissed at Russell Group institutions (Academic FOI, 2011). 'Gagging' agreements ensure the problem is not discussed; it is not transparent, consequently it tends to be perpetuated. Smyth's (2017:19) view is that the senior executive is complicit in institutional bullying, and the "state is not innocent either".

A near fanatical preoccupation with organisational goals, outputs, rankings and the consumerisation of students (Preston and Aslett, 2014:504) is legitimated by marketisations' singular view of market driven identities and values (Giroux, 2014:494). Policies, such as increased teaching workloads, and accountability for student outcomes and tighter deadlines, imposed on staff at all levels have the appearance of common sense, which is what makes them so insidious. Smyth (2017:56) uses the word "toxic" to describe the university as one where the policies and procedures of marketisation "infiltrate the cracks and crevices of everyday work practices and become insinuated into work in ways that distort, deform, deflect and damage the work and the culture within which it exists". Although Smyth (2017) cites casualties, and even fatalities, as a result of the pressure to produce funded research while coping with a heavy teaching load, over a period of time one acclimatises to a moderate level of non-specific fear and anxiety; it becomes normal. Shore (2010a) describes the contemporary university as "schizophrenic" where survival depends on a constant trade-off between intellectual and collegial values and the technologies of marketisation that demand more and more and ever more, with increasing levels of responsibility for oneself and for students.

#### 4.7 Students as Customers and Consumers

The raising of tuition fees in 2006 gave impetus to the notion of students as customers and consumers. The advent of league tables, such as the NSS, reinforces the idea of students as customers. First, the conceptualisation of students as consumers and customers sees them as a kind of 'change agent' (Naidoo & Williams, 2016) with the power to pressurise universities to act in accordance with the logic of the market based on rankings such as the NSS. Second, as Furedi (2011:5) says "the moment students begin to regard themselves as customers, their intellectual development is likely to be compromised". Furedi (ibid) goes on to say "those of us in higher education know that degrees can be bought, but an understanding of a discipline cannot". Cuthbert (2010:4) suggests that students who pay fees can be expected to be more conscious of their rights and expect better service standards, be less tolerant of shortcomings, more demanding, and more litigious.

A culture of student complaint is promoted by the commodification of what is essentially an abstract, intangible, non-material and relational experience (Furedi, 2011:1). The commodification of higher education leads to standardisation, calculation and formulaic teaching (Furedi, 2011:6) and reduces quality into quantity. The problem is that marketisation constitutes higher education as a quantifiable and instrumentally driven process, which may well be how students perceive it, rather than an intangible post-experience good. On the one hand, the metaphor of the 'free-market', with students as 'satisfied' consumers and customers, implies that the motivation for study is purely for the purpose of boosting CVs and improving employability, with a focus on '*having* a degree' rather than '*being* a learner'.

According to the 1994 Group (2007:6) "students know how they want to be taught and have ideas about how techniques can be improved". But Molesworth et al., (2009) found students' instrumental relationship with their studies led to higher levels of plagiarism, apathy and customer complaints

(p279). On the other hand, student complaints and fear of litigation can discourage academics from exercising professional judgement when offering feedback, and can encourage a culture of positive marking and grade inflation, which effectively perpetrates a disservice to students, higher education and society in general.

#### **4.8 Academics as Service Providers**

In positioning students as customers, marketisation positions academics as service providers which challenges academic identity. Henkel (2011:79) says the concept of identity is ambiguous and multi-dimensional. It incorporates a sense of who one is and is not; of distinctiveness and embeddedness, individuation and identification. Academic identity binds the present and future of individuals and groups to their past. It gives them a sense of meaning and worth, or self-esteem (Taylor, 1989). Communitarian philosophers, such as Alasdair MacIntyre (1929-) and symbolic interactionists such as George Herbert Mead (1863–1931), view identity as grounded in defining communities, which are the source of key values and provide the discourse and concepts within which the members communicate. Communitarian theories of identity are strongly reflected in academic traditions and structures. It has been argued (Fulton 1996; Henkel, 2000) that the most powerful source of academic identity is a particular form of community, bounded, self-regulating and centred on knowledge.

From this point of view academics are distinctive in that they are “embedded within, while simultaneously making an individual contribution to, the community of whose tradition they are the bearer” (Henkel 2011:79). Establishing a distinct public reputation and private identity is an important part of the process of becoming an academic (Henkel, 2011:81). Academic reward systems are based on the assumption that career progress depends on achieving an individual epistemic identity through making an individual contribution to knowledge in a specific discipline. Shore and Wright

(1999:559) suggest that one of the facets of marketisation is the requirement for “the re-invention of academics as units of resource whose performance and productivity must constantly be audited so that it can be enhanced”, so it re-frames academics as neoliberal academic subjects, or alternatively as ‘objects’ or ‘targets’ of the ‘improvement’ efforts of their universities (ibid: 560).

The processes of marketisation reduce all human talent, ingenuity and diversity to the single all-encompassing descriptor of ‘human resource’ (Neave, 2009: 20). Neave (2009:16) argues that under marketisation academics have become a ‘managed constituency’ with restricted control over their working lives and who now work mostly in large public bureaucratic corporate institutions, where traditional work relationships have metamorphosed into formal employment contracts. Social consensus, social structures and social relations are replaced by information technology. As human resources, academics are ‘governed by numbers’ (Ozga, 2008). To quote McWilliams et al (1999:69), “a sort of romance about being an academic is no longer speakable, thinkable, or do-able”, and is replaced by a new ‘responsibilised, ‘enterprising’, ‘narcissistic’ academic as the central figure. This suggests a profound shift in academic relationships with their identities, their professional practice, their students, and the very notion of ‘being’ an academic. In addition, the emphasis on ‘flexible working’ produces a growing workforce of part-time, casual and contract teachers at the bottom of the workforce, leading to ‘career precarity’ and resulting in high levels of anxiety and stress.

The literature suggests that in the contemporary marketised university research is conceived only in instrumental terms and judged according to its revenue earning capacity. A further problem is that increased teaching workloads along with the individualisation that comes with marketisation negatively impacts research which has traditionally depended on the interaction of collegial intellectual communities of critical scholars, and

consequently jeopardises careers. Boden and Epstein (2006:233) claim that “what marks the contemporary idea of research is its capture and control by the dominant ideology of neoliberalism”. Research as an instance of “imagination” (Appadurai, 2005:6) has become a part of the commodification of knowledge with a focus on “knowledge production” (Kenway and Fahey, 2009) by self-managed, self-reliant, ‘atomised’ researchers (Boden and Epstein 2006:225) who are encouraged to compete amongst themselves and between institutions (ibid:228) for funding.

#### **4.9 Conceptual Framework**

The literature reviewed above contextualises the research question. Since its foundation in the twelfth century the nature and purpose of higher education have been the subject of debate as to whether its purpose was the search for new knowledge or the dissemination of existing wisdom, whether it should embrace Newman’s (1976) liberal idea of the cultivation of the intellect as an end in itself, as discussed previously in chapter one, or prepare students for the “real world of muck and brass” as Robinson (1968:116) proposed. Over the decades, and particularly following the Anderson Report (1960), what used to be the preserve of the privileged has grown to become a mass system catering for over 40% of those aged between 17 and 30 (DfBIS, 2015b:5) and is now significantly open in terms of gender, class, ethnicity, age and nationality. As discussed in chapter two, since the Anderson Report (1960) introduced government paid tuition fees and means tested maintenance grants the debate on the nature and purpose of higher education has been inextricably linked to its funding. The literature suggests its current *raison d’être* is underpinned by an economic imperative.

Investigating what marketisation actually means in terms of higher education reveals that the term ‘marketisation’ is a veil for a worldwide neoliberal political economic agenda backed by the IMF, the OECD, the US

and the EU, which sees everything in market terms. As discussed in chapter three, the 'market' acts as a guide to all human action and is valued as an ethic in itself and a substitution for all previously held beliefs (Harvey, 2005:4). Although neoliberalism financialises everything, the difficulty with it is that it shifts its shape to suit different contexts. There is no single definition (Harvey, 2005). Other than assigning a central role to free markets and free trade, as discussed in chapter three, it is a complex, contested and contradictory phenomenon (Self, 2000) that claims non-government intervention while requiring the government to provide a framework for the operation of the 'market'. It is operationalised through NPM's discursive strategies and control technologies and maintained by rigid work performance metrics and bureaucratic administrative procedures. Deem et al (2007) suggest higher education institutions have been coerced into adopting the institutional and cultural change required of marketisation, but Gonzales et al (2014) found that universities are eschewing traditional approaches to managing and administering universities and engaging in 'market-like behaviours' at unprecedented rates.

From a critical perspective, there is a large literature promoting the idea that the propaganda and hubris surrounding some higher education institutions is marketisation, but it is not. However prolific advertising spin may be, it does not constitute marketisation. Advertising is simply marketing and branding. The issues arising from marketisation are not marketing *per se*, nor are they reflective of an anti-business, anti-market, anti-commercial, anti-industrial or anti-management bias. On the contrary, commerce, industry, innovation, astute marketing and management, have sustained UK higher education since the twelfth century. The idea of running universities sustainably, without waste or extravagance is not the issue and cannot be argued with.

But the other side of the coin is where the tail is wagging the dog. Since its foundation and throughout the middle ages students had been under the



authority of the university with strict rules governing their conduct and social life until the 1960s when the balance of power shifted and they had a voice in the governance of their university or college. Another seismic shift occurred when the discourse of the Dearing Report (1997) positioned them as 'discriminating investors' (S1.21) and established universities as 'service providers'. Students' status as the main funders of the university bestows unprecedented power on the student body to determine whether a university, a department, a course or an academic will survive.

The literature suggests that where higher education is not focused on knowledge, intellectual enlightenment and individual growth then it loses its legitimacy and credibility. Where its focus is profit as an end in itself; where constant restructuring proves toxic to academic work and life; where grade inflation and falling academic standards are competitive tactics; where off-scale salaries and bonuses for senior executives are combined with extortionate student debt; where teaching and learning are defined as 'excellence' with little or no explanation of what excellence is, there is a problem with the legitimacy of the system.

The conception of 'learning' as a deliverable means that the student is not an agent in the process and that responsibility for the success of students' learning is with the institution, or to be more precise, with the academic, who has been reconceptualised as a service provider. This, along with a strong focus on student choice and skills, marks a shift in the thinking and discourse about higher education but neither its nature nor purpose are clear. As discussed above the recent LFHE research shows that even those in senior leadership and management positions are unsure of higher education's function or purpose.

The literature suggests that these issues arise from the marketisation of higher education and that they are directly associated with the application of its underpinning neoliberal and NPM principles. An NPM stranglehold is

counterproductive to academic work and to fully transparent and participative university governance and leadership. This thesis argues that neoliberal and NPM principles subordinate the nature and purpose of higher education to the profit nexus; that they transform the educational character, meaning and operations of higher education and degrade the discourse and habitus of its constituent elements. They erode the academic experience as a developmental and transformative public good; they treat education as a commercial business transaction; they promote a corporate culture of conformity which undermines independent, critical and creative thinking.

Informed by the literature the research question is: how has the discourse of marketisation impacted the lifeworld of leaders, managers, academics administrators and students in a contemporary university? Specific research objectives include:

- examine what 'marketisation' means for university management and leadership practice;
- explore the implications of marketisation for the people who teach, learn and work in a contemporary university;
- make recommendations for the improvement of practice.

The next chapter discusses the methodological framework and leads to the research strategy and data collection methods.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature on research methodology and methods is unequivocal that the approach adopted should be driven by, and appropriate to, the research question (Silverman, 2006; Wodak and Meyer, 2016). This study is concerned with how marketisation is proliferated through discourse, and the implications of that discourse on the lifeworld, that is, on the everyday reality of people who work, teach and learn in higher education. A quantitative survey was considered as a method of generating data but rejected on the grounds that it would provide only superficial data. The research utilises the qualitative interpretative approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) discussed below. CDA is an appropriate methodological approach because its focus is not just on language *per se*, nor on entities or individuals themselves, but on an analysis of the dialectical relations between discourse and other elements and events (Fairclough, 2010:4). CDA is compatible with the philosophy of critical realism.

#### 5.1 Critical Realism

Critical realism is a philosophy of social science rather than a substantive theory (Sayer, 2000). It proposes that social reality and our understanding of it occupy different domains: an intransitive ontological dimension and a transitive epistemological dimension. In other words, it acknowledges the existence of a reality independent of our perception of it, but it denies that there can be direct access to that reality (Edwards, O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014); it can only be known through the human mind. Sayer (2000) suggests that when confronted with a new philosophical position it can be difficult to grasp what is distinctive and significant about it based on a couple of defining statements. He presents the following characteristics as signposts to the nature of critical realism:

- The world exists independently of our knowledge of it;
- Our knowledge of that world is fallible and theory-laden. Concepts of truth and falsity fail to provide a coherent view of the relationship between knowledge and its object. Nevertheless, knowledge is not immune to empirical check, and its effectiveness in informing and explaining successful material practice is not mere accident;
- Knowledge develops neither wholly continuously, as the steady accumulation of facts within a stable conceptual framework, nor wholly discontinuously, through simultaneous and universal changes in concepts;
- There is necessity in the world; objects, whether natural or social, necessarily have particular causal powers or ways of acting and particular susceptibilities;
- The world is differentiated and stratified, consisting not only of events, but objects, including structures which have powers and liabilities capable of generating events. These structures may be present even where, as in the social world and much of the natural world, they do not generate regular patterns of events;
- Social phenomena such as actions, texts and institutions, are concept dependent. We therefore have not only to explain their production and material effects but to understand, read or interpret what they mean. Although they have to be interpreted by starting from the researcher's own frames of meaning, by and large they exist regardless of researcher's interpretations of them;
- Science or the production of any other knowledge is a social practice. For better or worse, the conditions and social relations of the production of knowledge influence its content. Knowledge is also largely – though not exclusively – linguistic, and the nature of language and the way we communicate are not incidental to what is known and communicated. Awareness of these relationships is vital in evaluating knowledge;

- Social science must be critical of its objects. In order to be able to explain and understand social phenomena we have to evaluate them critically. (Sayer, 2010: 4).

As the above indicate, for critical realists the primary goal is to understand rather than predict social behaviour. In this study meaning-making forms the intransitive dimension whereas theory and discourse are part of the transitive dimension. Meaning has to be understood, it cannot be measured or counted and hence there is always an interpretative or hermeneutic element, and this is most obvious in discourse analysis. Sayer (2010) suggests that social science operates in a double hermeneutic implying a two way movement of listener and speaker, researcher and researched, in which the latter's actions and texts never speak simply for themselves, and yet are not reducible to the researcher's interpretations of them either. Meanings are related to material circumstances and practical contexts in which communication takes place and to which reference is made.

Critical Realism is compatible with CDA which adopts an interdiscursive and transdisciplinary approach in that it brings various disciplines and theories together to assist interpretations of research issues. Insights from Critical Management Studies (CMS) are used in this study to interpret the findings because as Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009:302) note, "data do not speak for themselves". The next section discusses CMS and then discusses discourse analysis which is followed by an explanation of CDA and the approach adopted in this study.

## **5.2 Critical Management Studies (CMS)**

CMS is not so much a unified theory as an eclectic approach (Parker, 2011) that borrows from various traditions to form a perspective on critical topics such as exploitation, inequality, and ideological closure. At its core it is defined by its opposition to the established order and the mainstream body of knowledge that sustains the prevailing power structures and interests of the hegemonic classes. CMS view mainstream approaches as denoting a

commitment to utilitarianism and positivism. It sees them as fostering the neutrality of science, and as attached to neoliberalism, managerialism and New Public Management (Grey & Fournier, 2000). In a review of the role of CMS in business education Grey (2004) proposed that there is a sharp distinction between 'fact' and 'value'. He suggests that "all facts are always impregnated with values..." (p179), thereby questioning the neutrality of science.

CMS draws on Marxist social theory, Braverman's Labour Process Theory, and Foucault's poststructuralist analysis of power, and utilises various streams of interpretative theory (Helms Mills, Thurlow & Mills, 2010), to evaluate and critique mainstream approaches. The guiding principles of CMS have emerged as:

- management techniques such as human resource management are closely connected to the construction of social reality. The point is that informal everyday interaction contributes to the performance of organisations as well as the more formal elements;
- organisations are microcosms that activate and renew wider power structures. The goal is to reveal asymmetric power relationships, and challenge the privileged position of top-level management. The division of labour between the top and the rest of the organisation is seen as a political structure, which maintains the inequality between various groups;
- rational management practices are often considered to be self-evident, and there is a lack of open discussion about the value premises and political implications of ways of organising. In resisting discursive closure one of the aims of CMS is to break communicative closure, and to launch democratic dialogue between various professional groups and stakeholders;

- the goals of an organisation and the decisions of senior management are often justified by claiming they are in the best interests of the entire organisation, but CMS has revealed that what is depicted as “common” interests does not always reflect a communal consensus achieved through negotiation, but rather the objective of the senior management;
- CMS accepts the pivotal role of language and communication in an organisation. It holds that language contains, performs, and transforms social realities and relationships within and around organisations.

To summarise, critical realism, CMS and CDA place great emphasis on everyday interactions between people and how they use discourse and language to represent their world. CMS recognises the central role of language in representing social reality, including group identities and relationships. The approach is reflexive in that it rejects unquestioned positivism. Rather than discussing methodology on the basis of sampling procedures and/or statistical techniques CMS questions the underlying ontologies and epistemologies representative of most mainstream social research. As such it fits well with CDA.

### **5.3 Discourse Analysis**

There is no neat definition of the term ‘discourse’ but it often follows Foucault’s (1972) use of the term despite his using it in various and shifting ways. Foucault suggests that discourses should not be understood

*“as groups of signs (signifying elements referring to contents or representations) but as practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things”* (1972: 54).

Foucault’s view is that language, and signs in general, do not denote objects, but that they constitute them. In Foucault’s view discourse does not refer to language or text but to areas of knowledge and knowledge production. Following Foucault, Hall (1997:201) defines discourse as “a

group of statements which provide a language for talking about- that is, a way of representing – a particular kind of knowledge about a topic”, and by providing such a language, discourse does not simply reflect reality but it “structures the way that we perceive reality”. By organising what can be said, written or thought about a social object at a certain time discourse shapes reality and thus exercises power. But at the same time, discourse is itself the object of power. As Foucault (1972) points out, “in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a number of procedures” (1972:8).

Foucault’s link between knowledge and power is why his view of discourse has proven to be so powerful even though it has been used differently by different researchers (Mills, 2004:54). Discourse analysis<sup>4</sup> involves the analysis of language patterns and texts and the social and cultural contexts in which they occur. Its interest is natural occurring language use, but rather than isolated words or sentences, its focus is on larger units such as texts, discourses, conversations, speech acts and non-verbal communicative events including semiotic, multimodal and visual elements (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

Discourse analysis is a complicated and contested discipline of far reaching scope for which there is no universal definition. It has roots in numerous disciplines including rhetoric, text linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, social psychology, and cognitive science. Between the mid-1960s and the early 1970s the fledgling field was joined by a variety of approaches which emerged from other disciplines including semiotics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and pragmatics. According to Wodak & Meyer (2016:2) discourse analysis now includes the study of the function of social, cultural, situative and cognitive contexts of language use (ibid) and the analysis of a vast number of phenomena of text, grammar and language use, coherence,

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<sup>4</sup> It is now called Discourse Studies but is still referred to as Discourse Analysis in much of the literature and is used interchangeably in this research.



anaphora, topics, macrostructures, speech acts, interactions, turn-taking, signs, politeness, argumentation, rhetoric and mental models. It includes a great and confusing diversity of methods and objects of investigation.

Although it has been criticised for taking on almost anything that acts as a carrier of signification (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), its main aim remains that of its founder Zellig Harris (1952)<sup>5</sup>, which was the examination of language beyond the level of the sentence, and the relationship between linguistic and non-linguistic behaviour. Harris was interested in “how people know from the situation in which they are in, how to interpret what someone says” (Paltridge, 2012:2). Rather than a system of labelling, and despite its diversity, a focus on meaning and the importance of the individual construction and understanding of meaning is common to all its approaches. For example, in the opening remarks of his *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein asks us to imagine a builder A and assistant B building with assorted stones: A calls out the word ‘block’, ‘slab’, ‘beam’, ‘pillar’, and B passes the stones to A who inserts them into the building. Wittgenstein (1967:4) calls this “whole” situation, “consisting of both language and the actions into which it is woven” a “language-game”. The language-game can be described as a discourse. Ostensibly this seems to be about labelling but the idea of a game suggests discourses are relational configurations that involve people, words and actions. Dryzek (1998:8) says “discourse is a shared way of apprehending the world, which enables those who subscribe to it to interpret bits of information and put them together into coherent stories or accounts”.

Saussure’s (1857-1913) focus on the relationship between language and non-linguistic behaviour transformed the study of language in the late nineteenth century. His work shifted the focus to the structural character of languages as they exist and operate at any one point in time, in particular how they generate distinctive patterns of sound and meaning. He is likely to

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<sup>5</sup> Cited in Paltridge (2012)

have explained Wittgenstein's building 'language-game' in terms of signs whereby assistant B established a connection between the physical sound 'block' and an *ideal* sound (*the signifier*) which is associated with building (*the signified*).

Saussure broke with earlier investigations which saw language as an historical process and concentrated on how a specific language is constructed internally and how it can be described (Joas and Knobl, 2010:345). He distinguished between the everyday language of individuals (*la parole*) and language as a social system (*la langue*). For Saussure language was a stable immaterial system of *signifier-signified* combinations in which the identity of each depends on its differences from others. For example, the term 'father' depends on its difference from the term 'mother'. Chouliaraki (2008) explains that Saussure saw the *sign* as the organising concept of linguistic structure and held that meaning emerged from the differences in linguistic signs. Criticism from a post-structuralist perspective would point to there being no consistency in the notion that sense and meaning come into being only through differences.

Wittgenstein's (1967:4) metaphor of 'language-games' embedded in "forms of life" (discourses) illustrating the concept of different types of language activity, each of which is governed by rules specific to its context, such as the game of chess, suggests that it is the positioning of the words that gives language its meaning rather than any inherent feature of the language or even the intentions of the speaker. Wittgenstein (1967) asserted that reality does not exist independently of language. He saw language as a social entity. The assumption was that discourse constitutes and/or constructs the phenomenon of interest, whatever that may be. The metaphor of the game suggests that meaning is not fixed, as proposed by Saussure, but is inherently unstable and contingent on the social rules of interaction.

In contrast to Saussure, Foucault (1926-1984) held that all meaning comes about through positions of power. He did not claim that meaning and power pre-exist as *a prioris* of social reality, but rather his work suggests that meaning and power are constructed through social interaction. Foucault's work can be confusing because he used the term discourse in different ways (Ball, 2013:19). He referred to discourse as "the domain of subconscious knowledge" and proposed that "statements make persons-we do not speak discourse, discourse speaks us". As mentioned above, he proposed that "discourses do not *denote* objects, they do more; they *produce* the objects about which they speak". He goes on to say:

*"It is this more that renders them irreducible to the language (la langue) and to speech. It is this 'more' that we must reveal and describe", (Foucault,1972:49).*

Foucault's *more* can be thought of in terms of the wider context in which words are said, who speaks, from where and in what way. In the passage above he asserts the autonomy of discourse, that is, that it cannot be reduced to other things, such as the economy or social forces (*la langue*). In explaining *la langue* Foucault (1972) proposed historical frameworks or 'epistemes' which provides a unified way of looking at some element of reality. He defined epistemes as:

*"the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalised systems [of knowledge], the totality of relations that can be discovered, for a given period between the sciences when one analyses them at a level of discursive regularities" (1972:39).*

Foucault's "epistemes" remind us of the historical influences on modern discourse, particularly higher education, and also that discourses have both disciplinary and 'disciplining' effects in that they delimit fields of enquiry and they govern what can be said, thought and done within those fields, which is relevant in researching marketisation which 'constrains' higher education. Although Foucault's work on discourse and power has been separated and split between archaeology and genealogy the two could be combined

because in engaging with texts Foucault is simultaneously engaging with questions of power (Jaos & Knobl, 2010).

### **5.3.1 The Linguistic Turn**

Relationships of meaning-making are not to be found in the structure of language, instead they are integral to social situations, and echoing both Wittgenstein and Foucault, are influenced by the historical and political situations in which they are embedded. Following Wittgenstein what came to be known as the 'linguistic turn' provided new ways of thinking about language and its relation to social reality. The focus shifted from studying phenomenon as an objective reality that exists 'out there' to studying it as a language-mediated process that exists in discourse. The 'linguistic turn' had the effect of bringing discourse and phenomenology together. The common ground is the notion that reality is a result of peoples' interpretations. From Schultz's (1966<sup>6</sup>) phenomenological point of view, as distinct from Husserl's, the implication of the "linguistic turn" means that rather than the influence of the social situation, or the influence of discourse on the social situation, the focus of study is on the way the individual defines the situation in which the discourse occurs. From a poststructuralist point of view phenomenology reduces social reality to linguistic representations ignoring historical, structural and contextual aspects.

Gadamer's (1965<sup>7</sup>) hermeneutics is in line with the 'linguistic turn' in that it claims society does not exist without the ability to use language, but rather than the micro perspective of Wittgenstein's 'language game', hermeneutics favours the macro perspective and includes the historical nature of language as a means of understanding the social world. In Gadamer's (ibid) view it is social reality that defines the individuals' perception of themselves and others. In keeping with this view, van Dijk (2008) maintains that contexts are intersubjective constructs that are constantly updated by people in their

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<sup>6</sup> Cited in Burrell & Morgan (1979)

<sup>7</sup> ibid

interactions with each other in terms of their social meanings and functions. For example, a government policy on improving teaching in higher education is understood differently by management and academic staff.

The view that linguistic accounts do not re-present the objects to which they refer but instead constitute those objects is central to many discourse analytic approaches post-linguistic turn. This shifts the focus of study to human action as a linguistic endeavour (Giddens 1993:75) so that language is not just a means of communication, it is a medium through which actions and activities are performed. It means discourse is shaped by language as well as shaping language. It is shaped by individuals who use the language as well as shaping the language itself. For example, the language of marketisation reciprocally shapes the discourse of higher education.

Wetherell's (2001) analysis of the BBC Panorama interview with the late Diana Princess of Wales, is an example of the role of language in the construction and construal of the social world. Wetherell shows how, through the use of language, Diana construes her social world, presenting herself as a sharing person in contrast to Prince Charles...who felt low about the attention his wife was getting" (Wetherell 2001:15). As she speaks Princess Diana creates a view of herself and the world in which she lives in a way she wishes people to see (Wetherell, 2001:15). This example illustrates how Wetherell (2001) studies language as a medium for interaction, rather than as a system of differences (as in structuralism), or a set of rules for transforming statements (as in Foucault's genealogies). It is an example of what people do with language in specific social settings.

One option when studying organisational discourse, according to Alvesson & Kärreman (2000a:1133), is to consider the local situational context, where language in use is understood in relationship to the specific process and social context in which it is produced. At the other extreme Alvesson &

Karreman (ibid) see discourse as a universal historically situated set of vocabularies, referring to or constituting a particular phenomenon.

The distinction between the local and the universal reflects the influence of Foucault's 'epistemes' and is evident in Alvesson & Karreman's (2000a) distinction between 'Discourses' with a capital D, and 'discourses' with a small d. According to Gee (2005) the term *discourse*, with a small 'd' refers to the study of talk and text in social situations, such as everyday interaction in organisations, whereas the term *Discourse*, with a capital 'D' involves particular codes of meaning and techniques people use for making sense of the various elements in their world. Alvesson & Karreman, (2000b) referred to Discourses as "the distinct and identifiable linguistic styles or approaches in which people tend to think and speak about particular genres or fields in their world", again echoing Foucault.

People who reproduce specific Discourses are often seen as not only expressing their own views but also the Discourses they represent. As Gee (1999) explains:

*"the Discourses we enact existed before each of us came on the scene and most of them will exist long after we have left the scene. Discourses, through our words and deeds, carry on conversations with each other through history, and in so doing form human history"* (1999:18).

Gee (1999) goes on to say that capital 'D' Discourse is about recognition:

*"if you put language, action, interaction, values, beliefs, symbols, tools and places together in such a way that others recognise you as a particular type of who (identity) engaged in a particular of what (activity) here and now, then you have pulled off Discourse (and thereby continued it through history, if only for a while longer). Whatever you have done must be similar enough to other performances to be recognisable. However, if it is different enough from what has gone before, but still recognisable, it can simultaneously change and transform Discourses. If it is not recognizable, then you're not "in" the Discourse"* (ibid).

Foucault's legacy is very evident in Gee's explanation. If we are able to recognise or identify a typical form or content (the what) as well as the

typical context of production, (who said it and in what circumstances) then we can identify Discourse. Examples include a medical Discourse or a managerial Discourse. The marketisation of higher education fits the category of Discourse with a capital D. Capital D Discourses order and naturalise the world in particular ways and they inform social practices by constituting particular forms of subjectivity in which people are managed and given a certain form, viewed as self-evident and rational (Alvesson & Karreman, 2000b). On the other hand, small 'd' discourse as a medium for social interaction is about the processes of conversing and messaging. It embodies cultural meanings, written documents such as emails and annual reports and verbal routines, such as performance appraisals and job interviews which also exist as texts.

Alvesson and Karreman (2000a) make the point that people talk when going about their daily lives and as a result of the daily talking reality comes about. This reinforces Hardy & Grant's (2005:60) view that language constructs organisational reality, rather than simply reflecting it. Chia (2000:513) concurs and says that social reality is systematically constructed through the processes of "differentiating, fixing, naming, labelling, classifying and relating". In addition to talk, quite a lot of organisational discourse is conducted and/or confirmed in written documents such as policy documents, manuals, reports, instructions, and email.

To recap, discourses shape, and are shaped, by different meanings and communities which hold similar values, views, ideas and ways of looking at the world, for example, higher education. Discourse studies analyse language at the level of both text and language in use; they examine how people achieve goals through the use of language; how they perform various acts; participate in events and present themselves to others; how they communicate within groups and societies and how they communicate with other groups and other cultures. Fairclough (2010:155) suggests that language is the most common form of social behaviour and it is situated in

a social context; in essence, language shows the “social effects of texts and on texts”. Because language is socially construed, the construction of meaning cannot be neutral, on the contrary, it is defined relative to the individual’s social and cultural experiences and subject to relations of power (Gee, 2005; Fairclough, 1992a).

Discourse Analysis can be used to examine the assertion of power, knowledge, regulation and normalisation, and to explore the development of new knowledge and power relations but it stops short of addressing larger questions about relationships of power, or ideological issues. Critical Discourse Analysis is necessary to describe, interpret, analyse and critique these larger issues and this is the focus of the next section.

#### **5.4 Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)**

The significant difference between discourse analysis and critical discourse analysis lies in the “*constitutive problem-oriented, interdisciplinary approach of the latter*”, to quote Wodak & Meyer (2009:2). Apart from that, it endorses all of the elements discussed above in relation to discourse analysis. CDA<sup>8</sup> is, according to van Dijk (2015) “discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (p466). The purpose of the approach is to understand, expose and ultimately challenge instances of inequality. It is relevant in this research because the concern is understanding what the hegemony and power of the discourse of marketisation means for those involved.

CDA investigates how texts work with regard to power and ideology. Fairclough and Wodak (1997:258) “...see discourse – language in use in speech and writing – as a form of ‘social practice’. As such, Fairclough (2010:3) describes it as *relational, dialectical* and *transdisciplinary*. It is

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<sup>8</sup> Now changed to ‘critical discourse studies, but still referred to as CDA in much of the literature. CDA is used consistently in this research for ease of reading.



*relational* in that its focus is on complex layered social relations; it is *dialectical* in the sense that its focus is on social relations. Harvey (1996) explains the dialectical view of discourse as one of six elements (or 'moments') of the social process; the others being: power; social relations; material practices; institutions (and rituals); beliefs (values and desires). Harvey (1996) proposes that these elements are distinct but not discrete, instead they are dialectically related, for example, discourse is a form of power, a mode of forming beliefs, values and desires, an institution, a mode of social relating, and a material practice. Being dialectically and internally related to other elements does not mean that they are simply discourse, or that they can be reduced to discourse.

Dialectical arguments begin from the language, beliefs and opinions (*endoxa*) of those engaged in the social issue under scrutiny (Fairclough, 2015:16). Marx is an example; he begins his critique of political economy with a critique of political economists and identifies contradictions which undermine their propositions. He then advances counter arguments against those conclusions. Marx's own analysis and argument begins in and emerges out of his critique of the existing arguments, and it is this analysis that yields explanatory understanding or comprehension of the existing social and economic order.

Similarly CDA provides a general model for critical analysis. Beliefs and opinions are manifest in discourse so it follows that an objective of analysis is to comprehend both cognitive (meaning) relations and causal relations between discourse and social objects (beliefs and opinions). CDA is also '*transdisciplinary*' or '*multidisciplinary*' as (Fairclough, 2010) calls it, insofar as it can cut across conventional boundaries and entail "dialogues" between disciplines, theories and frameworks, such as semiotics, history and cognition. Fairclough and Wodak (1997) summarise the main tenets of CDA as follows:

- CDA addresses social problems;

- power relations are discursive;
- discourse constitutes society and culture;
- discourse does ideological work;
- discourse analysis is interpretative and explanatory, and
- discourse is a form of social action.

It is therefore an appropriate method to apply to an exploration of the marketisation of higher education, which is characterised by interconnected networks of social practices of all sorts, including economic, cultural, political, historical and so on. Rather than an analysis of discourse itself, Fairclough (2010) says it seeks “to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power” (p132). According to van Dijk (2015:467) CDA focuses primarily on ‘social problems and political issues’ rather than the mere study of discourse structures. It does not merely describe discourse structures, it tries to explain them in terms of their properties of social interaction and especially social structure.

A central issue for CDA is the gap between *macro* and *micro* level analysis. Discourse, including verbal interactions are part of the *micro* level (agency, interaction), but power, dominance and inequality belong to the *macro level* (structural, institutional, organisational) of analysis. Van Dijk (2015) says that CDA must bridge the ‘gap’ between them. Wodak & van Dijk (2000) provide a good example of what this means:

*“In everyday interaction and experience, the macro and micro levels (and intermediary “meso levels”) form one unified whole. A racist speech in parliament is a discourse at the interactional micro level of social structure in the specific situation of a debate, but at the same time it may enact or be a constituent part of legislation or the reproduction of racism at the macro-level” (2000:6).*

If we turn this on its head, in a similar vein government legislation at the macro level introducing market, or quasi-market, practices in the higher education sector is also a discourse at the meso and micro levels. As with discourse analysis there are different approaches to bridging the 'gap'. Van Dijk (2015) would approach the analysis of this from the perspective that “the real interface between society and discourse is socio-cognitive because language users as social actors mentally represent and connect both levels”. In contrast, Fairclough (2010) would analyse it from a ‘textual’ perspective, that is, ‘description’ of the text; ‘interpretation’ of the relationship between the text and interaction; and ‘explanation’, of the relationship between text and interaction.

Every approach has its method, which is defined as a single set of practices and procedures, derived from theory, or theorisation of practice. Different approaches attribute varying degrees of importance and significance to discourse. Wodak & Mayer’s (2016) map shown here in figure 5.1 helps to contextualise the different approaches.

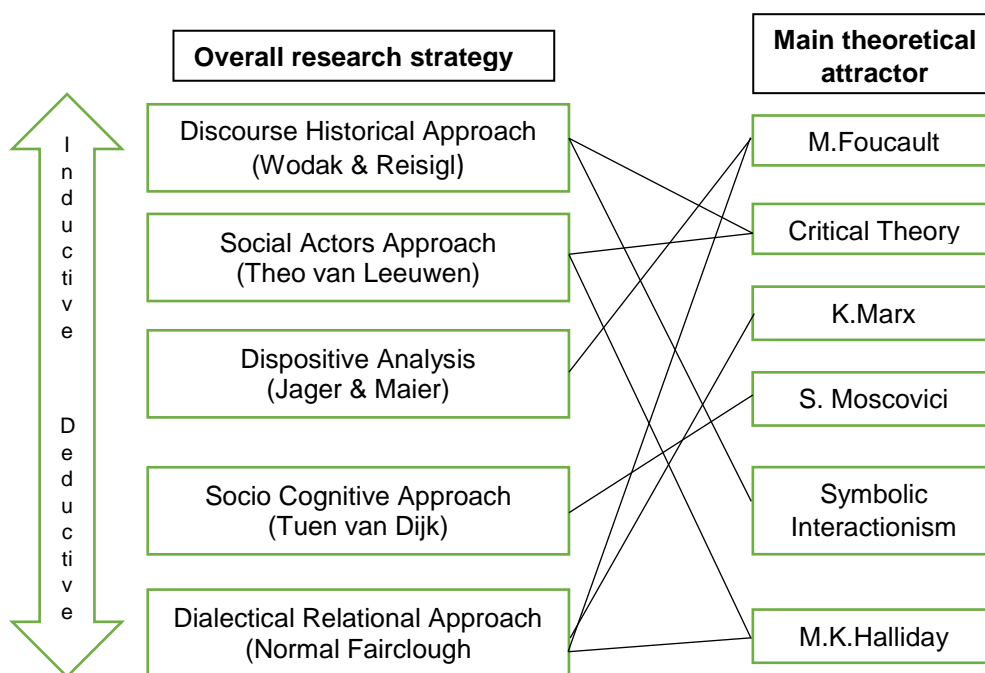


Figure 5.1: Research strategies. Source: Wodak & Mayer (2016:18)

This study uses Fairclough's approach which is referred to in figure 5.1 as the Dialectical Relational Approach, and is generally accepted as 'mainstream' CDA. CDA is not a school, or a single method, but *it is* an approach (Fairclough, 2010; Weiss and Wodak, 2016; van Dijk, 2008) and as such it has to be underpinned by clearly defined theoretical assumptions which themselves are linked with empirical data, and which permit specific ways of interpretation and therefore reconnect the empirical with the theoretical field (Meyer, 2001). As shown in figure 5.1 different methods apply to different theories.

For Fairclough (2010) the point is to use the framework which is the most appropriate to the social issue being researched and the social theory and discourse theory being used. All the approaches shown above share an overriding concern with meaning and the centrality attributed to the construction of meaning. It is the concern with meaning and subjectivity that drives the selection of different methods or techniques in the study of discourse. Fairclough's CDA, is a mix of social and linguistic theory. Halliday's (1994) Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) is particularly influential in this approach. Fairclough sees mainstream CDA as the process of analysing linguistic elements in order to reveal connections between language, power and ideology that are hidden from people. Questions include "*what* is the speaker doing, and *how* are they doing it? What are their lexical and grammatical choices? Intertextuality, interdiscursivity and interdisciplinary are characteristic of Fairclough's CDA, which makes it a good choice for this research because the marketisation of higher education involves networks of texts, discourse and disciplines.

CDA is underpinned by the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School in its attempt to explain the way discourse structures enact, confirm, legitimate, reproduce, or challenge relations of power or dominance in society. Van Dijk (2015) defines social power in terms of control whereby groups have more power if they are able to control the acts and minds of members of other

groups. This presupposes a power base of privileged access to scarce resources, such as force, money, status, knowledge, information, culture, or various forms of public discourse and communication.

#### **5.4.1 Power and Control**

The power of dominant groups can be integrated in laws, rules, norms, habits, and can become hegemonic (Gramsci 1971), but Foucault's (1980) work has shown that power is not always exercised in obviously abusive acts. Instead it can be enacted in the myriad taken-for-granted actions of everyday life, such as sexism or racism. Van Dijk (2015) suggests that questions for CDA research include:

- what are the properties of the discourse of powerful groups, institutions and organisations and how are such properties forms of power abuse?
- how do powerful groups control the text and context of public discourse?
- how does such power discourse control the minds and actions of less powerful groups, and what are the social consequences of such control, such as social inequality?

Access to or control over public discourse, communication, knowledge and information is an important "symbolic" resource (Mayer 2008). Members of more powerful social groups and institutions, and especially their leaders, that is, the *symbolic elites* (van Dijk 1993), have exclusive access to, and control over, various types of public discourse. For example, lawyers control legal discourse, teachers' educational discourse, politicians' policy and other public political discourse. The people who have more control over more influential genre of discourse are, by definition, more powerful. It is one of the tasks of CDA to explore these forms of power and especially forms of domination. In this way discourse can be defined in terms of communicative events, consisting of text and context, and access and control can be defined as relevant categories of the communicative situation, defined as context, as well as for the structures of text and talk (van Dijk, 2015:470). Ideology is also a form of control through the

socialisation process. CDA see ideologies such as religion or neoliberalism, as reflected in the use of discourse so its aim is to unpack what people say and do in their use of discourse to examine the values and assumptions that underlie that discourse.

## **5.5 Analysis using CDA**

CDA shares the methodological tools of qualitative research (Fairclough,2010). Written and oral texts provide the primary units of analysis. Data can be elicited from interviews, conversations, policy and written documents, email, audio/video recordings, or other social artefacts, such as websites (Fairclough, 2010). The 'critical' component of CDA is knowing that causes and connections are often hidden. Through a systematic inquiry aimed at description, interpretation, and explanation of language in use, the causes and connections can be uncovered and linked to local institutional and societal issues (Fairclough, 2010).

CDA is also concerned with what is not said; it looks for veiled meaning and "reads between the lines" since texts cannot be viewed in isolation and must always consider context. For Fairclough (2010) this represents "intertextuality". He argues that through the close, careful study of language, it is possible to not only describe and interpret representations but also to explain the formation of relationships, processes, and structures that affect individuals. The approach allows a focus on the signifiers that make up the text, the specific linguistic selections, their juxtapositioning, their sequencing, their layout and so on, (Janks, 2005: 98), and it allows for multiple points of analytic entry.

One of the challenges of verbal accounts is that words cannot be presented as a gestalt: they cannot march in rows one after the other structured into a meaningful order (Janks, 2005), but Fairclough (2010) provides a model that captures the simultaneity of his method where the three different kinds of

analysis are embedded one inside the other. Each dimension is a distinctive type of analysis: textual, process, and societal, as shown in figure 5.2.

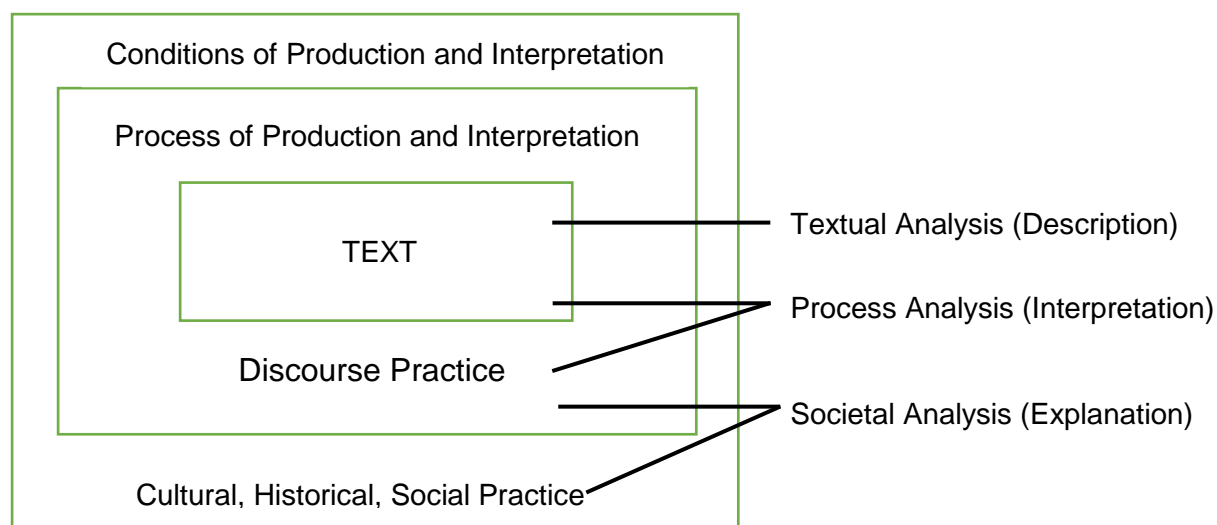


Figure 5.2: Fairclough's Dimensions of Discourse and Discourse Analysis.  
 Source: Janks, H (2005) Language and the design of Texts. English Teaching: Practice and Critique, 4(3),97-110

Janks (2005) says it does not matter which kind of analysis one begins with, as long as in the end they are all included and are shown to be mutually explanatory. Interesting patterns and disjunctions can be found in the interconnections and it is these that need to be described, interpreted and explained. The embedded boxes emphasise the interdependence of the three dimensions of analysis and the intricate moving backwards and forwards between the different types of analysis which interdependence necessitates. Nesting the boxes one inside the other helps to illustrate this interdependence. The three dimensional image provides an understanding that an analytic move to examine a single box necessarily breaks the interdependence between the boxes and requires subsequent moves which re-insert that box into its interconnected place.

The first dimension is textual analysis, where the purpose is to describe the properties of the textual elements. Textual analysis can incorporate verbal and/or visual texts, or a combination of the two. The second dimension is process analysis, which involves interpretation where the objective is to

examine the text and look at its functional parts to understand and interpret the relationship between the data and its producers (Fairclough, 2010). In process analysis, interpretations are based on the relationships in the text. The focus is on (a) the contents of the language, (b) its subjects, (c) the relationship of the subjects, and (d) the connections between the role of language and the greater social structures it reflects and supports. The third dimension of analysis provides an opportunity to expand on interpretation by explaining the findings in relation to the larger cultural, historical, political, and social discourses within which the data is situated and which help to shape it (Fairclough, 2010).

## **5.6 Chapter Summary**

CDA is in keeping with the conceptualisation of the marketisation of higher education as a discursive hegemonic process of influence. Both CMS and CDA recognise the central role of language in representing social reality, including group identities such as those of academics, and relationships such as pedagogic relationships with students. Both approaches are reflexive in that they reject unquestioned positivism. Both approaches question the underlying ontologies and epistemologies representative of most mainstream organisational research. The conceptual overlap between the two critical paradigms lends weight to the research strategy which is discussed in the next chapter. CMS provide a mechanism for critiquing marketisation because of its colonising powers that can result in an erosion of the 'lifeworld' but it is CDA that provides the methodological toolkit for conducting the research. CMS does not deal with the question of how micro-level linguistic choices are generated by macro-level discourse, but the linguistic approach that is characteristic of CDA can capture this type of data.

The research strategy and data collection methods are discussed in the next chapter.



## CHAPTER SIX

### RESEARCH STRATEGY AND METHODS

This chapter presents the research objectives, the research strategy and design, the analytical framework, data collection methods, ethical considerations, limitations of the study, and my role as researcher.

#### 6.1 Research Objectives

The purpose of this research is to determine how the discourse of marketisation is proliferated and to examine its unintended consequences and implications for everyday life in a university. The overall objective was to demystify what marketisation means in terms of higher education and explore how it plays out in the everyday discourse of the people who work, teach and learn in a post 92-university. The specific research objectives include:

- examine the history of higher education in order to contextualise its current *raison d'être*;
- investigate what marketisation means in the context of higher education;
- examine what 'marketisation' means for university management and leadership practice;
- explore the implications of marketisation for people who work, teach, and learn in a post-92 university;
- make recommendations for the improvement of practice.

#### 6.2 Research Strategy and Design

The strategy was to derive an in-depth understanding of how the marketisation of higher education constituted at the macro level through government policy is played out at the meso institutional level and the micro individual level. The design therefore is a multi-level, multi method one. The aim at the macro level is to understand government policy and procedures of marketisation, and at the meso level the aim is to understand the

institutional consequences of marketisation, and finally at the micro level the aim is to understand the implications for the people who work, teach and learn in a university. The design involved analysis of the government documents that consolidated and accelerated marketisation at the macro level, followed by analysis of the impact on an institution, and then an examination of the implications at micro level. Hence the choice of Fairclough's Dialectical Relational approach of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) which is a qualitative interpretivist approach and which combines both inductive and abductive elements.

### **6.2.1 Analytical Framework**

Since this research is utilising Fairclough's CDA as a method it is adopting his (2010:235) framework which identifies four stages as a guide to the whole research process. He says the first stage is essential but the remaining ones can be interpreted loosely, nevertheless they are all worth explaining here. The four stages are:

#### **Stage 1: Focus on a social wrong, in its semiotic aspects;**

Fairclough (ibid) acknowledges that the definition of 'social wrongs' can in broad terms be understood as "aspects of social systems [...] which are detrimental to human well-being". A review of the literature on the nature and purpose of higher education since its foundation in the twelfth century, followed by the literature on marketisation, NPM and the marketised university, suggests that the unintended consequences and implications of marketisation, particularly the degradation of higher education and the erosion of academic professionalism constitute 'social wrongs'. While there is little doubt that many have benefited from marketisation, the literature suggests that the subordination of the nature and purpose of higher education to a profit nexus and the transformation of its educational character, meaning and operations from a developmental public good to a commercial business transaction in a corporate culture of conformity undermines independent, critical and

creative thinking. The mobilisation of neoliberal monetisation and individual instrumentality coupled with the 'rigour' of NPM discursive strategies and control techniques that reframe higher education in the image of the corporate world for the sole purpose of employability is detrimental to the well-being of those imbued with the professionalism of developing and broadening diverse intelligences. In sum, marketisation is degrading higher education and can be detrimental to the well-being of those involved.

In terms of its semiotic aspects this research focuses on its proliferation through discourse and the relationship between reality and that discourse, that is, its impact, implications and ramifications on the daily reality of those involved in a post-92 university. A semiotic point of entry, which is the first level of analysis, involves the three policy texts that together constitute the consolidation and acceleration of the marketisation of higher education. These are:

- DfBIS (2010) *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education. An Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance* (The Browne Report, 2010);
- DfBIS (2011a) *Higher Education. Students at the Heart of the system.* (White Paper 2011a);
- DfBIS (2017) *Higher Education and Research Act 2017.*

These documents were chosen because between them they encapsulate the consolidation and acceleration of radical marketisation and the current situation in higher education in England. Together they meet the objective to:

- investigate what marketisation means in the context of higher education.

Analysis of these documents shows how marketisation is constituted at the macro level. It provides the basis on which material practices at the meso and micro levels can be analysed.

The second and third elements of analysis involve a case study with an embedded case, discussed below at 6.2.2 (p156), and additional units of analysis. The text from the case is representative of the dialectical relations between government policy at the macro level and discourse and subjective reality at the meso and micro levels. Following the literature review the aim of analyses at this level is to meet the following objectives:

- examine what 'marketisation' means for university management and leadership practice;
- explore the implications of marketisation for people who work, teach, and learn in a post-92 university;
- make recommendations for the improvement of practice.

### **Stage 2: Identify obstacles to addressing the social wrong;**

Fairclough (2010:235) suggests this and the following stages are not essential, nevertheless this stage concerns acknowledging obstacles that may prevent addressing the social wrong. A substantial obstacle in this case is that higher education in England is part of a wider national government network of public policy that adopts a neoliberal competitive market approach to governing, therefore addressing what is deemed detrimental to higher education may not be possible, the obstacle being strong state intervention.

However, along with government policy the selection of texts in this research also includes case study material and material representing individual subjectivities on the daily reality of marketisation in a variety of situations and this may provide a means of addressing some elements of the 'social wrong'.

### **Stage 3: Consider whether the social order needs the social wrong;**

Does the social order need the marketisation of higher education? Given the continuous expansion of higher education following a global financial

crisis in a period of continual fiscal austerity it seems plausible that there is a need for marketisation. This stage is bound up with stage 2 above but the point here is whether its consequences and implications can be addressed inherently or only by changing it. In other words, should marketisation be changed- or indeed can it be changed? Are the forces and resources that might be deployed to change it either feasible or desirable?

#### **Stage 4: Identify possible ways past the obstacles.**

This stage is about moving the analysis from negative to positive critique. The focus at this stage is on identifying possibilities for overcoming obstacles to addressing the social wrong.

#### **6.2.2 Case Study**

Given the focus of this study is the desire to gain greater understanding of the consequences and implications of marketisation along with an insightful appreciation that results in new learning and its meaning, an embedded case study with additional units of analysis was chosen. Yin's (2009a) definition of case study suggests that this is an appropriate choice:

*“an empirical inquiry about a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., a case), set within its real-world context—especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009a, p. 18).*

Case study research sees the context and other conditions related to the case as being integral to understanding the case itself. The method favours the collection of data in a natural setting rather than relying on derived data such as responses to a questionnaire or survey. The context and conditions, along with an in-depth focus on the case, can produce a wide range of topics and in this sense case study research goes beyond the study of isolated variables with relevant data likely to come from multiple rather than singular sources of evidence. Shalveson & Towne (2002:99-106) suggest that case study is pertinent when the research addresses either descriptive or explanatory questions, as this research does. Other methods are unlikely

to provide the rich descriptions or explanations that can arise in a case study. A case study is an appropriate method to address the consequences and implications at both the meso and micro levels.

All higher education institutions have been touched by marketisation and the distinctive political, organisational and discursive innovations that it has generated and mobilised, (for example, student-paid tuition fees), however, the impact of marketisation was first felt in post-92 universities. Following the recommendations of the Jarratt Report (1985) post-92 universities were encouraged to adopt private sector market disciplines, strategies and techniques as part of their constitution. The institution chosen for this research is a post-92 university, anonymised and hereafter referred to as PostPoly University (PPU). It was chosen on the assumption that post-92 universities, having been constituted as corporates and therefore more susceptible to NPM re-scaling and restructurings (Shattock, 2013) are more likely to exhibit a 'business' ethos and more marked consequences and implications than pre-92 universities. The choice of a post-92 institution will address the following research objective:

- examine what 'marketisation' means for university management and leadership practice.

Another reason for choosing the particular institution was ease of access through friends and peers.

Along with the case of the institution itself, the embedded single case (Yin, 2009), involves one of the schools, the Business School, hereafter referred to as TBS, and a series of group discussions will address the following objective:

- explore the implications of marketisation for people who work, teach, and learn in a post-92 university.

Case study is particularly relevant for explaining everyday reality in a university where the discourse tends to position individuals to their place in the institutional matrix, for instance academics in their distinct discursive domain and students in theirs. According to Fairclough (2010:43) without this positioning the analysis of discourse can lack systematic development of knowledge and understanding. Given the indeterminate nature of neoliberalism, NPM reform and hence marketisation, case study design offers greater understanding and is therefore an appropriate choice.

To summarise, following Fairclough, (2010) a basis for analysis requires an account of the order of discourse, in this research that consists of policy documentation of marketisation, an account of the institution under study, that is, the case study of the institution, and its relationship to the dominant discourse, that is, government policy and legislation, and discourse between them. An adaptation of Fairclough’s (2010) model provides an illustration of the overall analytical framework.

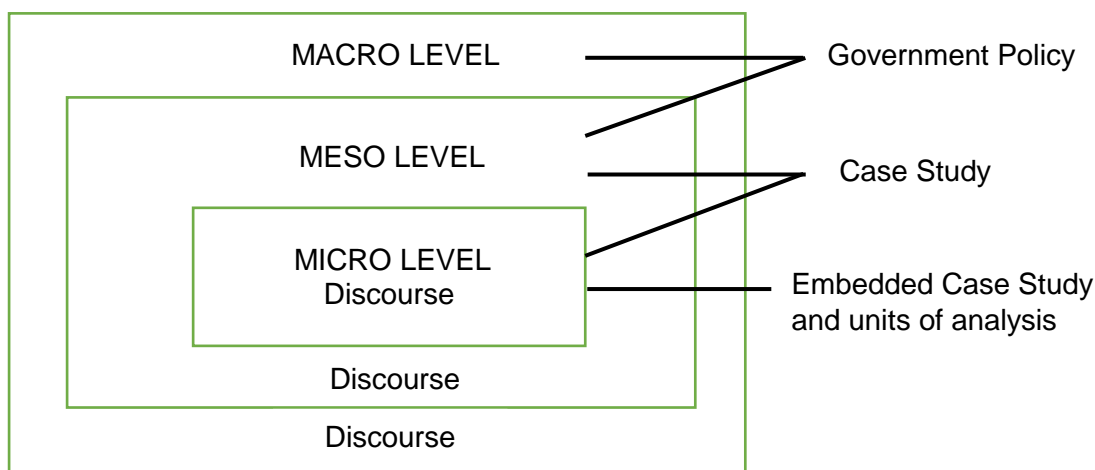


Figure 6.1: Macro, Meso & Micro levels of analysis. Adapted from Fairclough (2010:133).

The embedded boxes emphasise the interdependence of the empirical data at the macro, meso and micro levels.

Fairclough’s CDA does not use or require a coding process, instead it explores the lexical fields used to signify meanings not made explicit in

speech and texts. It examines the vocabulary and grammar the author uses to see whether certain words are avoided while others are overused. A question for analysts is what are the other lexical choices that might have been made? For example, overlexicalisation, that is a surfeit of repetitious, quasi-synonymous terms, can give a sense of over-persuasion and could be evidence that something is problematic or of ideological contention. There can also be suppression, where certain terms are absent, and structural oppositions (Halliday, 2014) where one side of opposing concepts such as young-old, good-bad, or rich-poor indicate differences from its opposite without being overtly stated. One way of explaining CDA is to examine it from the point of the three elements that are being followed in this study, that is, *description, interpretation and evaluation*.

Description involves examining the experiential, relational and expressive values of the words chosen and the experiential, relational and expressive grammatical values in the text along with metaphors used and sentence connections and references to earlier works. In CDA interpretations of texts are generated through a combination of what is in the text and what is “in” the interpreter (Fairclough, 2015:155). In other words interpretation depends on the interpreters’ background knowledge, which given the topic of this research is documented throughout the extensive literature review. Interpretation can be summarised in terms of (i) *context*: what participants are saying about the situational and intertextual contexts; (ii) *discourse type(s)*: what rules, grammar etc., are being drawn on, and (iii) *difference and change*: are answers to questions one and two different for different participants.

The explanation stage of CDA aims to display a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them. Social structures shape background knowledge, which in turn shape discourses; and



discourses sustain or change background knowledge which in turn sustain or change structures.

### **6.2.3 CDA Sampling**

A point of note is that CDA does not hold sampling in the same esteem as other research methods, however, as mentioned above Fairclough makes it clear that without positioning, analyses of discourse can lack systematic understanding, therefore purposeful sampling was utilised in this research. Purposeful sampling is the intentional selection of a sample for a particular purpose, that is, it allows the sample to focus on an issue or phenomenon pertinent to them. The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting participants appropriate to the relevant discursive domain in order to collect rich information for in-depth study (Patton, 2002:230).

## **6.3 Data Collection Methods**

Data collection included archival material and desk data, case study analysis, semi-structured interviews and group discussions, each of which is discussed below. CDA research treats archival and documentary desk data as primary sources of discourse data rather than as secondary data. From this perspective documentary sources constitute textual evidence in their own right. Case study research involves systematic data collection and archival data at both the meso and micro levels and utilises a wide variety of documents including extracts from email; strategic plans; written reports of various meetings and policy documentation, all of which are treated as primary sources of data. In this research written and oral texts provide primary units of analysis.

### **6.3.1 Archival Material and Desk Data**

As chapter two shows archival material included post-war policy and related documentation (e.g. CVCP and Department of Education) which contextualised the nature and purpose of higher education until its total marketisation culminating in the Browne Report (2010). The Browne Report

(2010) *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education. An Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance*, and the two complementary documents: DfBIS (2011a) *Higher Education. Students at the Heart of the system*. (White Paper 2011a), and the DfBIS (2017) *Higher Education and Research Act (2017)*, form the entry point and the initial part of this analysis.

Archival material and desk data also includes annual reports and a large selection of email pertinent to re-scaling and restructurings in the case of both PPU and also TBS. The data collected comprises some 13 years of Annual Accounts and over eighty-five emails.

### **6.3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews**

Primary data were collected through semi-structured interview as well as through group discussions. Interviews are a primary technique in qualitative research and they are a means of accessing individual meanings and perceptions (Punch 2005). Several authors (Bryman 2007; Deetz 2000; Denzin and Lincoln 2000) identify interviewing as an appropriate method of obtaining data on meaning, values, interpretation and human interactions. The use of in-depth interviews is appropriate to the epistemological position of CDA and congruent with the overall research perspective. Writers on research methods such as Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson, (2011), Denzin and Lincoln (2005) agree that to obtain data on meaning, values, interpretation and human interactions generally, interviewing is an appropriate method. The elucidations of these phenomena are core to the research being undertaken because the study seeks to understand perceptions of the implications of marketisation for the individuals concerned.

Interviews can be regarded as falling between two ends of a spectrum (Denzin and Lincoln 2005). At one end they are structured such that all respondents are asked identical questions (Denzin and Lincoln 2005), but

these limit possible responses and might not allow issues and themes to emerge or be explored. At the other end interviews are unstructured where the interviewer does not 'control' or guide the conversation in any way. Unstructured or open-ended interviews offer maximum flexibility when attempting to explore a research topic and obtain rich data (Silverman 2006). Interviews conducted for this research fell between the two extremes and took a semi structured form.

Six Senior Executives in PostPoly University (PPU) were approached in person and all agreed to participate in semi structured interviews. They were selected on the basis of their seniority. However, three left the institution before I had an opportunity to interview them. The remaining three who were interviewed were a VC/CEO, a Director of Strategy and an Associate Dean. These three gentlemen are all career academics who between them represented some 23 service years at PPU. They were chosen because of their seniority. The aim of the semi-structured interviews was to address the objective to:

- examine what 'marketisation' means for university management and leadership practice.

The interviews were conducted in the interviewees' respective offices. The total interview time ran to just under six hours and with the permission of the interviewees, interviews were recorded and transcribed using Gail Jefferson's (2018) notation convention. As Potter and Hepburn (2005:291) suggest transcript extracts include the relevant interview questions; they are typed using line numbers, and they include information about how participants were approached, which was either directly face to face, or via email. The total transcription for the three interviews amounts to approximately 30,000 words.

### **6.3.3 Group Discussions**

The discursive formations of different groups depends on their orientation, for example, the implications of marketisation for academics will be different from those for managers and from those for students. Group discussion supports data collected through case study insofar as the stratification of group members is concerned. For example, individuals can be positioned to their place in the institutional matrix, academics in their distinct discursive domain and students in theirs. As mentioned above Fairclough (2010:43) suggests that without this positioning the analysis of discourse can lack the systematic development of knowledge and understanding.

Four group discussions were conducted, one with academics, one with managers, one with undergraduate first year students and one with final year students. Based on the review of the literature the focus of the group discussions for academics and managers was how their working lives had changed over the past five to ten years. The aim of the group discussions was to address the research objectives to:

- explore the implications of marketisation for people who work, teach, and learn in a post-92 university;
- make recommendations for the improvement of practice.

#### **a) Discussion Group One**

The first group discussion was with academics. Academics in the business school were invited by email to participate in a one-hour discussion group on the marketisation of higher education. The group discussions were conducted during recess, so attendance was poor with only six academics attending. Three attendees were male and three female, and they ranged in academic experience from 30 to 3 years in academia. The overriding theme for discussion was “how has your working life changed over the last five to ten years”? The discussion took place in one of the Business School classrooms and ran to 1 hour 45 minutes.

**b) Discussion Group Two**

The second group discussion involved three middle managers who were targeted because of their positions in the institution. They were invited to a meeting to discuss how their working lives had changed over the last five to ten years. One attendee was an administration manager with 25 years' administrative experience and the other two were manager-academics with 30 years' experience between them, an average of 15 years each. This discussion ran for a little over an hour.

**c) Discussion Group Three**

Two additional discussion groups consisted of students, one with Level 4 students (first years) and one with Level 6 students (final year). Permission to visit a class of Level 4 students was requested and granted by the relevant tutor. This class was part of a 'February intake' as distinct from a 'September intake' which means that their first year of study was condensed into six months and they would graduate in two and half years as distinct from the usual three years.

The group consisted of six students who were asked to discuss their reasons for choosing this institution; their view of 'value for money', and their perception of themselves as customers. The discussion lasted for forty-five minutes.

**d) Discussion Group Four**

The second group of Level 6 students consisted of three final year students who were targeted because they were about to graduate and leave the university. They were also invited to discuss their reasons for choosing the institution; their view of 'value for money', their perception of themselves as customers, and their overall experience as students. This discussion lasted for a little over an hour.

With the permission of the participants all interviews and discussions were recorded and transcribed using Gail Jefferson's (2018) transcription notation. Transcription of the group discussions amounted to 22,000 words.

To summarise, table 6.3.1 below presents an overview of the data collected.

<b>Method</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Data generated</b>
Desk Data	Government Policy documents	Core marketisation policy
Interviews	Senior Executives	30,000 words
Academic discussion group	Academics	12,000 words
Manager-Academic discussion group	Academics and Administrators	4,000 words
Student groups	First and final year students	6,000 words
Archive material	PPU Annual Reports	13 years
Emails	Post Poly University (PPU)	31 emails
Emails	The Business School (TBS)	56 emails

Table 6.3.1: Data collection, methods, sources and data generated

Not all annual reports, 52,000 words, or 87 emails were analysed. Selection criteria was directly related to the research objectives and will be clarified and reiterated throughout the analysis in chapters seven and eight.

#### **6.4 Ethical Considerations**

A key ethical issue intrinsic to a qualitative study is ensuring no harm comes to the participants through the use of their testimony or provision of documents (Saunders et al. 2003). The most important ethical considerations are those of informed consent, confidentiality, honesty about the intended use of the data, and the negation of perceived asymmetries of power in the interviewer/interviewee relationship. It has to be emphasised that the focus of this research is the marketisation of higher education not the behaviour of people who teach, learn and work in a particular university.

All participants, including those involved in informal conversations were asked for their consent to (a) record the data, and (b) use the data in this research.

Confidentiality proved to be a considerable issue. Data were generously provided by individuals at their insistence of absolute anonymity and on the basis that the institution, school, departments and units would also remain anonymous. In honouring this ethical commitment interviewees are identified only as interviewee1, 2, or 3 and reference made to their length of service at the institution and only a vague reference to their status. Similarly, academics are coded as A1, A2, or A3 as appropriate, and no reference made to their discipline. A similar approach is applied to students. The 'middle manager' group allowed their status to be stated, e.g. administration manager. The research was conducted under the auspices of London Metropolitan University which sets out its own research ethics guidelines which were followed assiduously.

The issue of objectivity-subjectivity does not hold in qualitative research, and having adopted a critical realist stance and a discursive focus the issue of bias needed to be bracketed. However, the issue of 'insider' research also needed to be addressed. As an academic in a post-92 university I am interpreting 'insider research' to include this research. The benefits of insider research is that there is usually better access to those who have mutual knowledge (Trowler, 2016), and so greater access to implicit meanings. Trowler (ibid) says 'being culturally literate the insider is better able to deploy CDA and different types of data which are relatively easily accessible. On the other hand, some aspects of social life can become normalised for the 'insider' so the difficulty is rendering the 'normal' strange, and there can be issues of power differentials. Notwithstanding my view of this research as 'insider', data collection through formal observation was not part of this study, however, discussions significant to the research were recorded and are identified at the point of use in chapter eight.

#### **6.4.1 Data Management**

The three policy documents that constitute the total marketisation of higher education are published and therefore in the public domain. CDA of them, does not infringe copyright. Data derived from archive and/or desk research were stored on a portable hard drive acquired for the purpose at the beginning of my DBA journey and which is securely stored in my home. Data regarding the case study derived through desk research is also stored on the DBA hard drive. Data derived from interview and group discussion were recorded and transcribed using Gail Jefferson's (2018) method of transcription. Transcriptions are all stored on the portable hard drive. All documentation relating to the case study, interview data, group discussions will be destroyed on completion of this study.

#### **6.4.2 My Role As Researcher**

The act of obtaining data results in new interpretations, but the focus of this study was not the truth-value of what was being said. Instead, it was the subjective perceptions of those interviewed and the multiple meanings that are constructed between interviewee and interviewer during the course of an interview or group discussion. In this way important insights were gained, but my role as a researcher in qualitative research must be acknowledged and in this regard as a member of the higher education community and a practitioner in a business school at a post-92 university seeking to understand what is happening in higher education I am acutely aware of the implications of 'insider research' and the possibility of unconscious bias. I aimed to avoid obvious, conscious or systematic bias and to be as neutral as possible in the collection, interpretation and presentation of data, however I acknowledged that all research is influenced by the researcher to some degree.

Along with a research journal which aided reflexivity, and to counter possible bias I adopted a "tempered radical approach" which helped me to 'sit on the fence' to a certain degree. My overall aim was to be as reflexive as possible



on potential sources of bias. Meyerson & Scully (1995) explain that a “tempered radical is radical in that he or she challenges the status quo, and tempered in that he or she seeks moderation in doing so”. Tempered radicals are “angered by the incongruities between their own values and beliefs about social justice and the values and beliefs they see enacted in their organisations” (p586). Tempered radicals engage in a balancing act between fitting in and playing the game while preserving personal identities for which sceptical distance and critique are crucial (1995:587). They have to endure ambivalence and being criticised by both conservatives and radicals. For the former they go too far and for the latter not far enough. Both can accuse the tempered radical of being hypocritical.

If I have a bias it is for the preservation of teaching and learning in higher education, the continued production of knowledge and the dignity of the academic, as distinct from training students to game the jobs market. I have chosen a critical approach because it offers a way of looking at the world that is epistemologically rigorous while at the same time liberating. I agree with the many scholars who see conceptual closure as leading to unquestioned certainty thence to ideological dogmatism and ultimately to totalitarianism.

## **6.5 Evaluation of this work**

From a critical perspective CDA’s focus on texts has been criticised due to the interpretative nature surrounding linguistic artefacts (Gee, 2005), and because of its methodological flexibility, disproportionate amount of social theory (Flick, 2009) and linguistic method in the research (Rogers, 2004). It has also been criticised for its reliance on ‘secondary sources’ and what Flick (2009) refers to as ease of access which is said to defeat the spirit of true research. In this regard a positivist approach could have been chosen but it would have ignored the individual subjectivities inherent in the implications of marketisation which are a product of both the individual and

the environment in which they operate. A positivist approach would not have been appropriate.

A difficulty with all qualitative research is that it lacks the evaluative criteria of quantitative research, and although Kirk & Miller (1986, cited in Bryman & Bell, 2011:43) applied the concepts of validity and reliability to qualitative data these are generally considered to be inappropriate. The concept of internal validity seeks to ascertain causal relationships between phenomena but discursive and critical research does not embrace causality, instead it focuses on the contingent and unique nature of social life, and a similar argument can be made against the notion of replicability. Various criteria for evaluating qualitative research have been proposed by the 'reflexive' school of thought (Potter & Wetherall, 1987) and there is general agreement of the importance of 'usefulness', along with the inclusion of multiple perspectives and credibility.

The criterion of usefulness refers to the ability of the new knowledge to guide action and have a practical value. As usefulness is assessed on its social relevance, in this research relevance is concerned with clarity around what marketisation actually *is* and its implications for the people who teach, learn and work in universities. The criterion of credibility refers to the feasibility of the study, and the credibility of this research lies in clarifying the concept of marketisation and in the perceptions of its implications for the participants. Silverman (2006) suggests two criteria for evaluating any research: (1) 'have the researchers demonstrated successfully why we should believe them, which is really about the credibility of the research, and (2) does the research problem tackled have theoretical and/or practical significance? Alvesson & Skoldberg (2009:304) concur, and suggest that good qualitative research is characterised by:

- empirical arguments and credibility;
- an open attitude to the interpretative dimension to social phenomena;

- critical reflection regarding the political and ideological contexts of the research.

Van Dijk (2015) describes a good approach as one that is able to give a reliable, relevant, satisfactory answer to the questions of the research project.

### **6.5.1 Limitations of this work**

In addition to the evaluation of this work above at 6.5 which documents some of its limitations, one of the major weaknesses of this study is the small sample size and the use of a single case study of one university. Nevertheless, in terms of exploration the study has validity. There is a growing literature on the marketisation of higher education in England, however there is no literature on its implications for those who work in higher education, and the data from the small sample indicates that there is a need for further research in this area.

Time constraints and an interest in exploring how individuals actually talk about marketisation and the changes it brings to their working lives overshadowed the collection of biographical data. As mentioned above CDA as a method brings its own difficulties and there is the wider issue of the use of qualitative data. For example, the value and use of interview data raises questions about the difference between what people say and what they do.

## **6.6 Chapter summary**

This chapter presented the research objectives, the research strategy and design, the analytical framework, data collection methods, ethical considerations, my role as a research and the limitations of the study.

A multi-level, multi-method research design incorporates analysis of policy documents, case study, interview texts and group discussions. Purposeful sampling was adopted to generate data. The model of CDA used in this study consists of three inter-related processes of analysis that underpin

three inter-related dimensions of discourse, each requiring a different kind of analysis, and which are explained above in this chapter:

- text analysis (description),
- processing analysis (interpretation),
- social analysis (explanation).

The next two chapters present the empirical data.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

# MARKETISATION: CONSOLIDATION AND ACCELERATION

This chapter examines the discourse of marketisation as presented in the macro level documentation that consolidated and accelerated it, namely:

- DfBIS (2010) *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education. An Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance* (The Browne Report, 2010)
- DfBIS (2011a) *Higher Education. Students at the Heart of the System.* (White Paper 2011a)
- DfBIS (2017) *Higher Education and Research Act 2017*

This chapter sets the scene for the discursive practices at the meso level and everyday reality at the micro level which are discussed in the next chapter. The highlighted emphases added throughout this chapter are mine.

### 7.1 The Discourse of Markets and Choice - Government Policy

The marketisation of higher education was accelerated by the Browne Report (2010), *Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education: An Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance*, which proposed six principles for a new funding regime, and which was presented to a newly elected Coalition Government in 2010 in the midst of a global economic crisis. Tasked with providing a solution to ensure that “teaching at our higher education institutions (HEIs) is sustainably financed”, the report re-contextualised higher education as a quasi-market.

Its recommendations were a radical departure from the way HEIs had been financed. Government funding in the form of a block grant, would cease, instead, students would pay full tuition fees through a loan from government

with repayment contingent on their post-graduation earnings, hence the quasi-market; the number of places in higher education would increase; current regulations and legislation would be 'freed' to allow easier entry for private colleges and other providers into the sector; student choice would be increased; universities and other HEIs would have to compete for students; competition would raise the quality of teaching.

In making its proposals the Report reviewed the benefits of the changes made in the 2004 Higher Education Act which took effect in 2006, namely tuition fees paid by students through income contingent loans and which the Browne Report said:

*“increased income for institutions without reducing demand from students- and established the principle that graduates will pay towards the cost of higher education” (2010:19).*

The Report went on to say that institutions welcomed the additional fee income generated by the 2006 reforms, and that UUK noted that it *“brought in £1.3bn of additional annual income to English universities by the end of the third year” (2010:19).*

The report<sup>9</sup> presented England's internationally respected higher education institutions as *“disproportionately the best- performing in the world”*, but it warned:

*“our competitive edge is being challenged by advances made elsewhere...we are at risk of **falling behind ‘rival countries’**, other countries are **increasing investment** in their HEIs and educating more people to higher standards” (2010:4).*

Typical of a neoliberal approach the language incites concern. England has a long and proud history of higher education; no-one would want it to fall behind other countries and certainly not for the want of increased

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<sup>9</sup> The report can be accessed at [www.independent.gov.uk/browne-report](http://www.independent.gov.uk/browne-report)

investment. The slightly xenophobic reference to 'rival countries' is similar to the tactics used in both post-war reports, Percy (1944) and Barlow (1946), but while they, and the later Robbins (1963) and Dearing (1997) reports, argued for more investment from the government, Browne's view was that the investment should come wholly from private sources, namely that the student should meet the full tuition fee. As noted in chapter three, inciting concern, and sometimes fear, is a tactic that is often deployed in establishing a market based on neoliberal principles. It justifies the impression that there is no alternative.

The term 'increasing investment' (2010:2) signals an increase in the fees students were already 'investing'. A tuition fee, capped at £3,300, had been introduced in 2006 backed by a government subsidised, income-contingent loan, which negated the need for the cost of the 'investment' to come from the student's own resources up front. The concept of the student as consumer, confirmed by the 2006 fee structure, is reinforced by the notion of 'increased investment'. The assumption is that the student as consumer will not want England to fall behind. The government will help through a maintenance grant and by not expecting repayment of the loan until students' post-graduation earnings reach a £21,000 threshold, but the onus is on the student.

In presenting its six principles for a new funding regime the Report uses a business and marketing vocabulary to sell the benefits to students whose return on their investment will "*on average be around 400%*" (p4), and the benefits to the economy will in turn lead to greater national prosperity. The benefits to students are captured in the pure rhetoric of business in the phrase "*the premium employers pay to employ graduates*" (p14), but the benefit to national prosperity, which is effectively the public sphere, is not eulogised as a 'public good'. Instead, the Report emphasises the individual and personal nature of the transaction when it says that although a degree provides students with an "*entry to employment*":

*“students do not pay... only graduates do; and then only if they are **successful**” (2010:2).*

Separating students from successful graduates is not only a contradiction in terms but could also be conceived as a criticism of those students who are reluctant to incur a huge debt; it implies they will never be successful graduates. It not only personalises the debt, it turns a normal aversion to accumulating debt on its head and makes a huge debt acceptable, almost like a badge of honour. It puts a new spin on ‘*cogito ergo sum*’ if on leaving university I have a debt upwards of £50,000, therefore I am... successful.

Not only will successful graduates have higher status jobs and increased earnings, they are likely to live longer due to:

*“reduced likelihood of smoking, and **lower incidence of obesity** and depression. They are **less likely to be involved in crime**, more likely to be **actively engaged with their children’s education** and more likely to be active in their **communities**” (2010:14).*

No one wants to live in a society characterised by chain smoking, overweight criminals and depressives, neglectful of their children and their community. This is illustrative of a neoliberal rhetoric which is often used to reinforce the point that there is no alternative, but this time however, there is an alternative, and it is that:

*HEIs “**must persuade students that they should pay more to get more**” (2010:4).*

In re-contextualising higher education as an economic investment for the benefit of the economy as well as good health and return on investment for successful graduates, the Browne Report (2010) shifts responsibility for the prevention of a declining society of poor health and crime from the government to the universities. The use of the imperative ‘must’ denotes that they, the universities, have no choice in the matter. But, on the other side of the coin, the term ‘pay more to get more’ implies that the universities also stand to gain. They can get more (fees) on the basis of whatever extra they provide. In other words, and at a superficial level, if they paint the library



they can charge more. The Report recommended the abolition of the then current fee cap allowing universities to set whatever fee they wished, but they were required to return an increasing proportion of those fees to government for each thousand pound increment above £6,000, a 'levy' designed to dissuade them from setting fees indiscriminately.

Higher education, the Report says, helps “*to create knowledge, skills and values that underpin a **civilised** society*”, but the Browne committee sidestepped the vital question of the actual **purpose** of higher education and says of HEI's, they **matter** because they:

*“generate and diffuse ideas, safeguard knowledge, catalyse innovation, inspire creativity, enliven culture, **stimulate regional economies and strengthen civil society**”* (2010: 14).

What matters can be quite distinct from its purpose; one could say the purpose of discourse is communication, it matters because it moulds identities and categorises and characterises social interaction. The change in wording suggests a privileging of self-interest rather than a focus on a purpose that might have to acknowledge higher education as a public good. The use of the terms ‘*civilised*’ and ‘*civil society*’ is a play on words to connote the concept of a liberal higher education as an emancipatory practice providing knowledge of how society works, one's place within it, and the tools to equip one to engage with and change society. It is in direct conflict with the notion of a higher education that matters because it stimulates regional economies. The tone of the phrase ‘strengthen civil society’ suggests that in a market based society a liberal education is defined as self-interest.

In developing its theme that the UK is at a “*competitive disadvantage*” due to its “*inadequately educated workforce*” (p16), which it identifies as the 4th most problematic factor for doing business in the UK (ibid), the Report quotes the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE, 2007) that employers report “*some graduates lack communication, entrepreneurial*

*and networking skills, as well as an understanding of how businesses operate” (2010:16). It could be argued that medical students, among others, would not necessarily need to know how businesses operate, but the detail is suppressed by using the words ‘some graduates’ whom it does not name, have been identified by ‘employers’ whom it does not name. It paints a picture of the future as:*

*“defined by **high performing, high value-added** sectors. Growth in these sectors depends on growth in **high level skills** and the UK will have to be part of this race to the top on skills, as for good social and economic reasons it has long been **out of the race to the bottom on wages**” (2010:16).*

Abstractions such as ‘*out of the race to the bottom on wages*’ are increasingly used as part of a corporate business language that either backgrounds or obscures concrete issues, for instance in this case salaries in the public sector. The rhetoric of high level skills for high performing, high value-added sectors is part of the argument for shifting responsibility to the universities. It does not define the term ‘value-added’, but it does critique institutions that claim to have improved the quality of their teaching since 2006 when students began to pay more. It says they:

*“**continue to receive** a large block grant through HEFCE. They get this year on year regardless of what students think about the quality of teaching. And, because the demand for student places exceeds the number of places that are available, institutions **do not have to compete** as hard as they might **to recruit students**” (2010:23).*

The implication is that HEI’s are getting money from the taxpayer without having to do much for it. The concept of competition is core to the notion of ‘a market’, and the assumption is that institutions do not compete to recruit students as hard as they would have to in an open market. The criticism pre-empts the Report’s recommendation that the cap on student numbers be abolished. The recruitment of UG students was tightly controlled by the government through HEFCE who fixed the total number of students it was prepared to pay for in the system as a whole and translated that into a maximum number for each university. An institution exceeding its cap incurred large fines from HEFCE. The recommendation to abolish the cap

on student numbers, is consistent with the neoliberal philosophy of free-markets.

Among the justifications for 'increased investment' is that student choice should be promoted because:

*“**student choice** will drive up quality” (2010:29).*

In order for choice to drive up quality the student-as-consumer needs access to all the information that will allow them to make an informed choice. The assumption is that if universities do not provide the information they will lose out in the competition to recruit. The Report recommends that universities provide a host of data including: weekly hours of teaching contact time, the involvement of professional bodies in the course, feedback on assessment, and so on. Despite getting taxpayer's money for which 'they do not have to compete too hard', the Report claims that universities are currently not delivering.

*“The higher education system in this country **does not meet** the aspirations of **many people**. Students **are no more satisfied** with higher education than ten years ago” (2010:23).*

It does not explain who the many people are, nor indeed what their aspirations are. It uses the NSS as a metric to draw comparisons of student satisfaction over five years, making the assumption that the NSS is a reasonable measure as well as the assumption that student satisfaction can be measured. In terms of higher education student satisfaction is a nebulous concept. As a post-experience good it is not clear what the NSS is measuring. The NSS and its flaws are well documented elsewhere, but it is used in the report to urge universities to rise to meet the future challenges of competition and high quality. Universities '*must*' step-up to deliver high value-added, high-quality, high-performance higher education.

In presenting its principles for reform the Report cited a wide consensus that the current system needed substantial reform. To support its

recommendations evidence was collected from four days of public hearings, 36 witnesses, over 150 submissions from academics, universities, colleges, student groups, parents and businesses, totalling over 2000 pages of evidence. 13 higher education institutions were visited and discussions held with students and staff. Five meetings were held with the Advisory Forum, made up of over 20 organisations that represent the full range of the higher education system, and all major political parties were consulted. Discussion groups and workshops were held with pupils, students and parents (2010:24). The six Principles for Reform are:

- i) There should be more investment in higher education- but institutions will have to convince students of the benefits of investing more;
- ii) Student Choice should increase;
- iii) Everyone who has the potential should have the opportunity to benefit from higher education;
- iv) No student should have to pay towards the cost of learning until they are working;
- v) When payments are made they should be affordable;
- vi) There should be better support for part-time students.

(Browne Report 2010: 25-26)

In terms of ‘Enhancing the Role of Student Choice’ the Report says:

*Rather than create a bureaucratic and imperfect measure for quality, our proposals rely on student choice to drive up the quality of higher education. Students need access to high quality information, advice and guidance in order to make the best choices. Improvements are needed. Providing students with clearer information about employment outcomes will close the gap between the skills taught by the higher education system and what employers need. Institutions have a responsibility to help students make the right choices as well. The higher education system will expand to provide places for everyone who has the potential to succeed – and the expansion will follow the choices made by students (2010:28).*

Recommendations for Enhancing the Role of Student Choice include:

- Every school will be required to make individualised careers advice available to its pupils. The advice will be delivered by certified

professionals who are well informed, benefit from continued training and professional development and whose status in schools is respected and valued. Similar careers advice will be available to older people as well.

- There will be a single online portal for applications for university entry and student finance. We envisage that this portal will be run by UCAS. UCAS will work with institutions to gather more information about courses so that it is available to students when they are applying for university entry.
- Institutions and students will work together to produce Student Charters that provide detailed information about specific courses and include commitments made by students to the academic community they are joining. Institutions that have higher charges will be expected to make stronger commitments to their students.
- Institutions will no longer be required to provide a minimum bursary to all students receiving the full grant from Government for living costs. They will have the freedom to focus on activities that may be more effective in improving access.
- The higher education system will expand to accommodate demand from qualified applicants who have the potential to succeed.
- Entitlement to Student Finance will be determined by a minimum entry standard, based on aptitude. This will ensure that the system is responding to demand from those who are qualified to benefit from higher education. All students who meet the standard will have an entitlement to Student Finance and can take that entitlement to any institution that decides to offer them a place. Institutions will face no restrictions from the Government on how many students they can admit. This will allow relevant institutions to grow; and others will need to raise their game to respond (Browne, 2010: 28).

The above is primarily 'business' speak, however, the Browne Report (2010) tends to be more evolutionary than revolutionary in that it retains many of the features of the existing system and builds on them, but its recommendations are radical. As shown above, it shifts responsibility for higher education away from government to the university; it forces universities to raise their game; it proposes lifting the fee cap which raises the prospect of very high fees for some universities; it proposes raising the loan repayment threshold to £21,000; it proposes simpler arrangements for student maintenance, and it proposes the abolition of the cap on student numbers. By focusing on the 'benefits' of the 'investment' it adopted a classic business transactional discourse. In reminding 'successful graduates', but not 'students', what the return on their investment is likely to be, the choice of words distances students from impending debt, and as such it normalises the acceptance of a £50,000 to £60,000 debt at the age of 21-22, to the extent that it is never questioned.

The report is the epitome of a neoliberal agenda; it assigns a central role to the market along the three interconnected dimensions identified by Self (2000:159), namely, the economic, the social and the political. Economically it proposes a competitive market as a means of sustainable funding; socially, the focus is on the student and their rights and opportunities, and politically, it leaves it to the state to provide the legal framework for its implementation.

## **7.2 Implementing the Browne Report Recommendations**

Many, but not all, of the recommendations were acceptable to the Coalition Government of the day. Cutting direct central funding to institutions was accepted. The government announced it would no longer provide any direct funding for degrees in the arts, humanities, business, law, and social sciences. The recommended interest rate taper and the repayment threshold were accepted, however, the levy was not accepted, most likely because it was unpopular with the universities who wanted to retain control over the higher fees. The removal of the tuition fee cap was unacceptable

to the Coalition government partners, the Liberal Democrats, due to an election commitment to abolish tuition fees. Instead a compromise was reached.

McGettigan (2013:22) explains that through a snap vote held in the House of Commons in December (2010) the maximum tuition fee was raised to £9,000 per year for undergraduates commencing their studies in 2012-13. What is interesting about this, is that the vote was brought forward using existing secondary legislation *prior* to publishing a White Paper providing detailed proposals of the functioning of the loan scheme or the new 'market'. There is a view that had the fee issue moved slowly through Parliament accompanied by primary legislation the outcome may have been different, however, given the significant pressure on public spending due to the global economic crisis it is unlikely to have made a difference. As it was, without an opportunity to examine the detail, the House of Lords narrowly passed the vote the following week.

In June 2011 the government issued a White Paper (2011a)<sup>10</sup> *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System*. Influenced by Browne's recommendations it set out three reforms as:

- (i) achieving a sustainable financial footing;
- (ii) a focus on a better student experience, which is defined as improved teaching, assessment, feedback and preparation for the world of work; and
- (iii) social mobility, whereby universities "*must*" take more responsibility for increasing social mobility (2011a:4).

There is a considerable degree of overlexicalisation in this report and at times the use of imperative grammar is bordering on the dictatorial, for example, "we will put in place", "we want", "we will remove", and so on.

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<sup>10</sup> DfBIS (2011a) White Paper can be assessed at [www.tsoshop.co.uk](http://www.tsoshop.co.uk)

However, the principles and proposals of Browne's Report are in clear evidence in the White Paper (2011a) which sets out thirty nine points as follows:

<b>Financing Students</b>	
1	Over the period of the Spending Review, the proportion of funding for teaching provided by direct grant from HEFCE will decline and the proportion from graduate contributions, supported by subsidised loans from Government, will increase.
2	HEFCE will remain responsible for allocating the remaining teaching grant to support priorities such as covering the additional costs of subjects, such as Medicine, Science and Engineering, which cannot be covered through income from graduate contributions alone. We will invite HEFCE to consult on the method for allocating teaching grant from 2012/13, informed by the priorities we have set out for this funding.
3	From autumn 2012, all higher education institutions will be able to charge a basic threshold of £6,000 a year for undergraduate courses. The maximum charge will be £9,000 a year.
4	No first-time undergraduate student will be asked to pay for tuition up-front. Loans will be available to cover both course and living costs for all first-time undergraduate full-time students. Many part-time and distance-learning students will also be able to access loans to cover the full tuition costs for the first time.
5	These loans will only be repaid at a rate of nine per cent of earnings over £21,000. Repayment will be based on a variable rate of interest related to income. However, with this "pay as you earn" scheme, all graduates will pay less per month than under the old system, making higher education more affordable for everyone
6	We will consult on early repayment mechanisms.
7	We will consult on whether it is possible to remove the VAT barriers which currently deter institutions from sharing costs.
8	We will investigate options for the management of loans owed by graduates to seek early financial benefit for the taxpayer.
<b>Improving the student experience</b>	
9	We will expect higher education institutions to provide a standard set of information about their courses, and we will make it easier for prospective students to find and compare this information.
10	We encourage higher education institutions to publish anonymised information for prospective and existing students about the teaching qualifications, fellowships and expertise of their teaching staff at all levels.
11	We invite the Higher Education Public Information Steering Group (HEPISG) to consider whether a National Student Survey of taught postgraduates should be introduced, and whether to encourage institutions to provide a standard set of information for each of their taught postgraduate courses.
12	We are asking HEFCE to improve Unistats, so prospective students can make more useful comparisons between subjects at different institutions. From summer 2012, graduate salary information will be added onto Unistats.
13	We will ask the main organisations that hold student data to make detailed data available publicly, including on employment and earnings outcomes, so it can be analysed and presented in a variety of formats to meet the needs of students, parents and advisors.
14	We are asking UCAS and higher education institutions to make available, course by course, new data showing the type and subjects of actual qualifications held by previously successful applicants. This should help young people choose which subjects and qualifications to study at school.
15	We have asked the Student Loans Company and UCAS to develop a single application portal for both higher education and student finance applications.



16	We consider the publication of a student charter to be best practice and we will review the extent to which they are adopted and in light of this consider whether they should be made mandatory in the future.
17	We expect all universities to publish summary reports of their student evaluation surveys on their websites by 2013/14. Before this, we will work with HEFCE, National Union of Students (NUS) and others, to agree the information and format that will be most helpful to students
18	We will introduce a risk-based quality regime that focuses regulatory effort where it will have most impact and gives power to students to hold universities to account. All institutions will continue to be monitored through a single framework but the need for, and frequency of, scheduled institutional reviews will depend on an objective set of criteria and triggers, including student satisfaction, and the recent track record of each institution.
19	We want the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) to help higher education institutions resolve student complaints at the earliest possible stage. We are therefore asking the OIA to consult the sector on ways to promote and deliver early resolution.
20	We have asked Professor Sir Tim Wilson to undertake a review into how we make the UK the best place in the world for university-industry collaboration.
21	We will continue to support the Graduate Talent Pool in 2011 for another year, helping graduates to identify internship opportunities.
22	We will work with the National Consortium of University Entrepreneurs, the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship and the Quality Assurance Agency to encourage higher education institutions to support students to develop enterprise skills.
23	We are committed to opening up the higher education market, including to further education colleges and alternative providers, to meet the changing needs of employers, individuals and their communities.
24	We will free around 85,000 student numbers from current controls in 2012/13 by allowing unrestrained recruitment of the roughly 65,000 high-achieving students, scoring the equivalent of AAB or above at A-Level and creating a flexible margin of 20,000 places to reward universities and colleges who combine good quality with value for money and whose average charge (including waivers) is at or below £7,500.
25	We will expand the flexibility for employers and charities to offer sponsorship for individual places outside of student number controls, provided they do not create a cost liability for Government.
26	We will consult on removing barriers to entry to the higher education sector. This includes changes to the criteria and the process for the award and renewal of taught degree awarding powers, including allowing non-teaching institutions to award degrees, and changes to criteria and process for determining which organisations are allowed to call themselves a "university".
<b>Increasing Social Mobility</b>	
27	The Government will establish a new careers service in England by April 2012, built on the principles of independence and professionalism.
28	We will establish a strong quality assurance framework for careers guidance, including a national quality standard for the new careers service and measures to ensure consistency in the 'quality awards' that schools and colleges can work towards.
29	All institutions which charge more than £6,000 must agree Access Agreements with the Director of Fair Access setting out what they will do to attract students from disadvantaged backgrounds.
30	We will strengthen the Office for Fair Access, increasing capacity to up to around four times its original level, so that it can provide more active and energetic challenge and support to universities and colleges, and we will ask the new Director to advise on whether OFFA's current powers are the right ones to achieve its

	statutory goals. The Director will continue to have a duty to protect academic freedom, including an institution's right to decide who to admit and on what basis.
31	We have asked the Director of Fair Access to provide advice in the autumn following the first round of approval of Access Agreements, on what further steps might be needed to ensure the delivery of commitments made in Access Agreements.
32	We will provide more generous support for low income full-time students. Students from families earning £25,000 or less will be entitled to a full grant for living costs of £3,250 a year and many students starting part-time courses in 2012/13, many of whom are from backgrounds that are under-represented at universities, will be entitled to an up-front loan to meet their tuition costs so long as they are studying at an intensity of at least 25 per cent, in each academic year, of a full-time course.
33	A new National Scholarship Programme will begin in 2012. By 2014, it will provide £150 million to help improve access to higher education amongst the least well-off young people and adults. All higher education institutions that participate in the National Scholarship Programme will contribute additional funds. We will encourage them to attract charitable and philanthropic donations, potentially more than doubling the overall size of the programme.
34	UCAS are reviewing the applications process, including the scope for introducing Post-Qualification Application (PQA). We will await the outcome of the UCAS review. Then, working with the sector and the Department for Education, we will determine the extent to which the introduction of a hybrid or other PQA model promotes access and benefits potential students.
<b>A new fit-for-purpose regulatory framework</b>	
35	We will consult on our proposals for a single, transparent regulatory framework that covers all institutions that want to be part of the English higher education system.
36	We will legislate to allow HEFCE the power to attach conditions to the receipt of grant and access to student loan funding. HEFCE will, as now, monitor institutions to ensure financial stability, and intervene if necessary.
37	As part of HEFCE's revised remit as the sector regulator, it will be given an explicit remit to protect the interest of students, including by promoting competition where appropriate in the higher education sector.
38	In addition to deregulatory policies such as freeing up student number controls, introducing a risk based approach to quality assurance and reviewing the process and criteria for granting degree-awarding powers, university title and university college title (described above), we will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ask the Higher Education Better Regulation Group (HEBRG) to look across the complex legislative landscape to identify areas for deregulation whilst safeguarding students' and the taxpayer. We are particularly keen to ease the burden of data collection on academic staff;</li> <li>• explore how to reduce the costs to institutions currently incurred in completing corporation tax returns; and</li> <li>• exempt higher education institutions from the "accommodation offset" provisions in the National Minimum Wage rules for full-time students.</li> </ul>
39	We will invite HEFCE, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) and HEBRG, in collaboration with the Information Standards Board for Education to reduce the number of data requests that ask for the same information from higher education institutions.

Table 7.1 Main points of the White Paper (2011a): Source: White Paper (2011a:8-12).

All of these thirty nine points are explained and elaborated throughout the DBIS White Paper (2011a) *Students at the Heart of the System* which can be accessed at [www.tsoshop.co.uk](http://www.tsoshop.co.uk). Notwithstanding the overlexicalisation there is a high level of intertextuality with the Browne Report (2010) which

is their main influence. These points effectively re-imagine the English higher education system. What is striking about them is the centrality of metaphors of markets and open markets, enterprise, consumers and providers. Despite the continual use of the term “the quality of teaching”, which is not explained, the vast philosophical and pedagogical underpinnings of “quality teaching” are undermined by being rendered governable and technical. The points collapse into three main elements: finance, student experience and social mobility.

### **7.2.1 Achieving a sustainable financial footing.**

The White Paper (2011a) says “*our plans for reforming higher education funding have been influenced by the recommendations of Lord Browne’s Independent Review*” (p14), hence the intertextuality. However, the paper effectively operationalises Browne’s Report. It reduces the block grant that HEIs received from the government through HEFCE, but it did not eliminate it altogether; HEFCE would continue to provide funding for some subjects, such as science and mathematics. Commencing in academic year 2012-13 tuition fees were increased to a maximum of £9,000 which students could borrow from government, repayable contingent on their post-graduation income reaching a £21,000 threshold which would be deducted at nine percent of any income above the threshold, and spread over a period of up to 30 years, thereby linking repayments to the borrower’s income (S1.16:17). The shift was expected to “*generate £3 billion in savings to public expenditure by 2014-15*” (S1.6:15), while at the same time providing higher education with the funding it needs. In effect it shifts the burden of funding onto the student while removing the burden of administering funding from the universities and at the same time increasing university revenue.

### **7.2.2 A better student experience**

The White Paper (2011a) defined ‘a better student experience’ as:

*“a renewed focus on high quality teaching in universities so that it has the same **prestige as research**”* (2011a:1).

The assumption is that the existing teaching was of poor quality which is questionable because 'quality' is defined by the NSS. However, the interesting element is the focus on research. Research is said to confer prestige because although most faculty teach, few win competitive research funds from either government or industry. Research is the activity that differentiates among and between universities. Its funding is a critical resource for universities, not only because it is raised competitively but also because universities want and need prestige (Brown with Carasso, 2013).

The government provides two large streams of research funding through what is known as the dual support system (Shattock, 2013). The first comes from the Funding Councils and is generally referred to as QR, or quality related. It comes in the form of a block grant and is intended to pay for the salaries of permanent researchers and for the resources required to build research capabilities. The second part comes from the Research Councils, mostly in the form of project grants which are allocated to particular researchers in response to proposals for future work. QR funding is allocated on the basis of past performance on the RAE, a peer review process that ranks a wide range of different subject areas.

From the government's perspective the RAE raised the quality of research in the country's universities:

*"Since the RAE was introduced **research quality** has risen significantly as the RAE has acted as a **driver of competition**, focusing institutions on delivering high quality outputs. 32 percent of staff who submitted for the 1996 RAE worked in departments rated as 'excellent'. In 2001 the figure was 55 percent". (HMT 2006, cited in Brown with Carasso, 2013: 52).*

As a driver of competition the RAE is a posterchild of success for the government, and for some universities, however as a measure of research quality the RAE disguises a number of perverse dynamics. Despite criticisms of selectivity in the dual support system whereby increasing proportions of the total allocation of government funds go to departments

with the highest grades, the RAE is considered to have been extremely successful. For example, Henkel and Kogan (2010) summarise its success:

*“There is little doubt that as far as the academic research enterprise is concerned, the Funding Council has been responsible for the **most effective instrument of change** in terms of, first, the achievement of a policy goal of growing importance to government: research selectivity and concentration; and second, its influence on institutional and individual behaviour” (2010:36).*

The RAE was succeeded in 2014 by the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and its results then informed the distribution of government funding grants in 2015-16. Its success was acknowledged and enshrined in the recent Higher Education and Research Act (2017) which established a new research body, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). It is clear that the White Paper’s (2011a) focus on ‘teaching excellence’ has been informed by the perceived success of the RAE as an instrument of change, hence the development of a similar market for teaching.

The White Paper (2011a) expects its reforms to restore teaching to its proper position, “*at the centre of every higher education institution’s mission* (S2.7:27), the better to align them economically and societally. “*Students should expect to receive **excellent teaching***” (S2.5:26). Institutions “**must**” deliver a better student experience, which is explained as “*improving teaching, assessment feedback and preparation for the world of work*” (S3.5:33). It does not define excellent teaching but the imperative ‘*must*’ leaves universities with no alternative, and the word comes up repeatedly in the focus on student mobility.

### **7.2.2 Social mobility**

Along with a better teaching experience the White Paper (2011a) says that universities “*must take more responsibility for increasing social mobility*”, (2011a:4). It explains that social mobility can be “inter-generational, that is, determined by who ones’ parents are, or intra-generational, that is, the extent to which individuals improve their position during their working lives, irrespective of where they started off. It can be “relative”, which refers to the

comparative chances of people with different backgrounds ending up in certain social or income groups or “absolute”, which refers to the extent to which all people are able to do better than their parents (S5.1:54). It goes on to state that absolute social mobility can be driven by the growth of white collar jobs and can go hand in hand with a society in which background still has an unfair influence on life chances:

*“Our focus”, it says, “is on relative social mobility. For any given level of skill and ambition, regardless of an individual’s background, **everyone should have a fair chance** of getting the job they want or reaching a higher income bracket” (S5.2:54).*

Everyone should have a fair chance of getting the job they want but not everyone needs a university education to get that job. The carrot in this sentence is the promise of a higher income in return for a £50,000 to £60,000 debt. Unlike the Browne Report (2010), which is mostly conceptual, the White Paper (2011a) attempts to be microscopically detailed. It uses Gibb’s (2010)<sup>11</sup> ‘Dimensions’ of a high quality learning experience to justify its advocacy of: the size of classes; cohort size; extent of close contact with academics; levels of student effort and engagement; volume, promptness and usefulness of student feedback, and the proportion of staff with postgraduate teaching qualifications. In addition, it is explicit about the statistical data needed and how it can be made available to potential students, their families, schools, employers and anyone else with an interest. For example, it states that:

*“each university **will now make the most requested items available on its website, on an easily comparable basis.** These items, together with information about course charges, are called the Key Information Set (KIS) and will be available on a course by course basis, by September 2012” (2011a:28).*

Although there is always a need for complete and accurate information, the paradox here is that the underpinning philosophy of increased competition between institutions, increased choice for students and greater diversity of institutions, would lead to greater social equity and mobility, but by forcing

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<sup>11</sup> Gibbs, Graham (2010), *Dimensions of Quality*. Higher Education Academy

universities to comply with prescribed requirements for 'choice', the White Paper (2011a) constrains and homogenises higher education. Its discourse is authoritarian, and at times dictatorial. For example, the term '*will now make*' is a command. Along with the imperative '*must*', which is sprinkled liberally throughout the Paper, universities are being told what to do, and by when, which represents a shift in the balance of power. The assumption is that if universities respond to these requests they will be funded into the future. Institutions that can attract students, by giving them a lot of information and showing them that they offer good quality and value for money, should grow and prosper, and may well increase their overall income. "*Institutions that cannot attract students will have to change*" (S1.6:4), the threat is left in the air. To be successful, institutions will have to appeal to prospective students and be respected by employers.

### **7.3 Enshrining Marketisation in Law**

The focus on teaching excellence is continued in a policy paper from HM Treasury (2015) entitled: "*Fixing the Foundations: Creating a More Prosperous Nation*". It introduced the idea of a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to "*sharpen incentives for institutions [...] as currently exist for research*" (S4.7:28); replaced maintenance grants with maintenance loans, "*freed up student number controls*" (ibid); allowed HEIs to increase their tuition fees in line with inflation from 2017-18, and opened the market to new and alternative providers, thereby accelerating the privatisation of higher education. These proposals were subsequently enshrined in law by the Higher Education Research Act (HERA) (2017)<sup>12</sup>.

HERA (2017) established an Office for Students (OfS) as the single regulatory body replacing both HEFCE and OFFA. As mentioned above it also established a new research body, UKRI. Along with wide ranging powers its duties include the promotion of equality of opportunity in connection with access and participation. It encourages competition

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<sup>12</sup> HERA (2017) can be accessed at [www.tsoshop.co.uk](http://www.tsoshop.co.uk)

between providers (S2 (1)). The OfS, as stipulated in HERA (2017), sees institutional autonomy as: the freedom of English higher education providers within the law to conduct their day-to-day management in an effective and competent way, and the freedom within the law of academic staff at English higher education providers (i) to question and test received wisdom, (ii) to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions without placing themselves in jeopardy of losing their jobs or privileges they may have at the providers (HERA, 2017,S2 (8):2).

The duties of the OfS include the protection of academic freedom, in particular, the freedom of institutions (a) to determine the content of particular courses and the manner in which they are taught, supervised and assessed, (b) to determine the criteria for the selection, appointment and dismissal of academic staff and apply those criteria in particular cases, and (c) to determine the criteria for the admission of students and apply those criteria in particular cases (S36:(1):24).

The Act operationalises further the recommendations made in the Browne Report (2010). Although the White Paper (2011a) shifted responsibility for regulation to universities and HERA (2017) tidies up the regulation insofar as there is one body, it does not lessen the regulative or administrative burden on universities. On the contrary, it enshrines in law a new regulatory framework. One of the interesting things about HERA is that it defines both institutional autonomy and academic freedom as ‘freedoms’, the former as freedom in how institutions conduct themselves and the latter as the freedom of academics to speak their minds.

The Browne Report exhibits all the hallmarks of neoliberalism in conceptualising higher education as a market. The White Paper (2011a), subsequent policy and HERA legislation operationalise Browne’s concept. They are implemented through the medium of New Public Management



(NPM). The reforms are characteristic of those outlined previously<sup>13</sup> by Pollitt (2003), with a shift towards measurement, quantification, efficiency, individualism, outcomes rather than inputs, and a preference for lean, flat organisations (Pollitt, 2003). Although it took seven years from the Browne Report (2010) to HERA (2017) collectively these and intervening papers and policies represent the total marketisation of higher education in England.

#### **7.4 Chapter summary**

Neoliberalism is predicated on three fundamental assumptions about the role and functioning of markets. First, that the free market is the most appropriate mechanism for organising all aspects of life, second, markets are self-regulating therefore the role of the state is to create the conditions that allow markets to function optimally and then step back, and third, individuals are assumed to be rational, self-interested, economic maximisers. Together neoliberalism and NPM promise that open economies and free trade simultaneously increase efficiency, improve quality, and widen consumer choice (Friedman 1962). As the documents analysed above show, the marketisation of higher education is the application of these principles.

This thesis is proposing that the distinctive educational character, meaning and operations of higher education are in the process of being transformed and degraded through the discursive practices of marketisation; that the discourse and habitus of higher education's constituent elements are being usurped by an economic ethos and an audit vocabulary. The documents analysed above are mostly silent on educational character and meaning. Their discourse is on the operations of higher education and their vocabulary is distinctly business, economic and financial.

The next chapter examines the implications of the discourse of marketisation at the institutional level through the medium of case study.

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<sup>13</sup> See pages 96-97

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### MARKETISATION AT THE INSTITUTIONAL LEVEL

The three documents analysed in the last chapter demonstrate the intertextuality of marketisation policy. The White Paper (2011a) makes it very clear that “*institutions that cannot attract students will have to change*” (S1.6:4) if they want to survive. The HERA (2017) offers a carrot to incentivise change (or perhaps it’s a bribe) when it promises that providers with good quality teaching will be able to raise their fees by the rate of inflation from the academic year 2017/18. Just as there are consequences for resisting change, in this case failure to survive, forcing change on any institution also has consequences, both positive and negative, and inevitably there are ramifications and implications for the people involved in that institution. The chapter focuses on the consequences and implications of marketisation at the institutional level.

#### 8.1 Material practices at the Institutional Level

Data at this level were collected through a mixture of archival material, semi-structured interview and group discussion. The data include a variety of institutional documents including email and various reports along with transcribed texts of interview data. As explained in chapter six, three interviews were conducted with members of the Senior Executive who collectively represent approximately 23 years’ service in the institution. Interviewee 1 with 15 years; Interviewee 2 with 6 years; and Interviewee 3 with 2 years. Their comments are interspersed throughout this section.

#### 8.2 Introduction to PPU

The case is a post-92 university, anonymised as Post Poly University (PPU). It is situated in a large English city. Established as a polytechnic by Crosland in the 1960s, PPU has a much longer history in providing teaching and training. It became a university following the Further and Higher Education

Act 1992. As the Jarratt Report (1985) recommended, PPU is constituted as a limited company, comprising up to twenty-five members limited in liability to the sum of £1 each. It is also an exempt charity. The Vice Chancellor of the university is also the Chief Executive of the company. All Governors of the University are also directors of the company and trustees of the charity. Under the Education Reform Act (1988) custody and control of all assets and affairs of the university are vested in the Board of Governors. The Companies Act (2006) and the Memorandum of Assurance and Accountability with HEFCE require the Board of Governors to ensure financial statements give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the institution. The role of the Chair of the Board is non-executive and separate from the roles of Vice Chancellor/Chief Executive in order to ensure a clear division of responsibilities and a balance of power and authority at the head of the institution, such that one individual does not have unfettered powers of decision.

Universities, polytechnics and other higher education institutions were always separate organisational entities with their own charters, constitutions, identities, and so on, therefore McNay's (1995) model of universities as organisations may help to contextualise PPU as an organisation. The model, shown in figure 8.1, illustrates different cultures found in higher education generally and the ideological implications underpinning each of them.

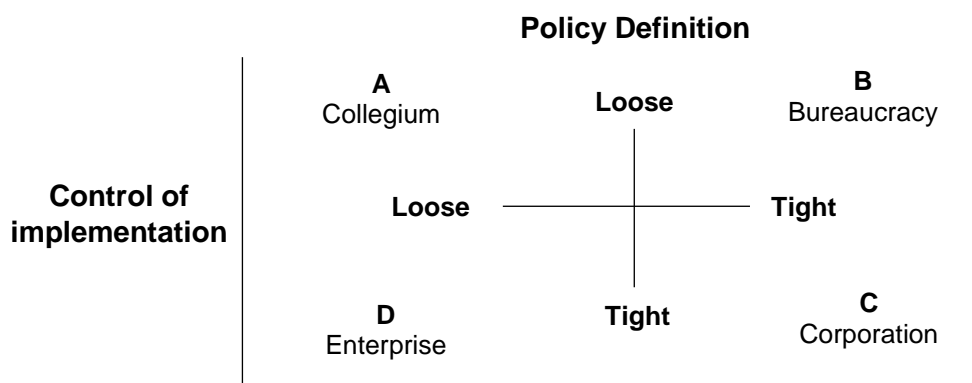


Figure 8.1: McNay's Models of universities as organisations.

Source: McNay (1995: p109).

McNay (1995:109) says the four cultures co-exist in most universities but with different balances among them, including traditions, mission, leadership style and external pressures. For example, research preferences in a collegium may not fit with corporate priorities and decision-making processes in a bureaucracy, and by the same token a bureaucracy may not be flexible enough for an enterprise culture in a competitive market (McNay, 1995).

Quadrant 'A' reflects the traditional higher education structure and culture associated with academic autonomy and freedom from external controls, with authority emanating from expertise in an academic's discipline, and where autonomous and independent academics function without close supervision in a structure that has variable power irrespective of position. According to McNay (1995:110) Quadrant 'B' refers to a bureaucratic dependency on regulation, processes and standardised operating procedures. Quadrant 'C' represents corporate power through executive authority with a separation of roles between managers and professionals, and quadrant 'D' sees higher education as an enterprise, that is, a market.

Interestingly, interviewee 3, a VC, saw PPU as an:

**“enterprise**, because part of what we do is very commercial, students/customers pay fees and pay for things and they need to get decent value for money...”.

Whereas interviewee 2, a Director of Strategy, with six years' service at PPU said that despite small instances of collegiality, PPU was firmly:

*“a bureaucracy because we have all **these outputs** and **we have to satisfy** a variety of people...So we are a **bureaucracy**...”*

Interviewee 1. An Associate Dean with fifteen years' service at PPU, said:

*“... **difficulties** come when they [departments] have **to work together** as ever, but I think as with most organisations there are parts which are unbelievably bureaucratic and there are other parts that are organic and very creative because they may need to be, **research centres**, are often highly organic in the way that they operate, ... but*

*other parts of the organisation like student records, for example **has to be bureaucratic** – there has to be an audit-trail...”.*

Following the Jarratt Report (1985) PPU was constituted as a corporate. It exhibits all the tenets of a corporate bureaucracy and more recently of an NPM version of bureaucracy with a rigid focus on efficiency, rationality, impersonality, objectivity in decision-making and in the application of rules and regulations.

### **8.2.1 Contemporary PPU**

PPU, like all ex-polytechnics, adopted a hierarchical organisational structure. The Board of Governors has overall responsibility for the institution, its strategic direction, its financial solvency, approval of major developments, how responsibilities are delegated, and how matters set out in the Articles operate on a day-to-day basis. Board Regulations provide an overarching framework for other University Regulations, including Academic Regulations, and Financial Regulations and since the full Board meets only four times a year it provides a Scheme of Delegation. The Academic Board has delegated authority from the Board of Governors and is responsible for maintaining and enhancing academic performance in teaching, examining and research and for advising the Board of Governors on matters relating to the educational character and mission of the University. In addition to delegated authority to chair Academic Board, Financial Board, and Remuneration Board, the Vice-Chancellor/Chief Executive has delegated authority to chair finance, audit and HR committees. The Vice-Chancellor/Chief Executive is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the institution and is obliged to report regularly to the Board.

In terms of its moral and ethical environment PPU states that it endeavours to follow the principles of the Standards in Public Life,<sup>14</sup> namely:

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<sup>14</sup> Standards in Public life can be retrieved at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>

selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty and leadership. It complies with the voluntary Higher Education Code of Governance<sup>15</sup> (the Code) which adopts and builds on the Standards in Public Life and which was published by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) in 2014. The Code echoes much of the language used in the Browne Report (2010) and the White Paper (2011a), for example, “*protecting the collective student interest through good governance*”; “*the publication of accurate and transparent information*”; and the availability of higher education “*to all those who are able to benefit from it*” (2014:8).

It identifies primary elements as hallmarks of effective governing bodies and stipulates imperative ‘must’ statements that prescribe the components within each element. For example, the governing body ‘*must*’ meet all legal and regulatory requirements imposed on it as a corporate body. Although the Code is voluntary it is very clear that ‘*any*’ organisation operating in the sector is expected to comply in order to “*show due respect for public interest*”. The ‘Code’, echoing both the Browne Report (2010) and the White Paper (2011a) leave little doubt as to how universities should be run and who is in control. Higher education, and therefore PPU, is framed and ordered by central government policy and regulation and funded by students.

PPU’s ‘mission statement’ for the year 2004-05 said it: “*aims to provide education and training which will help students...*”. For the year 2006-07 the wording was “*...committed to providing excellent educational and knowledge transfer...*”, and this mission remained in place until 2010-11 when the mission said it: “*transforms lives through education and research of quality, meets society’s needs and builds rewarding careers for students, staff and partners*”. That mission statement remained in place until 2014-15 when it changed to: “*transforming lives through excellent education...to be a **university of choice**, transforming lives for a **diverse range of***

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<sup>15</sup> The ‘Code’ can be found at the CUC website. See [www.universitychairs.ac.uk](http://www.universitychairs.ac.uk).

**students..**". A 'university of choice' echoes the discourse of Browne (2010), choice being the foundation stone of markets, and the words 'a diverse range of students' is taken directly from the White Paper (2011a). Of interest here is that the 2014-15 mission statement is silent on building careers for staff or partners, instead the focus is entirely on choice and widening access.

For the year 2016-17 the mission statement is subsumed into an introduction which states:

*"... is committed to transforming lives through **excellent education**. We pride ourselves on being a university which provides access to higher education to the widest possible range of students from diverse backgrounds.....All our efforts are focused on fulfilling this vision and mission"*.

Given the White Paper's (2011a) expectations evident in its imperative to restore teaching to its proper position "*at the centre of every higher education institution's mission (S2.7:27)*" the term 'excellent education' as distinct from excellent teaching, is an interesting choice of words. However, despite its philosophical and pedagogical underpinnings 'teaching' tends to be a narrower concept than 'education' which has connotations of wider scholarship and research.

Mission statements were a peculiarity in higher education until marketisation whereas they have long been an essential element of branding in the business world. The changing focus in PPU's mission statements reflects both the Browne Report (2010) and the White Paper (2011a). The widest possible range of students are being told they can choose to buy excellent education. The term 'excellent education' is not without significant implications at the micro level which is discussed below. Rather than a message of any kind, the deletion of words such as 'committed' and 'providing', and changing words such as 'transforms' to 'transforming', may reflect changes in personnel over the period. PPU had four Vice-Chancellor/Chief Executives (VCs) since 2009, but the focus here is on what

happened in PPU following the Browne Report in 2010, and the White Paper (2011a).

Following the publication of the White Paper (2011a) in June, PPU launched a university wide voluntary redundancy scheme “*in order to reduce the overall staff cost and ensure the university’s long-term financial stability*”. It claimed that the Trades Unions “*indicated*” their support. The scheme said that “*requests for voluntary redundancy would be accepted solely at the discretion of the university*”, which suggested a lack of pressure. In early October 2011 the then VC (the third since 2008) invited ‘*all staff*’ to a meeting with the Senior Executive to discuss the “*university’s positioning in the national Big Bang*”.

The then Executive did its best to convey the gravity of the existential threat caused by the withdrawal of government funding as outlined in the Browne Report (2010) and detailed in the White Paper (2011a). The Trades Unions vociferously opposed any change and the meeting closed in disarray. By early 2012 an S188 Notification of Redundancy was issued. When consultation closed in early April there followed slotting and pooling of displaced staff “*with compulsory redundancies being minimised wherever possible through voluntary redundancies*”. During the academic year 2011-12 there was a substantial re-scaling and restructuring programme; faculties were consolidated and four buildings closed, reducing the estate by 12%. Student numbers rose by 3% on the previous year, but staff turnover was 11.7%, up from 9% the previous year.

The academic year 2012-13 was marked by the launch of a new Undergraduate Framework which complied with the requirements laid out in the White Paper (2011a). For example, it increased class contact time and cohort sizes and created websites that provided a range of information about courses, students, teaching and subjects as requested of the White Paper (2011a) in points 9-14, shown in table 7.1 above. In 2012-13 student



numbers fell by 26% due to what has variously been described as a “particularly bad bounce of the ball”, and as “sloppy paperwork and carelessness”. Whatever the reason there is little doubt of that the loss of 26% of students had grievous financial consequences. Throughout that year (2012-13) PPU found itself grappling with those financial consequences while also dealing with sporadic union strike action. Staff turnover, including voluntary redundancies rose to 15%. The then VC announced his intention to retire in 2014. He reminded staff of the **growing competition** from private providers who:

*“are able to respond swiftly to market demands without the legacy requirements of large estates, nationally negotiated pay and contracts, and mandatory membership of sector pension schemes”.*

Legacy requirements such as large estates, nationally negotiated pay and sector pension schemes are antithetical to neoliberalism’s preference for bare bones institutions. The departing VCs comments reflect his frustration at the level of union resistance to change in the institution.

The year 2013-14 was also quite turbulent due to a government restriction on student numbers. A new VC arrived in August 2014 and found a demoralised staff and a vociferously hostile union. A staff health and wellbeing survey was completed in late 2014 which castigated senior management for incompetence. But in October rather than a discourse of ‘more and/or better management’ the results of the survey were reframed not as disappointment with management, but as lack of staff alignment with institutional goals which inflamed and further alienated staff. Student numbers dropped by a further 10%. Staff turnover was 15%.

On a positive note, within weeks of the new VCs arrival the government imposed restriction on student numbers was lifted. However, consultation on the forthcoming 2015-2020 Strategic Plan noted that “...*much dissatisfaction was expressed by students and staff about many aspects of the University’s present culture, systems and processes*”. It stated:

***“difficult strategic choices have to be made, and the responsibility of the University’s leadership is to set in a rational and evidenced way what we consider to be the best way forward. Student numbers and therefore income are decreasing year on year, leading to worrying financial forecasts”.***

Falling student numbers and growing competition cannot be ignored in any business and ‘difficult strategic choices’ mean job cuts in any language. And so it proved; a restructuring exercise during the year 2014-15 reduced staff numbers by 165 posts. Student numbers fell by 13%. Staff turnover was 15%. Within days of the launch of the TEF an email from the Senior Executive said: “...we have *no time to waste because we need to achieve excellence in teaching*”, and “*we need to raise our NSS score*”. It announced another major restructuring exercise. It was accompanied by an updated VR scheme and the inevitable S188, along with reminders that staff costs were way above benchmark and **needed** to be reduced by 15%. Repeated use of the word ‘need’ suggesting the Thatcherite mantra ‘there is no alternative’. For the benefit of doubt it is quite likely there was no alternative because the finances were not in robust good health at that point. However, the restructure reduced staff numbers by 252 posts. Student numbers decreased by 8% and staff turnover rose to 25%, compared with 15% the previous year.

PPU’s institutional structure at the end of 2016-17 had been transformed. Since 2008 staff numbers decreased by almost 50% and the number of academics decreased by almost 60%. At the end of year 2016-17 academics accounted for less than 40% of all staff. The survival of any university depends on its ability not only to recruit students but also to retain them. The Annual Reports suggest that In the ten years since 2008 student numbers fell by approximately sixty one percent (61%), however, the problem with “sloppy paperwork” referred to above questions this number. Nevertheless it is indicative of the amount of change at PPU over the last ten years.

PPU now consists of six academic schools reporting to a Pro-VC for Academic Outcomes. A department for Careers and Employability reports to a Pro-VC for Employment Outcomes. Five professional teams: Engagement, Finance, Estates, Human Resources, Information Technology and Student Journey, report to the Chief Operating Officer. Governance and Secretariat functions report to the University Secretary who reports to the Board and to the VC. The VC manages these senior staff and chairs the Academic Board, the Senior Leadership Team and the Senior Management Team. At the close of 2017 the VC reported “*favourable results*” on all performance indicators, which suggests the financial position was good, and that staff numbers and salaries were in line with sector benchmarks. He announced his resignation at the beginning of 2018 to take effect at the beginning of the academic year 2018-19.

A significant point is that since 2011 the discourse in PPU is almost exclusively in financial terms and echoes the Browne Report (2010) and the White Paper (2011a). Of interest also is that the ‘streamlining of the university’ appears to have created silos reporting to the P-VCs, and also that both P-VCs are responsible for ‘outcomes’ rather than contributions or inputs. Staff ‘turnover’ since 2012-13 suggests that although a number of posts were actually cut or not replaced following redundancy a far greater number were redeployed or had incumbents replaced. For example, all the posts that constitute the Senior Executive remain but with new incumbents.

The literature on marketisation is very clear that its reforms are implemented through NPM restructuring and reorganising, what Shattock (2013) referred to as ‘restructuring mania’. The restructure that began in PPU in 2015-16 continued into 2016-17 and on into mid-2018. The purpose of the restructurings were said to be for:

*“ensuring that all efforts were directed towards improving **students’ success** in their studies and in meeting their **career aspirations**”, and to **simplify the way the university works**, reducing silos, speeding up processes and encouraging and celebrating team work.*

The discourse of the Browne Report (2010) and the White Paper (2011a) with its focus on markets, choice and quality, is evident in PPU's focus on student success, (in other words teaching), employability and streamlining university processes and procedures.

### 8.3 Marketisation at PPU

No-one would quarrel with the view that institutions have to survive financially, however, the discourse since the Browne Report in 2010 suggests that income and finance are ends in themselves. The often used imperative 'we must', and 'we have to' are illustrative of neoliberalism's tactic of negating any alternative, so that concern and fear are a means of legitimating repeated restructurings which precipitate S188s, but there is little or no evidence of growth, or attempts to foster growth, and apart from an obsessive focus on metrics there is no evidence of attempts to actually improve quality teaching, which is at the heart of government policy.

Along with the material practices of repeated NPM restructurings one of the objectives of this research is to:

- investigate what marketisation means for university management and leadership practice.

With a view to collecting data to address this objective semi-structured interviews were conducted with three senior executives, an Associate Dean (Interviewee 1), a Director of Strategy (Interviewee 2) and a VC/CEO (Interviewee 3). The numbers 1, 2, 3 refer to the order in which the interviews took place, otherwise they have no significance.

Asked during interview what was different about PPU in 2016 interviewee 3, who then had two years' service at PPU said:

*This institution wouldn't have been my first leadership job or my second or third, by the time I came here it was fairly seasoned and I had done a lot of other leadership over the previous 20 years, specific to this institution, there was a step up in ... I had not encountered the extent of **institutional hostility**, it's more hostile here than*

*elsewhere ... it was very intense... industrial relations had kind of collapsed pretty much [.. ] although I knew that humans in the system here would have been hurt and damaged by ... not the best leadership I would say, probably, plus a couple of bad bounces of the ball with circumstances which could have happened in other places too but a particular combination to a certain extent which resulted in me coming into a turn around – it was very intense, **a bit hostile, industrial relations had kind of collapsed pretty much** but that wasn't actually...not entirely the **fault** of leadership and management that they had collapsed either I have to say, and there was **less bonding** to the institution than I might have expected ...”*

The reference to institutional hostility was a surprising statement given the rate of disruption and staff turnover since the Browne Report in 2010 and certainly in light of the White Paper (2011a) which advocated change on an unprecedented rate, to subjects, to courses and to how they were administered. The reference to ‘collapsed industrial relations’ is certainly a criticism of union militancy. The perceived lack of bonding is a reference to the staff survey, mentioned above, which had been extremely critical of management and which was ‘reframed’ as lack of alignment with PPU’s mission and organisational goals. Interviewee 3’s discourse reframed it as ‘lack of bonding’ with the institution, which has far-reaching consequences. First, it exempts leadership and management from blame for poor results or previous mistakes, and second, it allocates the blame for those results elsewhere.

Regarding the characteristics required to lead a contemporary university Interviewee 3 said:

*[PPU] is only different to other universities in one or two respects but mostly it’s the same as most institutions, the relevant characteristics for a leader...is you need to be **credible**, you need to be an **authentic leader**, so you need to have some mastery of the subject that gives you credentials that do matter- people won’t follow a leader that they don’t believe is authentic, unless they believe that leader is broadly speaking, from their tribe in academic work to be OK, although **leadership distance** is also important, **you can’t be one of the guys**, so the most relevant characteristics are, some academic mastery, and there has to be a very clear passion for higher education, it needs to be absolutely clearly communicated in a compelling way and it needs to inspire fellowship. This isn’t the*

*Army, so the leader's got to be somebody who is able to win the **discretionary effort** of colleagues who – the bit about discretionary is that most people come and do a job and they work reasonably hard and most people are decent, honest and the rest of it – to achieve exceptional things you **need to give a bit more, but that's discretionary**, people won't give that discretion unless they believe in it, so it's very important that the leader has the qualities necessary to elicit that discretion and the effort.*

Credibility and authenticity have long been acknowledged as being among the required characteristics of all leaders. The aspiration of inspirational leadership from a distance runs counter to the mainstream literature on leadership, and it contradicts the LFHE research discussed in chapter four that found the key competencies of effective VCs included: openness, honesty, willingness to consult others, and the ability to think broadly and strategically and to engage with people (Spendlove, 2007). A willingness to consult others in open honesty is seriously at odds with the notion that “you cannot be one of the guys”. However, this comment reflects the same ambiguities and contradictions found in a wide range of LFHE research on the leadership of universities in general, which may be a feature of marketisation and is worth further research. The focus on competitive markets in both the Browne Report (2010) and in the White Paper (2011a) incites universities to think of themselves as competitive organisations, characterised by corporate objectives, strategic leadership and a ‘business-like’ approach to managing their internal environments (Clarke, 2015: 135). This requires a different mind-set and approach for all leaders of marketised public sector bodies. There are two elements at play in interviewee 3’s discourse and those are a combination of the older arrangements of internal governance alongside the emergence of a neoliberal logic.

Both logics are evident in his metaphor of a **covered market** when asked to describe PPU in relation to McNay’s (1995) models of universities as organisations. He said:

*“...so I would say an enterprise in a sense you **can measure the outcomes**, you **can measure how effective it is**, and its academic in the sense that it isn't profit and loss.. it's like a **covered market**,*

*inside the **market has stalls**... they're all different and each one is a little enterprise of its own actually and they come and go all the time and the university is a bit like that, the subjects they...rise and they fall..."*

Different stalls, or departments, have different strengths and they also have different needs. For example, there can be a multiplicity of technical requirements. Students have different needs than academics who have different needs than administrators, and a variety of different teaching methods require diverse technologies some of which elude other faculty.

The covered market metaphor is interesting because multiple realities represent university life. For example, academics experience the organisation from their point of view, administrators from their different points of view, students from other points of view, senior management and boards of governors from yet others. It is unlikely that any one person, irrespective of power or position, fully understands the many realities present in a university, a situation that introduces uncertainty into the structure. Goals in such organisations can be problematic because compared with most organisations that have a clearly focused purpose, universities can have any number of ambiguous and conflicting goals. For example, despite the longstanding goals of teaching and research, goals that seem important to one discipline may not be relevant to another or to senior management. But, multiple goals can be a strength rather than a weakness because several purposes can be achieved simultaneously through multiple, and even conflicting, goals. Regarding the tensions between different departments, Interviewee 1 (an Associate Dean with 15 years' service at PPU) used the metaphor of "a holding company" to describe PPU where different departments are:

*"...doing different things with **different strengths**... **they co-exist**...I studied in an economics department and I also studied in a sociology department and sociologists never knew where the economists were and the economists never knew where the sociologists were and I don't image it was that unusual in a lot of other places...it's **like a holding company** with lots of different bits to it".*

Interviewee 1 is describing what is generally accepted as a higher education habitus. Although criticised as 'loosely coupled' (Weick, 1976) the approach exists in many universities, but marketisation as exemplified by Browne (2010) and in the White Paper (2011a), does not value the culture that this approach represents, namely its circular patterns of communication, faculty specialisation, academic freedom, tenure, peer review, self-governance, participation, consensus, professional expertise, competency, cooperation in research, and the democratic decision-making inherent in collegiums, or Quadrant A in McNay's (1995) model. Middlehurst (1995:81) is also describing Quadrant A when she says that successful universities depend on collegiality, collaboration and acceptance of the concept of academic freedom which cannot be commanded top-down but relies on being nurtured bottom-up. But, marketisation eschews collegiality and instead promotes individual competition.

Interviewee 2, a Director of Strategy with sixteen years' experience in higher education and six years' service at PPU thought personality was important in leading and managing a contemporary university. He said:

*"to lead... you have to have **some strategic thinking**, you need to be aware of your skills and you need to be a 'blue-sky thinker', you need a **strong network** to ensure that you're going in the right direction...and a strategic plan which is aiming to **inspire and motivate staff** and your stakeholders...also **personality** is important".*

Interviewee 3's view was that:

*"Leadership **shouldn't be personified in one person at the top**, there are times when that's necessary, in a crisis, there needs to be a leader to take responsibility and take control... there's not much time for collegial discussions, things have to get done, there's **no time for committees** to discuss what we might or might not do – that's a **very clear leadership**".*

There is a clear contradiction here, however the basic goal of leadership in all organisations is to ensure all the parts are working in harmony, but in a rigid NPM corporatised bureaucratic institution like PPU leadership is personified at the top. It is an interesting comment from Interviewee 3



because the leadership of PPU *is* actually personified in him, that is, Interviewee 3 at the top, whereas Interviewee 2's views reflect his career experience in a variety of senior management roles. It is also interesting and may reflect personal criticism because Interviewee 2 was leaving PPU the following week to "*pursue other interests*" as part of the 2016-17 restructure because he "*didn't have enough academic experience*", which was he said "an excuse" that distressed him and made him unhappy. His experience as Director of Strategy also echoed the LFHE research that found even department heads did not have the influence to bring real change. The difference in views between Interviewee 2 and 3 may reflect Interviewee 3's 'hands-on' approach to managing and leading because he was so busy he simply had "no time for committees". However, he did say that:

*"I think if you're in the long game, distributed leadership is the only game in town, it's the way to go, you want to create an organisation with leaders everywhere".*

What is interesting about this comment is that a growing literature on distributed leadership sees it as an instrument of direct management control. Gunter (2014) refers to the concept as a 'banality, and Amsler & Shore (2017) see it as a feature of government imposed NPM reform. PPU exemplifies a NPM hierarchical institution with power concentrated at the centre and then delegated. Collegial or democratic forms of internal governance and leadership, such as election by faculty members to senior positions, decision-making by representative senates and academic boards, have no quarter in PPU.

At face value authority rests with the chief executive and his senior team, as is evident in the following comment from Interviewee 3.

*My approach is contingent upon the problem...when I arrived here there were two things going on that were not good, and I **didn't really consult** about the fact that we needed to strategize a plan, I just got a few things together and we made a strategized plan **quite quickly** and now we are in the second year and we are about to sharpen it a bit more and it has produced results. The NSS required **direct intervention from the top** very quickly. It is going to be an institutional priority and if there are colleagues who don't like that, we*

*are not going to have a long discussion because **there's no lock on the door** – this is how we're going to be and if you want to be somewhere else, that's up to you, we're going to do this and I've got the **backing of the board** to do this and now its producing results...*

The 'backing of the board' clearly indicates that whether the personality at the top is 'strong' or not, that personality does not have the last word, and despite the common conception of markets as 'free', deregulated and autonomous, the Browne Report (2010), the White Paper (2011a) and HERA (2017) show that higher education in England continues to be controlled, albeit at a distance, by the government.

Committees, circular patterns of communication and collegial consensus are inimical to a marketised institution such as PPU. As both the Browne Report (2010) and the White Paper (2011a) show, marketisation requires a considerable number of outputs and the imposition of NPM strategies and techniques is one way of ensuring they are achieved, and that objectives are met. The discursive strategies and control technologies of NPM have generated their own bureaucratic rigidity, recipes, rules and instruments for governing internal behaviour (Deem et al, 2008). In an NPM driven institution such as PPU communication is one-way with limited opportunity for dialogue, feedback or dissent, as in the traditional model. In PPU communication takes the form of written documents, commands given by line managers and by those within prescribed and formal channels. Weber (1947) suggested that in bureaucracies' communication also flows horizontally through rumour and a variety of informal means, and this is the case in PPU.

Interviewee 2s angst is also evident in the following comment:

*"I think there are **certain people who cannot let go**, and there are others who are happy to devolve responsibilities to their staff and I think this is an important issue, you should be able to say, right, these are your objectives and really I am happy for you to get to them however you get to them and I will just keep an eye a watching brief rather than actually interfere too much. For some people, that's really difficult and I've got quite a lot of experience of individuals who just*

*will not let that go and that becomes quite problematic then I think and **there are differences in the way that leaders and managers actually perform those roles and I think it becomes quite difficult for certain individuals and it is an individualist thing**, I think some people have real difficulty permitting staff to actually have that freedom and also then get the accolades which go with it, whereas some others some leaders actually are quite happy for that to happen”.*

There is a distinct criticism in this piece of discourse which I am going to park because his upset and unhappiness (although distressing) is not the point here. The point here is the shifting possibilities and problems that constitute PPU's environment. Marketisation as constituted by both the Browne Report (2010) and the White Paper (2011a) advocates rigorous internal management in pursuit of 'student choice', that is, competition, 'quality teaching', and 'widening access'. As such, the logics of neoliberalism and NPM (in other words marketisation) displaces the traditional quasi-democracies of professional decision-making and modes of working. The expansion of marketisations' logics involve subordination and/or co-option of the status quo (Newman and Clarke, 2009), which can result in a contradictory and strained assemblage of modes of managing and leading, and which have been described as the re-bureaucratisation of organisational life (Travers, 2007). Interviewee 2's next comment suggests that is what is actually at play, which is why I've parked the explicit criticism:

*“I think there are **less differences** than we believe between an organisation which is basically around business and income and shareholders and the like and dividends rather than an institution which is public, and I think the **public sectors have undergone quite a revolution** in the last 15-20 years – higher education probably being the one last area and certainly now I think the focus has got to be on the **customer**, particular **as students** now are paying £9k a year and I think despite what some academic colleagues might say, they are more customers now than they ever were and I think if you get a poor experience now, you would be wanting some kind of retribution rather than us thinking oh that's just what you get”.*

Clarke (2015:136) suggests that processes of hybridisation make the world of the marketised university a peculiarly condensed and compound space.

The above two pieces together show that traditional professional conceptions, orientations, tasks and practices can persist alongside, but be subordinated to, the new logics. The struggles with the combination of old and new logics are evident in both comments above and in Interviewee 2's next comment:

*“there is a tendency within HE for **academic loyalty** to be to their **subject**, first and foremost rather than their institution, so its relatively easy for the academic, who represents the institution in the classroom to criticise the institution rather than sort the problem out , and you would not get that in commercial world”*

This is questionable in the new environment of PPU, however, I acknowledge that what Furedi (2011:1) calls “quaint academic rituals and practices”, and what Clark (2006:3) referred to as the “often unruly, disorganised, sometimes indefensible, working practices of academics” are easily and often used as scapegoats for misunderstood flaws in the system. Clarke (2015: 137) reminds us that the processes of displacement, subordination, and co-option through which NPM logics are implemented have produced a systematic re-working of the internal world of the university so that quaint rituals and unruly practices are more than likely things of the past.

Hanlon (2016:185) would see the re-working of university life as a neoliberal attempt to appropriate the soul of academia. Holloway (1998:182-183) would also see it as “*the subjection of human activity to the market, which takes place fully when the capacity to work (labour power) becomes a commodity to be sold on the market to those with the capital to buy it*”. This is particularly relevant to PPU where compliance with the corporate mission, which itself is based on both the Browne Report (2010) and the White Paper (2011a), and submission to NPM ways of working have combined to produce an intensification of the labour process.

Commercialisation of higher education is not new but what is new about marketisation is its pace, intensity and moral economic legitimacy. A focus on profit and loss is encoded in internal systems in order to produce the

measurements and metrics the legislation demands, and it has become normalised in the discourse of higher education in terms like the NSS and the REF. This is evident in Interviewee 1's comments, a career academic and Associate Dean, he said:

*“The element of marketisation that is most obvious in PPU is now and has been for the last few years, a situation where the student is not only viewed as **a resource** but the student is **the consumer** (for want of a better word) and I'm a bit reluctant to use that word but I mean that's in effect what they are and they are basically, as anybody in the market does, casting their votes depending on what they think is the best option for them. I think that changes the whole dynamic and it does seem to make it much more **reputationally sensitive** particularly where the prices are not a differentiator of this market. It's entirely... in favour of the Russell Group of Universities. It's incredibly difficult for institutions like this where so many of the variables are stacked against the organisation in the sense that, you have a **number of measures** here which are, to be brutal, crafted very much in favour of the Russell Group Universities and if you are not a Russell Group University, you are struggling and certainly for access institutions they're incredibly difficult”.*

The comment sums up one of the difficulties of marketisation for PPU and that is ranking and reputation. The focus on measurement and profit and loss is not surprising given that government policy is about markets and customers. Markets require constant monitoring and measurement, hence the NSS, the DLHE, REF and TEF. The focus on profit and loss may be pure business speak, as are the terms 'holding company' and 'covered market', but in terms of broad, common understandings the words profit and loss represent the difference between survival and failure. Using this language to describe PPU is illustrative of how a business discourse has pervaded higher education and has become normalised in everyday metaphors and analogies. These terms are immediately recognisable and make perfect common sense, so they do not tend to be questioned.

When asked about the implications of marketisation for PPU Interviewee 1 said:

*“I think they're profound. For example, how PPU seems to be interpreting marketisation is to say there is absolutely no point in*

*trying to play the research game as frankly research is **tied up and it's stitched into a few institutions in the Russell Group** .... basically, it's not worth doing, so institutionally you've then got to absolutely ensure that the **teaching you commit to is of the highest quality**".*

In direct conflict with marketisations claimed aspirations (Browne, 2011 and White Paper 2011a) to make the system more inclusive, it is likely to increase social inequalities. Rather than a free market, where choice and value for money are available to everyone, marketisation is resulting in an increasingly stratified system whereby it is mainly the already advantaged who can afford to attend the most prestigious institutions and pay for the training necessary to enter most economically lucrative professions; the less advantaged can only afford the lower cost, and lower status institutions and courses, or may not be in a position to participate at all (Brown & Carasso, 2013). Although framed as equal, PPU and other post-92 universities are not in positions of strength in an increasingly stratified 'market'.

The paradox is that in a lower status institution such as PPU a tightly controlled hierarchical top-down NPM system of governance and leadership erodes collegiality, collaboration and academic autonomy, all of which are essential for the development of the quality teaching, quality research and product innovation that the Browne Report (2010), the White Paper (2011a) and subsequent legislation demand.

Advocates of marketisation assert that market-based competition drives universities to become more efficient, innovative, and entrepreneurial; leads to a higher quality of research activity and education provision; generates better diversity of provision, and therefore more student choice, and results in a better alignment between university outputs in terms of research and graduates and economic and societal needs (Brown, 2010; White Paper 2011a; Massy, 2004; McGettigan, 2013). An alternative perspective refutes these claims and proposes instead that marketisation has a detrimental effect on higher education's function as a public good. Apart from one

reference to the benefits to students, their families and society generally, there is only small evidence to suggest a view of higher education in the traditional manner of a “public good”, and as mentioned above there is considerable evidence of the cognitive dissonance brought about by the displacement of old logics with the new logics of neoliberalism and NPM.

This section addressed the question: what does marketisation mean for management and leadership practice at PPU? Analysis of a selection of the discourse of the semi-structured interviews suggests that it means a focus on efficiency, innovation, entrepreneurialism, ‘quality’, ‘value for money’, and control, all of which are inherent in the discourse of a marketised university. What is strikingly significant is the pace of NPM implementation in PPU. The difficulties of dealing with change on such a grand scale are evident in the discourse. For an organisation with scant means of resistance, such as PPU, compliance with the imperatives of marketisation inherent in Browne (2010), the White Paper (2011a) and HERA (2017), the consequences are continuous restructuring.

The next section focuses specifically on the implications at the micro level, that is, how the consequences of marketisation at the institutional level shapes and constitutes the working lives of academics and middle managers, and also how it impacts the experience of students. This section focuses on the case of one of the schools embedded in PPU in order to contextualise the discourse of those involved.

#### **8.4 Embedded Case - The Business School**

The changes brought about by the restructurings at PPU, its S188s, and VR schemes involved all schools including The Business School (TBS). TBS experienced an unprecedented level of turbulence in the five years 2012-2017, most of which but not all, can be attributed to NPM restructurings. The turnover of Deans at TBS mirrors that of VCs in PPU, with four Deans since 2011 and currently an interim fifth. Added highlights are mine.

Following the retirement of a longstanding Dean at the end of 2011, a newly arrived Dean invited all school staff to his introductory meeting on 31 January 2012 by saying “*UG and PG reviews’ will enable us to focus on the school’s resources and build...*”. On 2nd February he advised the staff by email that the school **needed** to make savings of £1.4m and **reduce headcount** by 24 posts. Fourteen days later he held a meeting to discuss the school-wide restructure, which was “*necessary in order for PPU to make £7m savings in 2011-12 and £11m in 2012-13*”. Of interest here is that the information is coming piecemeal, first a review, then savings of £1.4m and within two weeks a jump to savings of £18m, which suggests on-going projections of the likely impact of the White Paper (2011a). The words ‘need’, ‘needed’, and ‘necessary’ liberally sprinkled throughout the communication imply the Thatcherite mantra “there is no alternative”, and they also suggest an urgency.

The 24 posts identified for reduction included management, but “*as far as possible frontline staff and student support will be protected*”. The rationale for the new structure, the Dean said, was to “*balance between senior, mid-level and junior colleagues*”, to “*prepare for the REF*”, and to “*focus on recruitment, teaching, learning and quality research*”. Where possible voluntary redundancy would be used to mitigate the **need** for compulsory redundancies. In response to a union query the new Dean could not provide details of school income, only costs. 53 posts were deleted which meant that whole departments disappeared, but 28 new posts were created, which meant ‘only’ 25 academics would lose their jobs. On 16th March the new Dean announced his relocation to Asia.

On 1st May 2012 another new Dean said “*a warm hello, the future is now*”. “*Working together to produce business-ready graduates we will secure a distinctive place, with our minds at the heart of \*the\* ‘world city’*”. He spoke energetically and positively of distributed leadership, professionalism as a watchword, a developmental orientation, and a need to earn respect and



trust, which suggests he perceived they were lacking. However, in an upbeat, friendly, communicative, if lengthy email, he set the tone for a “*clear sense of travel*”, using unadulterated business speak. The 25 redundancies went ahead and throughout the summer information came from HR about ring fenced pools, how the pooling process would work, how to apply for one’s job, selection criteria, new job descriptions and person specifications. By October 2012 staff had been interviewed, reinstated, redeployed or dismissed, and the school settled into an approximation of normal academic activities for year 2012-13.

Towards the end of 2012, actually on 12 December 2012, an email from the Dean informed staff that formal notification had been sent to the trade unions and to the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (DfBIS) proposing staff reductions of 152 staff from TBS. It cannot be claimed that this was fully a result of marketisation or NPM reforms, instead it is related to previous misinformed decisions made beyond the control of TBS, and subsequently referred to as “a bad bounce of the ball, and indeed referred to by a prominent politician as “sloppy paperwork”. However, from the point of view of TBS it meant more job losses, instability and more disruption. The school announced that it needed to act decisively on behalf of the university.

An S188 was immediately forthcoming and the consultation period was extended to Easter 2013, the assumption being that by Easter most of the teaching would be completed. A new VR scheme was launched by the university. A “Twelve12” vision was produced by TBS, which meant that courses would be cut to 12 UG and 12 PG. The reduction in courses is directly linked to marketisation. The Browne Report (2010:31) argued that “improved employability is a key selling point of a course” and that courses that delivered “improved employability” would prosper and those that did not would disappear. Although not explicitly stated “Twelve12” was designed to deliver improved employability. The remainder of the academic year at TBS was devoted to pooling, skills profiling, job descriptions, selection criteria

and job interviews. The Dean spoke of having “*lively, collegial Q & A sessions*” through the medium of ‘brown bag’ lunches on a one-to-one basis, the better to divide and rule. Many were very ‘lively’ but reports of collegiality are few. The irony is that the time normally devoted to the quality teaching demanded by Browne (2011) and the White Paper (2011a) was usurped by the need to defend courses or produce alternative courses, study job descriptions and selection criteria, update skills profiles, rewrite CVs, develop application forms and prepare for interviews.

The structural, personnel and course changes brought about by the 2012-13 restructure saw a period of intense activity to deliver the new ‘vision’ to students. Whole courses featuring new modules were rewritten and validated and buildings refurbished to accommodate diminished numbers of both staff and students. All teaching resources were to be uploaded and accessible to students on-line. As remaining staff settled into their ‘new’ old jobs another S188 was issued by PPU’s HR. In April 2015 the Dean called a meeting to discuss the “*attached S188 consultation outcome*” and looked forward to “*constructive dialogue*”. A new VR scheme was opened and staff were reminded of the university’s Employee Assistance Programme (EAP).

Along with the proposed deletion of “*around 74 FTEs*”, this S188 included the removal of non-core modules, and non-viable modules (using financial indicators); a review of SSR (staff:student ratio) based on a benchmark of 1:35 proposed by an external consultant; a review of workload through formal teaching schedules, and the development of a “managerial” structure “*to rationalise the Principal Lecturer layer*”. Although the combined results of the external consultant’s review showed overall lower costs than sector benchmark, the redundancies went ahead. The timeline for pooling individuals, job descriptions, selection criteria, skills profiling, job applications and interviewing processes ran to the end of July 2015.

At the beginning of the new academic year 2015-16, in reply to a question regarding job security the Dean quoted Jack Welch ex GE CEO as saying “*job security is a satisfied customer*”, cementing his credentials as a neoliberal native. *The review must continue*, he said. Both UG and PG courses were cut for 2016-17. The Dean left the University early in 2016. A new Dean (number 4) arrived, on a one-year contractual basis, whose choice was to be less visible and less communicative until he too left in the Spring of 2018, and was replaced by an interim Head of School. TBS is a shadow of its former self; its staff, and students, reduced by two thirds.

The literature is clear that neoliberalism and marketisation are contingent on the strategies and techniques of NPM re-scaling, restructuring and reorganising reform. Irrespective of ‘sloppy paperwork’, and ‘financial difficulties’, the continuous incremental restructurings at PPU and consequently at TBS are directly linked to marketisation. The literature is clear that it is through restructuring and the discursive practices of NPM strategies and techniques that marketisation is proliferated.

One of the objectives of this research is to:

- explore the implications of marketisation for people who work, teach, and learn in a post-92 university.

A consequence of the restructurings is that many people are no longer with either PPU or TBS. The next section focuses on the implications for those who are still with TBS.

### **8.5 Empirical data from the front line**

Academics, manager-academics and administrators were invited to participate in discussion groups. Discussion groups were also held with first-year and with final-year students. Academic staff in ‘Business Management’, HR, and Marketing’ subject groups were invited by email to discuss how their academic working lives had changed over the previous ten to fifteen years. Manager-academics were invited to a separate

discussion group to discuss the same topic. Students were invited to discuss their choice of institution, their expectations of their university journey, and their perception of themselves as customers. Permission to record discussion groups was granted and transcribed using Gail Jefferson's (2018) notation convention.

The data are grouped into the following themes and analysis integrates input from the interviews and all the discussion groups:

1. the nature and purpose of higher education;
2. students as customers;
3. the working lives of people at TBS.

### **8.5.1 The Nature and Purpose of Higher Education**

As chapter two shows the debate about the nature and purpose of higher education stretches back to its inception in the twelfth century, but more recently the debate centres on whether it should be regarded as a 'public good' or whether it should be seen as a private benefit to students in terms of improved earnings and life chances. The three policy documents that exemplify the marketisation of higher education in England, that is, the Browne Report (2010) the White Paper (2011a) and HERA (2017), emphasise the private economic benefit. Browne (2010) claims that higher education is central for "the nation's strength in the global knowledge based economy" (2010:2) and he later adds that it "helps to create the knowledge, skills and values that underpin a civilised society" (2010:14). He makes it absolutely clear that the "public benefit is less than the private benefit" (2010:21). The focus on the private benefit justifies the recommended funding reforms.

Interviewee 2, a career academic and Senior Executive with 15 years' experience at TBS articulated the changing landscape when he said he saw the purpose of higher education "*in the broader sense as being about opening up opportunities and widening horizons*". He said:

*“Most people in HE have some notion about why students **learn**, why **they come to university** and it underpins their beliefs and values as to whether HE is a means or an end or what. These kinds of ideologies include production approaches, which favour developing aptitudes, skills, attitudes and they’re more production than developmental, compared with transformational approaches which had a heyday about 10 years ago but the transformational ideologies see **education as a tool** and focuses on social justice whereas the current approach is purely instrumental”.*

He is describing what could be considered the normal habitus of higher education where the view of its nature and purpose is developmental change. That view began to narrow as marketisation encroached. In the years since the Rt Hon Charles Clarke MP urged universities “to make better progress in harnessing knowledge to wealth creation” (DfES, 2003:2) higher education began to be reconceptualised as a means to an end. The idea is now widely promoted in the media, school and within families that one must have a degree to enhance their life chances. Marketisation reinforces that logic. For example, interviewee 3 said:

*“the purpose of higher education is to assist people to reach the highest and best place they can get to in terms of their education and to provide **value for money**”[....] “to help their personal professional development...the **benefits** go to them and to their family and also to society”*

‘Value for money’, a nodal point in the policy discourse is notoriously difficult to define in terms of higher education which is a *post*-experience good (Weimer and Vining, 1999:75-76) whose value may not be evident to the individual for many years post completion. ‘Value for money’ is, however, a common business phrase. It encourages students to think of their higher education as an investment in themselves, so that having a degree represents value for money, rather than the learning or knowledge it implies. A group of Level 4 students (first year) all agreed that their ‘university degree’ was:

*“an investment in me, so I expect a **return on my investment**”.*

This comment illustrates how business discourse can both follow the spread of business practice and prepare the ground for them. The view is clearly

linked to the Browne Report (2010:3) which promised a yield of up to 400% on students' investment. This represents a very good business deal in any language. 'Return on investment' is the bedrock of the business world. However, the Level 4 students could not define either, other than to say both phrases, referred to 'getting a job', and 'getting high grades'. The utilitarian reasoning evident in their approach is usually based on a cost-benefit analysis, but utilitarian reasoning has a corrosive effect because the 'degree' becomes an end rather than a means. On the other hand, utilitarian reasoning based on perceived personal benefits can justify the huge debt incurred in studying. Marketisation policy is a role model in utilitarian reasoning.

It could be argued that the *raison d'être* of a business school is to prepare students for the world of profit-making business, so a utilitarian approach is to be expected in TBS, however a narrow instrumental view does not foster the skills needed for a thriving economy, such as cognition, dialogue, reflection, critical thought, imagination, creativity and the speculative testing of ideas essential to build character and confidence. These skills are critical to the discussion of social and democratic issues as well as developing the skills and knowledge required by a particular discipline, and for life. The instrumental focus promoted by marketisation, as determined by Browne (2010) the White Paper (2011a) and also by HERA (2017) elides the integration of these skills.

There is evidence to support the claims made by Browne (2010) that on average graduates are healthier and law abiding, and that in most cases graduates enjoy enhanced earnings, but they also pay more taxes while not consuming equal shares of public services supported by taxation (Scott, 2016:16). Nevertheless, and despite the ubiquity of student charters following the White Paper (2011a) which simultaneously markets a university to potential students while managing the expectations of existing students (Williams 2016:67), the focus of marketisation on the importance

of *having* a degree rather than *being* a learner denotes an intellectual shift from engagement to passivity; it means some students, having made their *choice* of institution may pursue fulfilment of their perceived rights as opposed to struggling with theoretical content. This represents a shift in the nature and purpose of higher education; a shift which diminishes students' overall education.

### **8.5.2 Students as Customers or Consumers**

The debate regarding whether students are customers, consumers or students predates the Browne Report (2010) by decades. In general, customers are said to know specifically what they want, choose on the spot and are “always right”, whereas consumers know generally what they need, may take time to choose on the basis of advice, and expect satisfaction of self-defined needs. The neoliberal assumption is that we are all customers and consumers and the Browne Report (2010) holds to that assumption. However, higher education is usually a one-off transaction, and rather than just students, others, for example parents, can be heavily involved in the decision. The student, or parent, has little knowledge of the product and is unable to test it before buying it, which posits the student as ‘consumer’, however, students cannot know what they need, and although they can now use the huge amount of information available to them as a result of the White Paper (2011a), unlike most other purchases the ‘learning’ students pay for through their fees depends on their own efforts.

Permission was requested and granted to visit the classrooms of two groups of students, one at Level 4 (first- years) and one at Level 6 (final- years) and conduct group discussions. Both groups were too small to be fully representative of all the students at TBS, however their comments are indicative of how students perceive themselves. Both groups were asked how they see themselves in light of claims in the literature that they are customers; that they compare the higher education market before making their choice of institution; their reasons for joining this particular institution

(TBS) and their expectations of their student journey. The particular group Level 4 students is atypical not only in its small size but also in that they had commenced their degree course at the beginning of February and would complete the first year of their degree by the end of July. In other words it was fast-tracked and pressurised which they were aware of when choosing it, so they had to be focused.

The Level 4 students saw themselves as “customers with consumer rights” but the Level 6 students saw themselves as “students with consumer rights”. For example, a Level 6 student said:

*“No, I’m not a customer, I’m a student, but I have **rights**. My education is my life’s platform. I’ve **changed totally** since my first year. I’ve had some **big family issues** to deal with....I’ve had to care for my mum”.*

There is a profound difference between the notion of a customer and a student but irrespective of that difference all of these students perceived their higher education in terms of a commercial transaction thereby recasting the role of academics as service provider. From a cultural perspective students’ perception of themselves in commercial terms contextualises education as a commodity so that what is actually an abstract, intangible, non-material and relational experience is transformed into a visible and instrumentally driven process. This is borne out in the reasons given reason for coming to university, for example, the Level 4 students said:

*“I googled all the institutions. We had to do a **comparison** for school”.*  
(Student 1)

*“I realised I needed a degree to get anywhere on the job front. It’s not about getting a job. I have a job... it’s about getting **the kind of job I want**”.*  
(Student 2)

All students, both Level 4s and Level 6s, agreed that the reason they were in university was to “get a better job”. This echoes the “employability trope in the marketisation literature. The student who said he wanted to get the



"kind of job I want" was the most confident and articulate of the Level 4 group. He said he had chosen this institution (TBS) "*for a very specific reason – I'll be finished in two and a half years*". Of a group of six he was one of two who did not need a loan for their tuition fees. He had worked and paid his fees himself. At face value this comment supports the view that students know what they want, but this particular student was atypical in that he already had a job, and he had saved for his tuition fees. He had the cultural capital to understand the process of choice and could negotiate his way through what the various institutions had to offer. He had chosen TBS because it offered a quicker route through his degree- his focus was clearly on attaining a degree rather than acquiring the knowledge it implied.

Another student without debt had his tuition fees paid by his father and he was living at home. He said: "*....so no pressure! I just have to do well*". The choices of these students are not self-evidently a reflection of the superiority of market systems. Student choice is meaningful only if universities can respond to it. In this instance TBS had responded to student needs by providing the information needed for students to make an informed choice, supports the White Paper's (2011a) insistence on the provision of Key Information Sets (KIS).

Marketisation frames higher education within a discourse structured by the language of 'choice', 'competition', 'quality', and 'private economic benefit', and it also puts great emphasis on 'the student experience'. The White Paper (2011a) used the phrase 'the student experience' five times in its executive summary alone (BIS, 2011: 3-9) so that it has become a central nodal point in policy discourse, as well as in practice. It tends to cement the view of the student as customer. Although not defining what 'the student experience' actually is the Browne Report (2010) maintains that in order to attract students and charge high fees, universities need to provide "a high quality student experience" (2010:10). All Level 4 students expected "a high quality student experience", and they expected that if they "worked hard

they would get high grades.” All of them were aiming for “2:1s or firsts”, but could not say what was required for either grade.

There is a problem with the one-size-fits-all assumption that all students learn in the same manner, but the nature of education is that it is experienced individually and comes without guarantees of firsts or 2:1s. For example, having said he expected to get a 2:1, one student (Level 4) said:

*“I can’t come to all my lectures because I have a job, but I know I can **get the grades** if I catch up on line”.*

Marketisation leads students to believe not only that they can expect 2:1s and firsts but that they have a right to those grades, because they are paying for their degree, which clearly has implications for academics. The White Paper (2011a) repeatedly emphasised that “the student experience” needed to improve but unlike Browne’s Report it states that this includes teaching, assessment, feedback and preparation for the world of work (2011a:4).

Although the concept remains unclear its real significance is in the way it is framed. It has been argued (Sabri 2011:664) that the term ‘the student experience’ homogenises the experience of different students and therefore ignores the extent to which their experiences are “constrained by class, ethnicity, gender, race religion, sexual orientation or responsibility for dependents”, and how much their experiences depend on particular personal relationships with academics and with each other. Sabri (ibid) makes the point that student experience is context dependent, it is likely to be different for the same student in different institutions. The question is: who is to blame if that student does not get the grades he wants if he cannot come to class because of his job and therefore feels he has had a ‘poor’ student experience.

The marketisation logic that the “customer is always right” encourages a culture of complaint which can result in a form of ‘defensive education’ (Furedi, 2011:3) devoted to minimising sources of student dispute or upset

that have the potential to lead to complaint and litigation. Although the White Paper (2011a) claims that feedback empowers students (2011a:6), it empowers students only if they agree with it. Where students do not agree with the feedback they tend to think the academic “does not like me”, or they are “stressed and grumpy” whether they are or not. Where academics are forced to be on the defensive, feedback can be used as a vehicle for validating the efforts of a student rather than pointing out weaknesses in presentation or argument, which contributes to the deprofessionalisation of academics. Empowering students to complain whether through the NSS or otherwise negates them from taking control of their own education, so it reduces the concept of empowerment to a service level agreement. Arguing against the empowerment of the student is career suicide in a marketised university but ‘student empowerment’ has the effect of disempowering and stressing academics.

### **8.5.3 The Working Lives of People at TBS**

A group of six academics ranging in experience from 30 to 3 years at the Business School (TBS) and a group of three managers ranging in experience from 15 to 25 years at TBS were invited by email to discuss their views on how their working lives had changed over the past ten to fifteen years. In addition, two administrators, one with 15 years’ experience and one with 6 months experience, contributed their views via informal conversations. In the interests of confidentiality academics are coded A1...A6 and where necessary other participants coded similarly. Quotes from all participants are interspersed in this section. The data are grouped under the headings:

- (i) workload,
- (ii) responsabilisation,
- (iii) deprofessionalisation, and
- (iv) health and well-being.

The highlighted emphases added throughout are mine.

#### 8.5.4 Workload

The literature on neoliberalism and on NPM in particular, that is, marketisation, simulates in the public sector what markets were claimed to have achieved in the private sector which, as discussed above, has led to a focus on organisational, department and staff performance. For some it has meant executive levels of pay whereas for others it has meant a different and increased workload. Traditional academic workloads focused on student progress, teaching, research, scholarly updating and subject areas or knowledge development, but the academic group expressed tension and dismay at how their workloads had changed over the last five years. As the following comments show some saw the change in their workload as directly related to changes in the conceptualisation of students as customers, and in students' expectations of the investment they were making in their education. There was consensus that along with increased workloads, a "new culture of demand, critique and blame made current working life very different":

*"I'm in academia for over 20 years- yes it's changed. There's more of an emphasis now on **keeping students happy**, sometimes at the **cost of academic standards**. I'm not sure...of the balance between keeping students happy and **maintaining standards**. Is a happy student one that always gets the grades they want or is a happy student one that leaves with some enrichment to their knowledge base that will help them in their future lives. I think the marketisation of HE is all about getting **the bit of paper and getting the job... it's not necessarily about the knowledge attached to it**".*

(Academic 1)

*Student expectation is very different. **A first was very rare** – it meant you were a very good student, you put the time in, you were studying, not just regurgitating. Now, everybody **wants a first**. I'm not so sure if they're worth a first. It used to be elite – now it's not considered elite – **it's become normal**".*

(Academic 3)

*You're not alone. Somewhere they became consumers and customers and that **changes academic lives** massively"*

(Academic 5)

*"They're paying, so it puts **extra pressure on your marking**"*

(Academic 3)

I think that's a **fundamental change**- much more so than just changing career or changing direction or even a cultural change, students questioning your integrity and your professionalism".

(Academic 5)

*"They **want to pass everything; they want value for money** and if you're not giving that **they're coming down on you**, ... I had one the other day and he said 'I'm self-funded so therefore I **need** to swap my dissertation supervisor because I'm not happy'. They feel **entitled**".*

(Academic 3)

*"They **click their fingers** and we are supposed to **do what they want**, how did that happen?. Where did the notion that they had **so much power** come from?"*

(Academic 5)

*"It comes from the notion that **students are customers**, not even clients, and it's perpetuated by the fact that they're paying. In their minds they are customers".*

(Academic 1)

*"The expansion in higher education over the last 10-15 years, now it's close to 40-45% so the **cost to government** and the taxpayer is a major issue, hence the change is in the students themselves having to pay their own fees and by implication it **changes our workloads**".*

(Academic 2)

At interesting point here is that when asked how their working lives had changed the participants immediate focus was on the demands of students. One of the most common criticisms of the 'student as customer' in the literature is that it is alleged to have a negative impact on their self-understanding and their ideas of education; that they "wait for a quick fix; that they expect to receive an education rather than claiming one; that they expect to be acted upon rather than act in pursuit of their goals" (McMillan and Cheney, 1996:9); or that they just "want certification in order to enter the job market at a relative advantage" (McCulloch, 2009:174). The narrative above mirrors these decades old criticism. But, it also provides a snapshot of how marketisation increases student demands and it reflects a perception that the goal was to keep students happy.

Given the focus of the Browne Report (2010) and the White Paper (2011a) on 'quality', 'competition' and choice the view of students as happy is essential for recruitment. The White Paper (2011a) makes it very clear that universities have a duty to keep students happy and the HERA (2017) provides the legislature through which students can seek redress if they are "not happy". They are actively encouraged to report any 'unhappiness', a move which is reinforced by the HERA (2017) and the new OfS.

Happy students contribute positively to the NSS and also to the reputation of the institution, so keeping students happy is a main aim of marketisation. Failing to keep students happy has personal risks for academics. Creating satisfied customers influences university ratings and rankings. There is little doubt that 'keeping them happy' is using them for purposes other than education irrespective of whether they just want the piece of paper or the skills and knowledge that go with it. The requirement to produce happy customers negatively impacts the pedagogical relationship at the heart of 'quality teaching'. For example, it can lead some lecturers to avoid making intellectual demands of their students (Furedi, 2011), and it can replace education with 'entertainment' and thereby lower standards and actually reduce quality.

Government policy presents the student-as-customer or consumer as a positive and inevitable development that empowers them to influence their university experience. As a personal financial investment students feel entitled to make demands. They are told repeatedly in the media and in university advertising what they want, and they are told that they know what they want (1994 Group, 2007). The terms 'high quality', and 'value for money' are not clearly defined, but the notions of personalisation, choice, and responsiveness associated with student centeredness reinforce their conception of their right to get what they want, resulting in a sense of entitlement. Marketisation has positioned the student as a customer with consumer rights which entitles them to question academic integrity and professionalism. The promotion of the student as such can result in

aggression when they don't get what they feel entitled to. As mentioned above "the student experience" and student satisfaction have come to assume a significance greater than learning and academic achievement. Under marketisation the assumption is that by attending university, as distinct from studying, they will access a 'graduate premium workplace'

*"they **question your integrity and your professionalism**. When you went into academia it was your subject [...] your discipline...like marketing, quants, HR or whatever, that called the shots on grading, not the **demands** of random students. I see that as fundamentally different".*  
(Academic 3)

Their degree is their 'ticket' to higher earnings. The sense of entitlement that accompanies a consumer mentality tends to confer rights without responsibilities, and despite the proliferation of 'student charters' in response to the White Paper (2011a), students tend to focus on what the charter says about their entitlements, and less so on what it says about their responsibilities. The mere fact that a charter is needed and considered normal is illustrative of neoliberalism's power to colonise.

On the other hand, student's empowerment to question academics professionalism and hold them to account has a positive element. The current disclosive environment is evidence of a long standing need for accountability in all walks of life. It would be difficult as well as unethical to argue against a robust means of reporting any kind of transgression or abuse of power. However, the promotion of a litigious culture whereby students can complain about their grades and expect academics to be reprimanded not only undermines the trust needed for a collaborative, co-creational pedagogical relationship, it dilutes the authority of the academic and it reduces the possibility that students will acquire a sense of their own authority through education, which in the long term diminishes their contribution to society.

At TBS the qualities of incoming students and the qualities of outgoing students have always been important to the student, to the academic and to the operation and reputation of the university as a whole. What has changed is the power and authority granted to students by marketisation over what counts as a quality education and value for money. As shown above contemporary students compare the market and feel entitled to make demands. The idea of students as consumers fully informed about previous NSS satisfaction ratings and the idea that they have the power to influence change at the institution pits the student and the academic in opposition, thereby damaging the pedagogical relationship. Rather than raising the quality of teaching, as proposed by marketisation, it damages the nature of the asymmetrical learning relationship (Buber, 2002). It encourages students to adopt a distrustful stance towards an academic who does not 'give' them all they need to pass and whose interest they regard as different and distinct from their own, and the pressure it adds increases the academic workload.

Along with administrative duties that increased academic workloads there was general acceptance in the academic group that students appeared to need additional help and support, so that the academic role had expanded into assistance and in some cases counselling. Level 4 students saw the role of academics as:

*“helping me **to get** the best I can get.....to advise and **guide** me through my degree”*  
*(Student 3)*

The perception of academics as advisers and facilitators, rather than teachers with expertise in particular disciplines or in the art of teaching reflects a neoliberal notion that only the market matters. It is to be expected that students in their first year of university need help and advice, but what is interesting is the view of the role of academics, and the extent to which the discourse of students mimics that of government policy. The expectation of some students that the 'materials' they need to pass are readily available and should be immediately accessible to them, rather than hours of study



turns the educational relationship into a power struggle. But, according to students themselves, they are paying customers with consumer rights and if value for money is a 2:1, that is what they want. Inevitably some want it without making too much effort, hence the view that off-the-shelf material will give them a 2:1. The attitude is that “it is my learning for me”, which is the epitome of marketised individualism. There is little doubt that the demand for firsts and 2:1s is market driven. Employers set 2:1 as a benchmark of what they think is an acceptable standard. The problem is that if everyone gets a 2:1 the value of the 2:1 is eroded:

*“if they **don’t get a 2:1 they don’t even get an interview**, so the pressure is on both them and us”. (Academic 5)*

*“...they all want an A+ without evidence of any thinking, critical or otherwise. Universities have introduced 12 point grading scheme where the word **exceptional** is turned into the A+. Suddenly everyone wants to be **exceptional** ...by definition **it’s a stupidity** – exceptional means fewer people can be exceptional...it cannot continue like this –because what happens **when you reach 100% firsts**”. (Academic 4)*

The emphasis on the individual is derived from the neoliberal assumption that humans are self-interested utility maximising individuals, and that their self-interest correlates with the best interests of society, so the market analogy goes beyond competition between institutions; it reaches out to the employment marketplace where a 2:1 determines whether students get an interview or not. The pressure on students to compete for employment is huge, but the privileging of student needs, by giving them grades that are not justified, is damaging to them, to employers and to society as a whole.

Academic 4 makes a good point when he says that the idea that everyone is ‘exceptional’ is a stupidity. It is counter to the concept of individual differences that underpins ‘diversity’ which is heavily promoted by government discourse and by the discourse of TBS; it defeats the purpose of learning as developing skills and knowledge, and it undermines academic freedom and autonomy. The irony is that although the term ‘quality’ is rarely

defined it has come to convey a perceived need to improve performance, which actually subjugates academic work to NPM priorities and leads to such a level of work intensification that there is no time to develop pedagogical relationships of care and trust.

Both the academic and manager-academic discussion groups complained about ever increasing workloads, and particularly following the restructurings in TBS which required the re-allocation of work. There was common agreement in both groups that there was little recognition of the struggle to keep on top of everything. “**They** have no idea what I do”, but ‘they’ is not defined. It is assumed to be senior management because all instructions about work, scheduling, teaching and so on, originate with senior management. Both groups complained that “*following each restructure the work has to be picked up by someone else*”. They recognised that the number of students was diminishing while at the same time the workload is increasing because of “fewer academics”, increasing demands from students and from the centre, and tighter deadlines. Academic 6 said:

***“there’s less students but there’s more and more and more work...”***

This comment exemplifies the contradictory nature of marketisation. Where academic headcount has been systematically reduced through NPM restructurings over a number of years, the expectation of efficiency *and* of high quality teaching are contradictory goals. In addition, there is more and more work because the White Paper 2011a) makes it very clear that Student Charters will identify areas in which academic and academic support provision needs to be addressed, including the academic advice and guidance provided for students, opportunities for students to undertake activities which will enhance their employability, student participation in academic development and access to a range of services including careers support, counselling, health and welfare advice, accommodation and finance advice. No matter how good a university is at this element of service,

there is scope for improvement, particularly in terms of employability. Where there is limited resources as a result of repeated restructurings efficiency comes to mean employing underpaid, part-time casual teachers, or where the 'budget' does not allow for part-time staff, efficiency means doubling or trebling the number of students in a classroom, which defeats government policy on adhering to Gibbs 'Dimensions of Quality', is counterproductive to quality teaching, and doubles or trebles the academic workload.

### 8.5.5 Responsibilisation

Neoliberalism emphasises individual responsibility and as a result marketisation sees the individual as responsible for their own learning and development. Self-development is evidence of entrepreneurialism and is hallmarked by free choice, personal initiative, and innovation whereby job training and career progression are the responsibility of the individual. The discourse of responsabilisation including terms like 'results', 'improvement', and 'opportunity' are utilised to empower individuals to take charge of themselves and their own circumstances so that one is responsible for their own modules, their own students and their own career, but it forecloses sharing, collegial decision making, or cooperative work. The issue of individual responsibility is evident in the following:

*"On my first module 25 years ago 80% of students failed... but nobody talked about it...20% pass 80% fail... nobody said you can't do that". I was free to exercise my judgement and I was responsible only for my students. Now, I have **no freedom** as an academic and **I'm responsible for everything**". (Academic 4)*

"other universities also make demands but they **train and develop** their staff, and help them to deliver... we have nothing".  
(Academic 5)

The paradox is that with NPM outcomes are planned, predicted and risk managed. Although academics are 'responsibilised' for everything, they cannot be trusted to get on with it, to decide, deliver or evaluate on their own. In TBS academics are told what to include in formative assessment and when to conduct it; what to include in summative assessment and when

to conduct it, and how to mark it. The White Paper (2011a) lays out how classes are to be arranged, the size of cohorts and the length of lectures. In addition academics are obliged to upload their resources on-line, so that students who don't attend class have access. A culture of rigid NPM is reflected in the comment:

*“All the years I've been at this university the VC was someone who belonged to the university and that's it. You **weren't expected to attend chats**... He would never consider telling me how to mark a piece of work. Whether to give it a 2:1 or a first. Now, in terms of responsibility the biggest person, the **highest person** in this university **gets involved in my way of teaching**. They need to intervene even at the lowest level whereas before it used to be, as long as you're doing what you're supposed to be doing **I'll let you get on with it**”.*  
(Academic 4)

The obvious contradiction is that academics are expected to attend chats with the VC who himself perceives a need to remain distant but yet gets involved in telling academics how to mark students work. NPM micro-management and rule-bound practices results in a hollowing out of the academic world. This comment is further evidence of the schizophrenic nature of marketisation which is predicated on the notion of government withdrawal while at the same time intervening at even the lowest level. The White Paper (2011a) demands this level of accountability and dictates what is acceptable behaviour but it contributes to the deprofessionalisation of academics.

### **8.5.6 Deprofessionalisation of Academics**

Academic identity is a socially constructed, fluid, continuous and reflexive process, described by Henkel (2009) as a synthesis of internal self-definition and the external definitions of oneself offered by others. The dominant influence on academic identity, that is, the discipline, is reinforced by the processes and procedures of the 'home' institution as much as by status in the relevant discipline, so that the identity of the academics in general and also in TBS, is defined to a large extent by what they teach.

Expanding responsibilities to include increasing administration, NSS and DLHE results emerged as a concern. The academic group expressed the view that in the shifting environment of repeated restructurings they are expected to teach more and more disciplines with which they are not familiar. Not only does this increase their workload it also further diminishes the power of their professional disciplines. Both groups, academics and managers, defined themselves as 'academics' first and foremost, and all duties outside of those directly related to teaching, and research as unwelcome impositions:

*"I want to help students, that's my job, I don't see myself as a service provider".*  
(Academic 5)

*"to a certain degree my allegiance is to the institution because of its values, ...but I'm here because of the student... my allegiance is to the student.... I am an academic so I am here for the student".*  
(Academic 1)

*"In this university allegiance is not for the salary, or the institution but for the students – we have BME students and the satisfaction is in helping them. It is what we do as academics".*  
(Academic 6)

This comments are interesting in light of a perceived lack of bonding by PPU senior management. However, both groups direct their energies towards the students instead of to the institution or to the element of their work over which they have no control. It suggests a degree of alienation towards the institution which is exacerbated by the focus on the restricted control over their working lives. As the squeeze to reduce academic staff tightens, the sense of identity through a specific discipline weakens, and these excerpts suggest that the fragmentation of their work loosens the connections binding them with the institution so that the connection with the student takes centre stage. The academic group agreed that their role had changed beyond recognition and to a significant degree by the amount of administration work they now had to undertake. For example:

*"When I finish class I'm expected to chase students to find out why they didn't attend their class... how can I do this when I'm teaching back-to-back classes".*  
(Academic 3)

*“a lot of what academics are having to do **should sit with administration**; it would be **more effective** and **efficient for them** and it would be more effective and **efficient for us**”.*

*(Academic 1)*

*“I have to work **most evenings**, you know that because you’re there too, and I work **most weekends** just to keep up”.*

*(Academic 2)*

The focus on quality teaching contradicts the increasing amount of administrative work cascaded to academics. Work that was normally undertaken by administrators, including all manner of reporting has become the responsibility of academics. Tasks such as programme planning and reminding students to re-register have become the responsibility of academics. There was considerable scepticism in the academic group regarding administration:

*“There used to be the **hidden army** that kept everything going. Now with marketisation, administration has taken on a bigger role of monitoring and policing. Student Journey behaves like they understand the market, money and the student, better than these academics [...]. Student journey used to belong to academics. What do they do now... they manage the list and they manage the numbers. **Staff reduction** is taking place across the academic estate ... but those controlling the numbers are very present on Academic Board. If you thought Academic Board was for academics. No, academic board is now about **finance**”.*

*(Academic 4)*

The centralisation of the administrative function is a core element of NPM reforms but centralisation is not without its difficulties. For example, while the essential elements are standardised, controlled and necessarily consistent, adaptation to the local environment typical of a peripheral school can be glacially slow, and standardisation and consistency can quickly become red tape. The hidden army referred to in this comment refers to what used to be registry staff but is now renamed ‘Student Journey’ in keeping with the White Paper (2011a). However, at TBS ‘Registry’ were not exempt from the many restructurings; at the beginning of the 2017-18 academic year, all registry staff were replaced by agency temps who

struggled to understand systems, courses, regulations, students and staff. The implications were wide ranging. For example:

*“I came in new and I don’t know policies and procedures and you go to the Hub and they’re also new and **they don’t know anything** and the student is expecting some information and they’re sent to me and I have to send them back and they’re going round in circles. I needed help with students but the hub was a nightmare, **no tacit knowledge**. You’re stuck in the middle between the university not providing a service and the students expecting a service”. (Academic 3)*

Replacing expertise (at the ‘front desk’) with agency temps without the requisite knowledge or where to find it, requires the work to be cascaded elsewhere, in this case to academics thereby increasing their workload. Eventually boundaries between academic and non-academic work become less clear. It is fraught with contradiction and paradox. One of which is that front desk type roles are much diminished in TBS there is a massive expansion in the level above, all of whom are ‘managers’ and none of whom see actual interface with students as part of their role. A senior manager in TBS with 25 years’ administration experience said:

*“I **manage the people** who do the admin. I manage the budget for the school; **there are policies and procedures** and I make sure they’re followed; that plans are executed and that **deadlines are met**. I don’t do the timetabling, but I make sure the timetables are done, that exams are staffed with invigilators, that room bookings are done, and that deadlines are met. Since I joined PPU it has changed beyond recognition, I am now part of the Wider Management Group which is part of the ‘Governance’ team. **I report into the centre**, and my boss reports to the Chief Operating Officer. Every day the **pressure from the centre for reports and updates** seems to increase. I have a dotted line responsibility to the Head of the School. **I am not responsible for students**, everything relating to students is the responsibility of Student Journey”.*

This is a good example of ‘centralised decentralisation’ where objectives and planning are done in the centre. NPM sees management as rational and value neutral. With its origins in scientific management, it places great faith in planning and objective setting as a means of improving performance. The underpinning decision-making is perceived as entirely logical and rational. The management role becomes one of monitoring and auditing.

From the perspective of NPM, managers are neutral professionals who can be trusted to manage in an impersonal way and in the institution's best interests, where decision-making is centralised in the hands of professional and objective managers. Because marketisation treats the whole notion of management as value neutral its principles are unquestioned as common-sense truths. Looking after students is someone else's role.

An administrator with limited experience at TBS and who arrived following a restructure at the end of 2017, said of her experience:

"I came in as a temp. It was **ridiculous** what they expected me to do, so I walked out. They called me back and offered me an internship – I have a degree, I said no thanks. I **negotiated** a long-term contract. It's a bit chaotic here - they operate a matrix management system ...which is very strange in administration. I'm pulled in different directions all the time...but if they mess with me **I'll just walk**".

Another administrator with eighteen years' experience in PPU said the administrative function had changed beyond description. His job was now "*more concerned with monitoring than anything else*". The use of interns and temps and the resultant loss of expertise and tacit knowledge lowers morale and has a negative impact on everyone, including the interns and temps themselves.

In terms of research and the production of public knowledge academics felt they had been left behind.

*"Other institutions want high quality research and high quality teaching, but **they train and develop their staff** to meet these objectives- we have nothing – we have been **left behind**".*

(Academic 5)

Over the last five years academic staff at TBS have not been encouraged to undertake research, which is in keeping with the view that the strategic direction was a focus on teaching. Academic 3, who was new to TBS was delighted with this and described the insistence on Four Star research papers at her previous institution as "*horrendous pressure*", "*bleak*", and



something you “*cannot control*”. As a post-doctoral researcher she had endured six zero-hours contracts while being promised tenure following the publication of her next paper. She was told repeatedly at her previous workplace to work ‘smarter not harder’ which elides the very purpose of research.

The message that unless it leads to profit it is futile and a waste of time and money discourages an interest in research, just as much as institutional pressure to produce papers on what one is told to research rather than one’s choice. As mentioned above responsibility for their own research is left to the individual, and despite feeling ‘left behind’, there was common agreement that the pressure to secure research grants was incompatible with heavy teaching loads and that research would “*not be possible given such a heavy teaching workload, but while the teaching workload is silly, it’s a different kind of pressure*”.

### **8.5.7 Health and Well-Being**

Those in the academic group described a struggle between individual efforts to provide what students needed and institutional pressure to provide what the centre demanded. Some complained of bullying, harassment, high anxiety and stress related illness. There was common agreement that their working lives depended on the personalities or personal preferences of their line managers. There followed something of a ‘moanfest’ culminating in agreement that: “*some managers do a lot, some do very little, some don’t know how to manage people- they **divide and rule** and manage by **spreadsheet***”. They said:

*“...the problems and pressures of marketisation ...are in the middle.  
There is a **lack of transparency** at the middle.*

Management by spreadsheet is in keeping with the impersonality and objectivity of NPM. The ‘lack of transparency’ expressed by this group points to a lack of trust and a sense of injustice. A sense of exclusion in the academic group was palpable which is unusual as they were all on full time

contracts and many of them had been with the school for over 25 years and are experts in their field but were anticipating the “*next restructure this coming Autumn*”, which is a reflection of the instability engendered by NPM, and is reflected in the following comment:

*“for me.... in the last five years lots of my colleagues have left and gone elsewhere and are doing well, but **some have passed away**... The **stress of workload**, of **not being told what’s happening**, of having modules changed or removed at the last minute... write a paper for this...do a conference for that... “. (Academic 6)*

Marketisation expects academics to complete a greater number of responsibilities more quickly than ever while also performing numerous administrative roles. An unfortunate corollary is that one way through more work is to work individually so as not to ‘waste time’ consulting others, which not only reduces engagement with others but also lessens opportunities to either share or democratise one’s work. There have been a number of premature deaths in TBS over the last five years and Academic 6 sees this as directly related to high levels of stress.

Poor communication contributes to stress and to the intensification of workloads. The narrative of ‘excellence’, which has now become naturalised, requires a greater amount of academic effort to ensure it is justified. All students are told they are, or have to be, excellent, which in itself requires ever more metrics to demonstrate that ‘excellence’ is being achieved through teaching and support. Student demands for high grades also bring anxiety and stress:

*“...I marked a student at 68% and he couldn’t understand why he didn’t get a first. He was quite aggressive. That stays in my mind now when I’m marking... you’re **conscious of your marking**,...it’s a constant source of stress”. (Academic 3)*

A related contradiction is that ‘student centred’ learning needs only facilitation skills rather than teachers with expertise in the subject, an assumption that echoes the NPM belief that individuals are interchangeable, resulting in work related stress and anxiety.

What is interesting is that the manager discussion group echoed the views of the academics regarding 'excessive workloads' and responsabilisation, and made complaints very similar to those made by the academic group regarding the 'lack of transparency' and extreme pressure from their line managers and from the centre, as well as the difficulty of managing the academics that reported to them. An experienced manager with 15 years' experience said:

*"I report to the Dean, I found the last few years very difficult ...blame, shame and... midnight emails. There is an astonishing level of depersonalised bullying... I'm torn between cascaded **administration from the centre, teaching and managing**. I'm trying to **juggle teaching at the same time I'm doing admin and looking after my students...and every email that comes from Student Journey carries a threat**".*

The contradiction between the neoliberal approach to responsibility and lack of empowerment is evident in this comment even though this level of management is the one above the majority of academics. This excerpt highlights the hidden professional ethic at the core of academic work that is invisible to those who neither appreciate nor understand the nature of academic work. Student Journey invariably include the term "this is a reasonable request" in their communication, which is a reference to employment contracts and is generally perceived as a threat.

Interestingly there was common agreement in both academic and manager discussion groups that both the university and the school lacked any kind of vision for the future. The issues of short-termism and 'platform transfer', whereby VC's only stay for a short period and then move to another institution, were discussed. Academic 4 said:

*"With marketisation the average number of years per VC per institution has decreased,...how can you talk **about vision** if you only plan to stay in the university for three or four years- that's a **short-term vision. That's not a long-term vision**. The last 3 VCs came in, took huge salaries and left within 3- 4 years. The mentality is that it's better to be **on the move** all the time....so play a game in one university and play a different game in another university and the salary increases all*

*the time. It has nothing to do with students or learning – it has to do with **salaries and pensions***".

This is an interesting comment particularly in light of the LFHE research on university leadership in chapter four. That all participants felt the need for a 'vision' for both the university and the school reflects the frequent changes in VC and Dean at TBS level.

There was a heated debate on exorbitant VC salaries which was perceived as a reward to the VC for implementing NPM government policies. However, that issue is well documented elsewhere, the salient point here is the overwhelming desire for:

*" a VC with vision and someone with management experience to lead TBS", "I want a leader who doesn't tell me how to mark... I want a manager who tells the student that their tutor knows them better than Student Journey, one who discourages them from going the litigation route". "I want to be left alone to teach my students", and, "I want to bring back the intellectual power base that has disappeared"*.

This comment sums up the mood of the academic and manager-academic discussion groups. The paradox is the strength of the perceived need for vision in light of the wealth of government policy and mission statements that proffer clear vision along with prioritising performance and outcome indicators.

It is important to note that this exploration of marketisation involves a small sample in the form of a single case study from one higher education institution. However, although there is evidence of both business and academic language in the data, and with the exception of a long discussion on grades and the top-down imposition of grades, the discourse of 'customers', 'managers', 'excellence', 'value for money' 'high quality', and 'metrics' is in greater evidence than the discourse of deans, students, courses, creativity, learning, studying, debate, knowledge or intellectual argument.

## 8.6 Chapter summary

This chapter examined how macro level discourse is proliferated through material practices at both the meso and micro levels and the implications for people who teach work and learn under the marketisation of higher education. Despite the small sample, PPU and TBS could be claimed to be textbook examples of the implementation of neoliberal and NPM ideologies. The key findings attest to the transformation of the educational character, meaning and operation in the institution. NPM restructurings have transformed the traditional structure, culture and operation of the institution.

As shown in chapter seven the discourse at the macro level, that is, in the Browne Report (2010, the White Paper, 2011a) and HERA (2017) is exclusively financial and business like and this is followed through at the meso level, and results in frustration, anxiety and alienation for those who teach and work at the micro level. At face value students are beneficiaries of marketisation, but it is questionable whether the promised return on investment is worth improved information, huge debts and inflated grades.

At the senior level in PPU the focus is on measurement, on-going restructurings, and the metrics of the NSS, the DLHE and the TEF. In keeping with the government policy of both Browne (2010 and the White Paper (2011a), learning and development as the purpose of higher education have been subordinated to 'employability' and the need for high grades to get a job. Students with consumer rights position academics as helpmeets and service providers which erodes the pedagogical relationship and ultimately damages the students' education. The data suggest more than a degree of trauma as a result of repeated restructurings and ever increasing workloads in the face of shifting NPM priorities and poor management skills.

One of the most interesting findings in this small sample is that there is no business development, no staff development, no training at all and no

attempt to explain why PPU should be a university of choice for either students or staff.

The next chapter continues the discussion on the findings.

## CHAPTER NINE

### DISCUSSION

This research was concerned with exploring the consequences and implications of marketisation for the people who work, teach and learn in a post-92 university. Although the sample was small the findings suggest that the consequences and implications echo those increasingly documented in the literature on the marketisation of higher education. In addition to description and interpretation in the last chapter this chapter explains the findings in light of the literature.

#### 9.1 The Discourse of Marketisation

The dominant discourse of marketisation is government policy and legislation, particularly the Browne Report (2010), The White Paper (2011a) and the HERA (2017). At PPU the dominant discourse is also government policy but it is mediated by NPM discursive strategies and techniques. As made very plain in the White Paper (2011a) PPU's Senior Executive has no alternative but to change if it wants to attract students. As shown in chapter seven marketisation frames the individual in terms of market value and economic growth. Four decades ago Robinson (1968) argued in support of polytechnics that students should "come before subjects, before research, before demands of employers and before demands of the state" (1968:117) but he also warned that the most illiberal education is the one that makes a student "mere fodder for the industrial machine". Hanlon (2016) makes the point that the focus of neoliberalism is a new form of subject subjectivity and this transfers into the focus of marketisation which is fodder for the economic machine. A narrow focus on 'muck and brass' (ibid:116) eschews Briggs (1961) notion of producing people who are "able to compare, to relate and to judge"(p60), and Anderson's (2006) notion of producing "all round citizens" (S12). A primary benefit of an educated workforce is society itself

but marketisation's emphasis on individual financial investment and students' entitlement to 'value for money' ill serves either society or democracy, instead it serves only the utilitarian purpose of advancing individual wealth and the country's economy. PPU's discourse is a mirror image of the discourse of consolidated marketisation.

Marketisation constrains and homogenises higher education by pressurising all higher education institutions to standardise their courses and 'align' their grading systems, so that a particular grade will be recognised by potential employers who demand it as evidence of 'excellence', a word that has become so overused as to be a meaningless "stupidity". Extreme homogenisation is evident in TBS where the grading system dictates how to mark and what to mark, thereby eviscerating academic professionalism and leading students to expect 'A' grades irrespective of their effort, or lack of it. Teaching to the grades means intellectual demands are lowered (Williams, 2011) and having to comply with instructions to deliver 'firsts' and '2:1s' in order to 'align with rival institutions' reduces quality, which is a paradox given that the word 'quality' is a major determinant of marketisation.

Although the nature and purpose of higher education have been debated throughout its history they are made very clear in both the Robbins (1963) and Dearing (1997) reports. The text and context of marketisation is controlled by government and as shown in table 9.1 the documents that consolidate and accelerate it avoid discussion of the meaning or character of higher education and focus instead on implementing reform in the sector so that it will do its bidding, and promote the student as an investor.



Report	Purpose of Higher Education
<b>Robbins Report (1963)</b>	<p>To do justice to the complexity of things, it is necessary to acknowledge a plurality of aims. Its purpose is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• instruct in skills suitable to play a part in the general division of labour.</li> <li>• teach in such a way as to promote the general powers of the mind.</li> <li>• produce not mere specialists but rather cultivated men and women.</li> <li>• impart students on a plane of generality that makes possible their application to many problems;</li> <li>• balance between teaching and research</li> <li>• the search for truth is an essential function of higher education and to partake of the nature of discovery. The world and higher education will suffer if ever they cease to regard it as one of their main functions.</li> <li>• transmit a common culture and common standards of citizenship. A proper function of HE is to provide a background of culture and social habit upon which a healthy society depends.</li> </ul>
<b>Dearing Report (1997)</b>	<p>The purpose of education is life-enhancing: it contributes to the whole quality of life. This recognition of the purpose of higher education in the development of our people, our society, and our economy is central to our vision. In the next century, the economically successful nations will be those which become learning societies: where all are committed, through effective education and training, to lifelong learning. Its purpose is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• develop as a learning society through teaching at its highest level, the pursuit of scholarship and research;</li> <li>• encourage and enable all students - whether they demonstrate the highest intellectual potential or whether they have struggled to reach the threshold of higher education - to achieve beyond their expectations;</li> <li>• be at the leading edge of world practice in effective learning and teaching;</li> <li>• sustain a culture which demands disciplined thinking, encourages curiosity, challenges existing ideas and generates new ones;</li> <li>• be part of the conscience of a democratic society, founded on respect for the rights of the individual and the responsibilities of the individual to society as a whole.</li> </ul>
<b>MARKETISATION Browne Report (2010)</b>	<p>There is no stated purpose. HE matters because it</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• helps to create the knowledge skills and values that underpin a civilised society;</li> <li>• transforms the lives of individuals;</li> <li>• drives innovation and economic transformation.</li> </ul>

<p><b>White Paper (2011a)</b> <i>'Students at the Heart of the System'</i></p>	<p>There is no stated purpose of HE. Rather the focus is on implementing reform.          “English higher education has a high reputation for scholarship and research, which have a fundamental value in themselves, and for turning these into valuable innovation which can change the world. We have world-class research universities as well as universities which are excellent in other ways such as through their contribution to their local economy or the opportunities they provide for mature students.</p>
<p><b>HERA (2017)</b> <i>Higher Education and Research Act</i></p>	<p>There is no stated purpose of HE. It is:</p> <p>“An Act to make provision about higher education and research; and to make provision about alternative payments to students in higher or further education”.</p> <p>The Act establishes:          The Office for Students, OfS;          UK Research &amp; Innovation, UKRI;          A new regulatory framework for HE.</p> <p>“The ACT gives the OfS the power to operate a new Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), This will introduce stronger incentives for universities to raise teaching quality and support students into employment. Through the reputational and financial incentives associated with a TEF award, providers will be encouraged to raise their standards. The TEF will highlight areas of variable practice encouraging providers to address areas where there is room for improvement. The TEF will, for the first time, link the funding of teaching in higher education to quality and not simply quantity – a principle that has been long established for research”.</p> <p>“The Act is designed to deliver greater competition and choice that will promote social mobility, boost productivity in the economy and ensure students and taxpayers receive value for money from their investment in higher education, while safeguarding institutional autonomy and academic freedom. It will help ensure that everyone with the potential to benefit from higher study can access relevant information to help them make the right choices from a wide range of high-quality universities and benefit from excellent teaching that supports their future productivity. It will also strengthen the UK’s world-class capabilities in research and innovation” (DfBIS/16/285).</p>

Table 9.1: The discourse of the purpose of higher education.

Quality and choice are synonymous with a market ethos and consumer ideals of value for money. They are key drivers for PPU. Quality, based on its NSS definition of how students tick boxes on subjective statements including: “*staff are good at explaining things*”, “*I have sufficient advice and support*”, “*staff have made the subject interesting*” and “*overall satisfaction with the quality of the course*”, is used as a determinant of survival. The mobilisation of change through choice is also one of the many contradictions and paradoxes evident across the entire corpus of marketisation in relation to the purpose of higher education. The words ‘choice’ and ‘mobility’ dominate the formal documentation at PPU and at TBS.

The ideology of neoliberal individualism is evident across the whole corpus of marketisation. For example, “*we want courses and services to become more personalised*” (DfES, 2005:8. DfBIS 2011a:6). Students’ insistence that “*I need high grades*”, and “*I want value for money*” fosters a mode of teaching that privileges employability and entrepreneurship which itself encourages and promotes self-interest and displaces individual responsibility. It changes the relationship between students and academics whereby academics become ‘professional’ advisers and brokers of services. Even if not providing them themselves, their new ‘administrative’ tasks include helping students make decisions about what is available which reinforces students’ views of them as service providers. The implications of marketisation are far reaching, some of which are discussed below.

## **9.2 Consequences for PPU**

The traditional view of higher education was structured around the idea of a liberal discourse of ‘truth’, ‘learning’ ‘criticality’ ‘culture’ and ‘moral growth’ with education seen as having values of its own and not just to society but which would eventually benefit society (Amsler, 2013). The current marketised view is structured around an economic view which is framed in a discourse of ‘economy’, ‘prosperity’ ‘investment’ and ‘employability’.

These ideas are not exclusive of each other but they are in struggle for hegemony and this struggle is apparent in the discourse at both PPU and at TBS.

Although constituted as a corporate in accordance with Jarratt's (1985) view the data suggest that PPU's culture was more in line with a traditional collegium until the Browne Report (2010) the White Paper (2011) and the imposition of NPM restructurings and measurement techniques. PPU's current focus is measurement, profit, competition, student choice, and the NSS, the DLHE and the TEF in a continuously restructuring, lean, flat structure where power is concentrated at the top and staff are kept at a distance but expected to do more with less. There is an unprecedented focus on metrics; anything that can be measured is measured, particularly if it contributes to league tables:

*"...the NSS and cost control are hard measures... institutional morale is a soft measure...but it can be measured". (Interviewee 3).*

Institutional morale is not helped by a remote Executive but Shattock (2013) has spoken of the distancing and remoteness of Boards of Governors and Executive as a consequence of marketisation. In discussing the Robbins Report (1963), Barnett (1999) complained that the higher education system was dislocated from the economy that it served, a theme that recurred in the Dearing Report (1997), and appears to be continued with marketisation. The power in PPU is very clearly at the top, but Handy (1993) makes the point that centralised power is unstable and that it risks isolation from reality. There is evidence of isolation from reality in the decision to replace relevant expertise with agency staff or interns, resulting in negative consequences for the institution, its staff and its students.

The discourse of measurement is all pervasive. It has usurped the traditional discourse of learning in a culture marked by collegiality. The new culture and structure are in keeping with NPM's discursive strategies and techniques and was described as toxic in group discussions because all

principles of *noblese oblige* appear to have been abandoned and staff are treated as disposable resources. Marketisation has reinforced the notion that the nature and purpose of higher education is purely instrumental with a narrow focus on investment 'by me for me'. The data reflect the struggle between the traditional view of higher education and its more recent politically and economically structured manifestation.

### **9.3 Implications for the People who Teach and Work at TBS**

The implications of marketisation for academics include increased workloads, increased personal responsibility, increased pressure, increased self-audit, increased frustration, but decreased professionalism, decreased authority, decreased job stability, and heightened anxiety. Braverman's (1974) word 'proletarianisation' is useful to describe the loss of freedom and autonomy experienced by academics in TBS, which includes the fragmentation of work, the evisceration of professionalism by top-down instructions on how to assess and how to mark, and the need for compliance with increasing NPM reform resulting in the intensification of work practices. As with the proletarian worker replaced by the machines of the industrial age, marketisation increasingly reduces academics to the conditions of waged labour.

The academics in TBS, whether in management roles or not, found themselves pulled in opposite directions between the demands of central administration, the demands of students they teach, and 'massive workloads'. Intense workloads and accounts of depersonalised bullying through timetables and direct bullying through email contribute to feelings of powerlessness and to high levels of anxiety and stress which in turn lead to ill health and disengagement, as in the comment 'I don't care anymore, I'm retiring next year'. The demands of a changing, complex higher education environment are not without their challenges, but they are exacerbated by pressure from students as well as pressure to meet government objectives.

Archer's (2007:7) work on the relationship between structure and agency is helpful in analysing some of the contradictions in the empirical data. Her work shows that the structures within which individuals operate either constrain or enable the activities they pursue and their perception of themselves and the development and maintenance of their professional identities. She suggests that reflexive engagement with the various constraints and enablements an individual encounters leads them to adopt a strategic, evasive or subversive stance over time.

This study found a mixture of those three stances; for example, some people are strategic in complying with heavy workloads in order to avoid censure; some adopt evasive tactics, such as refusing to attend senior management chats in order to cope with a heavy workload, and some are subversive in either opting out or over delegating.

The high levels of anxiety and stress experienced by TBS staff are consequences of tactics employed to implement NPM reform. The instability of repeated restructurings incite anxiety. As discussed in chapter four, inciting fear and anxiety through blame and shame as a means of justifying and mobilising change is a common NPM tactic. The notion that '*there is no alternative*' to S188s cutting yet more jobs and projecting the blame for low NSS scores, or poor student recruitment, onto academics who have little or no control over either of these phenomena results in the kind of anomie evident in both the academic and manager discussion groups.

#### **9.4 Implications for Research at PPU**

The research office at PPU was a relatively recent casualty of NPM restructuring. Despite Crosland's (1965) view that the primary purpose of the polytechnics was to 'provide teaching' there had previously been an active research stream in PPU and in TBS. The intensification of teaching workloads contributed to the demise of research, making it a casualty of restructuring at TBS. The three pillars of the academy have traditionally

been teaching, research, and service (Bourner, 2008) so severing the link between teaching and research neglects the symbiotic relationship between them, and fundamentally changes the nature of both the academic profession, and of higher education itself (Jenkins, Healey, & Zetter, 2007).

### **9.5 Implications for Students at TBS**

It cannot be claimed that there is universal agreement as to whether students are customers or not, but all students were aware of their rights as consumers. While students at TBS were quite comfortable being defined as either customers or students, academics were not happy to be seen as service providers even though students' perception of the academic role was to "provide help and advice".

The narrative of 'excellence', which has now become naturalised, requires a greater amount of academic effort to ensure it is justified and it requires ever more metrics to demonstrate that 'excellence' is being achieved. A related contradiction is that 'student centred' learning needs only facilitation skills rather than teachers with expertise in the subject, an assumption that echoes the bureaucratic belief that individuals are interchangeable. The point is that the issue of students as customers is anything but straightforward.

Williams (2013) notes that the construction of the student as consumer is a complex and multifaceted outcome of wider cultural, social, and political changes. Marketisation presents the student as consumer in the media and government policy as a positive development that empowers them to influence change at their institutions and this is borne out in the views of students at TBS. The portrayal of the student as a consumer contributes to the erosion of higher education as a public good, and supports Lynch's (2014) view of a deliberate attempt by government to erase the differences between providing a service at cost and only providing a service if it is profitable

## 9.6 Resistance to Marketisation

A general perception in the literature is that the marketisation of higher education occurred largely unexamined and unopposed. Academics have been accused of adopting practices that were not always in their best interests, and of colluding in their own oppression by closing their eyes to the real situation (Reed, 2002a). In order to resist something one must be aware of it and neoliberalism in general, and certainly in PPU and TBS, neither announced nor introduced itself. It crept into every aspect of life under the veil of 'marketing' and tends to be accepted at face value as denoting branding and advertising activities. It is worth noting that the word 'market' appears twice in the Browne Report (2010) and then only in relation to the Market Transition Fund (p50) and the taught Postgraduate market (p55); only twice in the White Paper (2011a), and not at all in the HERA (2017).

Although recent literature reveals the more realistic elements of both neoliberalism and NPM, where change is proposed as a solution to the existential threat of declining student numbers and rising staff costs, as was the case in PPU and TBS, criticality is deemed disloyal and is perceived to be a risky strategy. There was common agreement in the academic and manager discussion groups that even constructive dissent was not welcome.

In keeping with the neoliberal reliance on discursive closure, dissent is seen as being out of alignment with institutional values. There was recognition in the discussion groups that "many people opted to leave higher education as an act of resistance to marketisation but have had to sign compromise agreements in order to get their redundancy payment". Opting to leave higher education altogether is one way of resisting incessant self-audits and the continuous degradation of higher education, but it perpetuates the cost cutting goal through the dispensability of individuals and the proliferation of zero-hours contracts. Zero-hours contracts preclude



collective action, and responsibility without power imposes self-restraint so that organised dissent becomes impossible.

Despite efforts by various unions to resist the more drastic changes at PPU and TBS, attempts were neutralised apparently by senior management. Resistance from the main union (UCU) had some success against cutting pensions at the older universities, but there appears to be no overall strategy for the universal defence of higher education against marketisation. Traditionally PPU and TBS had very strong union representation and although there is still considerable union membership there is little union representation in PPU and none at all in TBS. In true neoliberal fashion union representatives have been 'freed' from their duties at TBS.

The depth of the transformation that has occurred in marketisation's name, the displacement of people, fragmentation of work, individualised responsibility and subordination to the centre produced through NPM logics has reworked the internal worlds of PPU and TBS. Compliance with new forms of work have produced an intensification of work processes. Practices of collaborative decision-making have been displaced by corporate management. The combination is a simultaneous intensification and degradation of academic work which serves both the student and society badly.

## **9.7 Chapter summary**

The most powerful and dominant discourse of marketisation is that of government policy which is proliferated at both the meso and micro levels. TBS is embedded in the intertextuality and interdiscursivity of PPU and is a creation of its environment in that it relies on PPU's implementation of marketisation for its survival. The hegemonic control of marketisation in PPU has weakened the traditional values on which higher education depended because its focus is so narrow. There is no questioning the need for efficiency in terms of maximising the use of available resources in every

institution but the difficulty is that marketisation suppresses other institutional values, which can lead to an abuse of power. The subordination of the social value of higher education to the profit nexus also corrodes values. In the current culture in PPU teaching only has value in terms of its rating by students on the NSS and the DLHE. Over twenty years ago Palfreyman and Warner (1996:5) spoke of a clear fault line having appeared between those who manage and those who are managed, and a ‘them’ and ‘us’ mentality” having emerged in the academy. The fault line is currently very visible in PPU and in TBS.

The next chapter concludes with a reflection on the relationship between the literature and the findings. It includes recommendations for both knowledge and practice and also a critical assessment of my own work; further areas for research, and a concluding commentary.

## CHAPTER TEN

### CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes by reviewing the main arguments of the study. It reflects on the relationship between the literature and the findings, and identifies contributions to knowledge and practice, further areas for research, and recommendations for practice. It closes with a reflective account of my work.

#### 10.1 The Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this study was to demystify the marketisation of higher education and explore its implications for the people who teach, learn and work in university. The main argument is that the discursive practices of marketisation are transforming and degrading the distinctive educational character, meaning and operations of higher education, and that the discourse and habitus of higher education's constituent elements are being usurped by an economic ethos and an audit vocabulary. Specific objectives of the research were to:

- examine the history of higher education in order to contextualise its current *raison d'être*;
- investigate what marketisation means in the context of higher education;
- examine what 'marketisation' means for university management and leadership practice;
- explore the implications of marketisation for academics, managers, students and leaders in a contemporary university;
- make recommendations for the improvement of practice.

The review of higher education in England in chapter two revealed that its nature and purpose, although contested since its foundation in the twelfth

century, have always been closely linked to its funding. For centuries concepts like 'knowledge', 'culture', 'truth', and 'criticism', dominated the discourse but the legitimising power of these concepts diminished in recent decades and was replaced by a political ideology and economic discourse of 'economy', 'prosperity', 'investment' and 'employability' for the purpose of supplying manpower and individual wealth. The data in this study suggest that there is a continuous struggle between these two views.

The liberal view dominated the debate during the 1940s and 50s. It was characteristic of the new 'plateglass' universities, and is central to the Robbins Report (1963). It is present in the arguments for the Open University and is referred to in the Dearing Report (1997). Although it has lost its hegemony in the debate the liberal idea has not totally disappeared. The economic view of higher education as a means of manpower production is evident in the post-war reports of Percy (1944) and Barlow (1946). It too is present in the Robbins Report, in the proposals for the Open University and even more so in those for the polytechnics. It dominated policy discourse in the 1980s. As the system expanded the discourse of manpower underwent a transformation and was reframed by a discourse of 'markets', 'quality', and 'competition'. In other words it morphed into 'marketisation'. References to the 'economy' and 'the nation' are reframed as 'individual benefits', and student 'choice' has become a central point to justify competition. Although the discourse changed slightly along the way the underlying idea is that the main purpose of higher education is to provide the economy with manpower, and students fund it.

## **10.2 Demystifying Marketisation**

Chapter three shows that ideas of marketisation were well under way in the 1980s as a result of the global fiscal crisis in the preceding decade and the governments' need to fund an expanding system. Advocates of marketisation see higher education's purpose as purely instrumental in serving the national economy. This does not in itself constitute a major

change; at its inception the purpose of higher education was instrumental in the service of either the church or the state. When Queen Elizabeth the 1<sup>st</sup> visited the only two universities in England in 1559 she listened to scholarly and 'learnèd' disputations, as did King James the 1<sup>st</sup>, and many subsequent dignitaries, and we can be certain that those disputations however constrained they may have been, had to display higher learning. What is different about contemporary higher education is that rather than religion or statecraft the market, rather than learning, is the current *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1999:57). Another difference is that the neoliberal philosophy underpinning contemporary higher education encourages a narcissistic focus and corrosive utilitarian reasoning which at the very least eschews social well-being and social coherence. It reduces universities to the 'business' of 'training' people for the workplace.

A difficulty with marketisation is the word itself. At face value it denotes either a straightforward market or the commercialisation of institutions, but it is actually a veil for a political and economic neoliberal agenda and its associated NPM reform. As such, marketisation shapes the structure and discourse of higher education and thereby ensures compliance with an underpinning ideology that serves mainly a utilitarian purpose concerned with advancing the country's economic growth and individuals' monetary wealth through the economic, cultural, and social policies it advocates.

Neoliberalism is a shape-shifting and slippery phenomenon (Harvey, 2005), and although it now stretches across the world it manifests differently in different countries and in different educational institutions. Its focus is profit and its common themes include unrestrained markets, deregulation, an ethic of individualism, and individual choice. It is marked by intrusive government intervention and an audit culture. NPM, as its operational arm can take the form of extreme bureaucracy for the purpose of effective reform and efficiency. It too manifests differently on different sites and in different

countries but the literature shows that its common *modus operandi* is constant restructuring.

### **10.3 Implications for University Leadership and Management**

Constant restructurings, justified by the threat of existential catastrophe and facilitated by an extremely hubristic discourse that forestalls criticality, have transformed the structure and culture of PPU and TBS. Interestingly the experience at PPU provides some explanation for Boden et al's (2008:3) description of university leadership in general as dysfunctional, dislocated, and disconnected. Although not all PPU's ills can be attributed to marketisation, there is strong evidence of the adoption of NPM techniques in the name of reform. Along with the benefit to government of divesting itself of both the cost and the responsibility for higher education the main beneficiaries of marketisation are universities themselves and 'platform hopping' executives on extraordinary salaries. There are few, if any benefits for academics and the long-term benefits for students are questionable.

The word consistently applied to the entire marketisation corpus since the Jarratt Report (1985) is 'efficiency'. But it is difficult to prove or disprove whether marketisation can improve efficiency in higher education. Massy (2004:13) defines efficiency as "producing the right bundle of outputs given the needs and wants of stakeholders, and then minimising production costs for the given bundle". But it is not possible to quantify the return on investment from higher education because it is not possible to establish a direct correlation between the outcomes of students' learning and the investment made (McGettigan, 2013). Also, the "right bundle" of outputs might include "goods" that are valued by society but not valued by students, so although it could be argued that marketisation has made higher education more efficient, and has facilitated massive expansion in student numbers, any apparent efficiency gains would need to be offset by reductions in quality, equity, and diversity of the whole system, as well as

the detrimental impact on higher educations' societal role and its negative impact on democracy.

Rather than the 'choice' and 'value for money' promised by marketisation, the reality is that the application of market principles tends to limit choice to those who are already advantaged and can pay, and the quality that could provide value for money is seriously compromised by constant restructurings and their inevitable NPM job cuts, White Paper (2011a) top-down micro-management and an obsessional focus on metrics. The empirical data suggest that the message to academics is that they must teach to the grades and the message to students is that they are buying the grades.

#### **10.4 Implications for People who Work, Teach and Learn at University.**

As chapters four and seven show, marketisation altered the concept of the student. Following the Anderson Report (1960) being a student ceased to be the privilege of the few, but with marketisation the student was reconceptualised as a customer who is making an investment in themselves. Positioned at the "heart of the system" authority for driving higher education is "ceded to the novice" (Collini, 2012:184) in the name of 'student choice', while responsibility for learning has shifted away from students onto academics. Satisfaction as a means of evaluating the quality of education is antithetical to the development of pedagogical relationships as it implies that teaching should confirm what the student believes rather than having their assumptions challenged in an intellectual process of transformation. The empirical data from the Business School (TBS) supports the view that the central focus of the academic role has become one of satisfying student 'wants' rather than helping them to form new horizons and new possibilities for satisfaction.

Teaching in the marketised university has been waylaid by numerous demands for self-audit through evaluative instruments including benchmarks, quality marks and rankings designed to gauge student opinion about the quality of the institution, the course, the teaching and the academic. These measures distract from teaching, erode 'quality' and heighten anxiety. Marketisation demands that each higher education institution understands itself as a competing enterprise, therefore eschewing the pursuit of bone fide 'excellence', 'quality', 'efficiency, and 'success', is not an option. The people who work in universities are expected to 'align' with these demands.

Multiple and contradictory reform strategies displace professional identities, contribute to the intensification of work and degrade academic work. The micro-management promoted by government policy and legislation which is evident in PPU and TBS eviscerates trust and contributes to anxiety and stress. Apple's (2016:880) "epistemological veil" is evident in TBS where neither academics nor managers feel that they "know what is happening" and have to deal with the constantly shifting milestones, along with the decreased trust and increased competition between individuals and departments that marketisation engenders.

A core tactic of the discourse of marketisation is to present processes, such as aligning grades, as being natural and common sense and therefore exempt from criticism which means other viewpoints or interpretations are marginalised, and which also means that over time the "wit becomes diseased", as in Shakespeare's Hamlet, (cited In Alexander, 1971:78) referring to an incapacity to reason differently due to the imposition of degraded standards. Employer demands for 2:1s or firsts is an example of the colonisation of the neoliberal ideology. As the discourse of higher education is converted into the discourse of marketisation the very meaning of higher education is degraded. A quality higher education would help students to develop the art of critical thinking, analytical reasoning and



clarity of thought as well as good judgement, but marketisation forces academics to teach to the grades eschewing any kind of thought.

### **10.5 Contribution to Knowledge**

The creation of a quasi-market that treats students as choice-makers and universities as service providers is a core conception at the heart of marketisation. When the government implemented student-paid fees to fund higher education and shifted responsibility for the system to universities, institutions with scant resources such as PPU, had to change in order to survive. As proposed by Hanlon (2016) neoliberalism is a form of subject subjectivity, and its operational arm, NPM reform, is a means of controlling that behaviour; without its strategies and techniques marketisation was unlikely to flourish. NPM encapsulated the imaginary characteristics of an ideal capitalist organisation: dynamic, competitive, lean and mean in its internal processes, customer-facing and shaped by a strategic vision of corporate survival and success (Clarke, 2015:133). The implications are numerous and while there is little doubt that many have benefited, it has a mostly negative literature. There is evidence of 'marks of weakness, marks of woe' in the English system similar to those in the highly marketised American system.

The data from TBS suggest a strong culture of conformity which undermines independent, critical and creative thinking, and degrades academic work. The student-as-customer is glorified and seen as willing and capable of making market-led choices, but the notion that all students have the freedom to buy whatever higher education they choose is contrary to the evidence that only those already advantaged can make choices whereas those who are poor have little or no choice.

### **10.6 Contribution to Practice**

There was an assumption in both PPU and in TBS that the phenomenon of marketisation was understood at a deeper level than mere marketing,

branding or the comparison of websites, and therefore that the constant restructurings would make sense, but the data suggest that this was not the case. Early attempts by the then Senior Executive to get the message across following the publication of the White Paper (2011a) were scuppered by vociferous union resistance such that few attendees at that meeting actually understood exactly what was happening or why.

The arrival of an NPM logic to PPU or TBS and elsewhere was not the simple establishment of a new mode of organising and coordinating practices. There was already a mode of organising in situ that encompassed professional decision-making and bureaucratic administration, but the new logics displaced and subordinated existing practices and created contradictory assemblages under the guiding frame of NPM (Newman and Clarke 2009). In the process previous discourse persists but are transformed by the new logics. There is evidence in the data, although the sample is small, that many professional conceptions, orientations and practices persist alongside the new logics of marketisation. For example, academics continue to teach, although they are meant to be 'facilitating learning', and they interact with students who identify as customers, in an environment where they compete for students, and for success in various performance evaluation systems.

Therefore, as in all instances of change and transition, there is a need for communication. In addition there is a need for management training at all levels in both PPU and TBS to better address the implications of a radically changed system. Change-management training at all levels in the institution would go a long way to alleviating the angst of repeated restructurings. There is a need for everyday practice to develop and cultivate discourses that do not perpetuate existing power structures. Given the will to make it happen the educational discourses that have sustained higher education for centuries, encompassing 'enlightenment, individual growth, intellectual independence, quality, and integrity in the search for knowledge through

critical examination and the freedom of debate in communities of scholars, can sit comfortably alongside marketisation, and marketisation, or elements of it can equally comfortably sit alongside a 'social justice' view of higher education framed around a discourse of 'equality', justice' and 'the people' where the nodal point is not 'choice' but social change.

### **10.7 Recommendations for practice**

- An institution wide training and development programme encompassing communication and change management skills for all managers;
- Replace the current hierarchical corporate model with a relationship-oriented leadership model;
- Introduce an 'electoral' model for line management based on candidates management and people skills and their commitment to CPD in managing others;
- Review the sustainability of the 'teaching, research and service model of academic work'. Rather than having academics struggling to pursue excellence in the three aspects simultaneously, models that include an ebb and flow across the three would be a better fit with the generative work of academics, and it would re-skill deprofessionalised academics;
- Replace the focus on metrics with a focus on high quality education and social justice;
- A change in discursive behaviour from all staff is recommended to help develop an alternative discourse.

### **10.8 Areas for Further Research**

Notwithstanding the shape-shifting qualities of marketisation comparative studies would contribute a greater understanding of its implications for the people who teach, work and learn in universities. As the marketisation of higher education tightens its grip in England ethnographic study of its implications could be extended to pre-92 universities and to the recently

established UK Research and Innovation office. Although there is a great deal of research on the implications of the new order for students such as what it means for them to make choices and so on, a longitudinal study of their progress through ten to fifteen years post- graduation would yield fruit in terms of the overall benefits of their marketised education to them, and to society. There is little or no research on the psychological impact on academics who have experienced redundancy as a result of NPM restructuring in higher education and given the growth of marketisation this could be a fruitful stream of research.

### **10.9 Reflective Account**

When this study commenced a very long time ago it wore a different hat. Its focus then was to identify a need for ‘action research’, implement an action, and discuss it. Not long after that, it morphed into an exploration of the value of complexity theory as a means of improving institutional practice. Realising that complexity theory would not bridge what I perceived to be a widening gap in practice and espoused values between those of us on the academic front line and those at the top and students, complexity theory was sidelined as a focus of study.

Increasing awareness of my poor understanding of higher education policy, the sector in general, and the power differentials inherent in post-92 universities as corporates was accompanied by a need to find out ‘what was behind a change in the discourse of my institution, my colleagues and my students. Like most of my colleagues with busy, busy schedules I had read only the executive summaries of both the Browne Report and the White Paper (2011), hence my limited understanding of what was happening. Marketisation brought me to neoliberalism and to NPM. I was not familiar with critical discourse analysis. I admit to many twists and turns and many mistakes in the gestation of this work. I have travelled many roads and pathways in the pursuit of ‘marketisation’ and I’m aware that there are several avenues that require much further exploration.

Previous management and leadership experience in blue chip corporates had ill equipped me with an understanding of the realities of neoliberalism. As Harvey (2005) said it gets into your head and your heart and soul, and at times I find its singular focus on economics and money very uncomfortable but it has provided greater understanding of all manner of things not immediately evident in this work, such as global politics. With a background in positivist psychology CDA came to me as an astonishing gift. Had I found it sooner suffice to say my life would have been different. Although I continue to struggle with its finer points, and indeed its not so finer points, it is a new fascination. It has opened a whole new world for me and I hope to continue to develop my understanding and practice of it.

It appears to be monumentally hypocritical of me to criticise the marketisation of a business school from a position within a business school where the purpose of higher education is wholly instrumental, but my view, and that underpinning this research, is that a quality higher education involves a trustful pedagogical encounter between academics and students, and that encounter requires care irrespective of the discipline. Although I have been teaching for a quarter of a century this study has consolidated my understanding and values of teaching and learning. I am disposed to follow Habermas's (1984) view that higher education is about the development of the students' intellectual and moral attributes, such as communicative reasoning, so that they are disposed to think creatively and act responsibly with others and thereby help to ameliorate the problems of contemporary society.

Finally, as the history of higher education in England shows the art of teaching involves changing the brain of both teacher and student, and the focus of higher education is learning whatever the subject matter. Learning on-line is not education; the machine does not care. Learning from a person behaving like an automaton due to overwork is not education; that person's capacity for care is suppressed. It is care that is the basis of creativity in

developing high quality learning at all levels. There is no room for either care or learning in the neoliberal agenda. Its view of education is as human capital development for the purpose of achieving profit. Learning is seriously impeded by the mania for restructuring. It leaves an unstable and insecure workforce; weak unions, the proliferation of zero-hours contracts, and uneducated students.

Given my circuitous route to here and now it seems appropriate to close with an excerpt from 'The Little Gidding', the last of T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets:

**“We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring  
will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first  
time”**

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