# English Higher Education as ‘dressage’: investigating academic and student identities within consumerist discourses

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## Abstract

The study explores the construction of the student-consumer discourse in national higher education policy and higher education institutions – in particular through New Public Management policies. These policies were critically evaluated using Foucauldian discourse analysis. To gain an insight into how the academics and students were negotiating the discourse of the student-consumers a qualitative study was conducted and data were collected from twelve separate focus groups of academics and students. A total of 30 academics and 34 students volunteered for the focus groups. To gain a range of student and academic views the institutions were purposefully chosen to be representative of the sector. These focus groups were conducted in six Higher Education Institutes in England, between December 2016 and December 2017. The resulting data were analysed using Foucault's concepts of dressage, surveillance, responsibilisation, the parrhesiastic contract and resistance.

The thesis provides an original contribution to knowledge as it finds that, for most students, the discourse of full-fees has been normalised and accepted. However, this acceptance has resulted in a new discourse emerging where student-consumers can be seen to be expecting a service for their money. This expectation suggests some students are adopting a consumerist subjectivity to negotiate the discourse of the student consumer. The study further finds that the management of the student-consumer discourse at the local level seems to give the rise to a schizophrenic environment where academics and students appear pitched against each other. This is due to the inconsistencies in the texts produced by universities which results in confusion about roles and responsibilities. These texts appear to be repositioning academics as service providers whilst at the same time articulating the discourse of the independent learner.

In addition this study provides an alternative understanding of how student-consumers can be viewed as either assets or liabilities, and how through constant surveillance universities manage this situation through technology and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) strategies. The study contributes to the literature through the use of Foucault's concept of the parrhesia (truth-telling) and shows what appears to be a wariness on the part of academics as to how truthful they should be with student-

consumers due to the influence or requirements of NPM. This is important as it shows a change in the way academics are negotiating the discourse of the student consumer.

The research suggests that there are elements of resistance to the student-consumer discourse by both academics and students. From the academics' perspective, this research adds to the literature as it has shown how academics are positioned in a continuous struggle to meet the requirements of New Public Management and the student-consumer. Academics appear to be having to compromise their personal and professional values to ensure positive student-consumer outcomes.

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# Chapter 1: Introduction and Outline

> it's cos you don't really have to worry about it cos like everyone doing it so everyone has that 9k debt every year so like you don't really think about it like omg I'm that much in debt, like I never think that I am so in debt with all of these university fees, you kind of just get on with it you just worry about it when you're done
>
> Charlotte (Student, Elite University)

This thesis explores the discourses of students and academics relating to the fee increase in English Higher Education (HE) English student fees were increased from £3,000 to £9,000 per annum in the academic year 2012/2013; this was in effect the full marketisation of public sector HE. The tripling of fees constructed a new discourse, that of the student-consumer. The key changes brought in by the full-fee discourse was the emphasis on the student-consumer, student value for money, a fully marketised HE environment, and the stressed rhetoric of the graduate-premium.

This thesis critically evaluates the government policies with Foucauldian discourse analysis that have contributed to the marketisation of HE and the construction of the student-consumer. It further examines how universities have adapted their policies to manage the student-consumer and academics in a marketised HE environment. Using a qualitative approach, this thesis explores, through foucus groups, how students and academics in 6 HEIs are negotiating the discourse of the student-consumer. It uses a range of Foucauldian concepts to provide an interpretation of the discourses that have emerged in the focus groups. In doing so it shows how academics and students appear to be pitched against each in what is seen as a schizophrenic environment by inconsistent university policies and differing student-consumerist expectations which can be at odds with the values of academics . The analysis indicates that discourse of the student-consumer is normalised and that in many cases students are not really concerned with the loans they are having to take out. In part, the data suggests that some student-consumers appear to be adopting a consumerist subjectivity and expecting academics to provide a service discourse as they are now paying for their education. In many cases students can be seen to be expecting a discourse of competitive advantage for their money when they enter the workforce

The research is important as it explores how pedagogical relationships can be seen to be changing through the construction of the student-consumer discourse. The research does not investigate pedagogy *per se* but instead examines how discourses and practices of the student-consumer can be seen to impact the academic-student relationship. The study investigates how academics and students are negotiating a shifting pedagogic relationship where there appears to be confusion

concerning roles, responsibilities and honesty. The marketisation of HE and the construction of the student-consumer could be seen as repurposing HE towards an outcomes-based business model as opposed to a challenging pedagogic discourse.

The research aim of this exploration is:

To explore the impact of consumerist discourses on student/academic identities and pedagogic relationships in an increasingly marketised HE system in England.

**Research Questions:**

- To what extent and in what ways are consumerist discourses evident in national and institutional HE policies?
- How do consumerist discourses influence the academic/student pedagogic relationship and experience?
- How are students and academics negotiating and constructing identities within a pedagogic environment influenced by consumerist discourses?
- To what extent are students and academics articulating and/or resisting a consumerist discourse?

## 1.1 Context of the study

### 1.1.1 National Policy Context

The context for this study is one in which the funding of HE in England has been gradually transferred from the state, through general taxation to the individual student. Before 1998, students born in the United Kingdom (UK) did not pay HE fees; instead they received maintenance grants that were means-tested, subject to parental income, and did not have to be repaid. These publicly-funded grants were first introduced in 1962 to provide students with funding for their Higher Education and living costs (Hubble & Bolton, 2017). In 1988, the grant was partly replaced by a no-interest loan (Barr, 2009). In 1991, non-income-assessed student loans first became part of the student support package (Bolton, 2019, p.5). Maintenance grants were replaced with non-income assessed loans, repayable on an income-contingent basis. In 1998, the Labour Government introduced tuition 'top-up' fees. These were £1,000 loans for students who could not pay up-front tuition fees. Maintenance grants were replaced with maintenance loans in 1999. The shift from grants to loans can be viewed as the government's first move in constructing the student-consumer. In 2003, the government introduced the concept of variable fees as a metric of the market; however, the imposition of a fee cap maximum meant that for most universities this did not become a price differentiator (Foskett, 2011). The word *variable* demonstrates the government's determination to construct an HE market structured through price differentiation.

In 2006, means-tested maintenance grants were reinstated and up-front fees were replaced with deferred fees of £3,000. Here we can see the increasing marketisation of HE as students were being required to contribute more to their education. These fees were for all students, irrespective of background, and were described as 'top-up' or variable tuition fees (Lunt, 2008).

In the academic year 2012/13, full-fees for students were introduced in HE, meaning that students would have to cover the full cost of their courses. Full-fees for students entailed the removal of government subsidies for most undergraduate teaching and universities would have to charge students accordingly. This resulted in an increase from £3,375 per annum to a maximum capped fee of £9,000 in 2012. The government's expectation was that the full-fees would be variable across the HE market. Again, this expectation can be argued as crucial to the marketisation of HE as students would have the choice to 'shop around' for what they considered to be value for money.

Government support remained nonetheless, for what were deemed as priority subjects (Brown & Carasso, 2013) such as science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM). The change to full-fees meant universities would receive less than half their income directly from central government; effectively the difference would 'be paid by customers of various kinds' (ibid, p. xiii).

Students unable to pay the fees upfront were expected to take on tuition loans of £9,000 per academic year for their educational investment. Most universities in 2012 immediately adopted the highest fees. Arguably, to charge less may indicate that their degrees had less educational capital or were of inferior quality. From either perspective, it is possible to view the positioning of students as full-fee payers as a shift towards the construction of students as consumers and the full marketisation of Higher Education (HE).

Brown (2015,p.5) suggested that the rationale for the marketisation of HE was based on three components. 'First, it was believed that the best use of resources is obtained where universities interact directly with students as customers, rather than with Government or a Government agency acting on their behalf'. The argument here is that 'students know best' and that, through this empowerment as consumers, HEIs would have to 'either respond to their needs and preferences or lose custom'. Secondly, as the system expands, costs would increase and HE has limited scope to increase efficiencies. The Government believed that there were limits to which taxpayers would be prepared to pay for the enlarged system and therefore a personal contribution would be necessary to maintain quality. Thirdly, most of the benefits of higher education, higher wages, better jobs, better health and lifespan 'accrue to students/graduates as individuals' (ibid); therefore it is only fair that they should share part of the costs. Furedi (2011, p.1) suggested that advocates of the marketisation of HE institution argued 'it will provide better value for money and ensure that the universiity sector will become more efficient and responsive to the needs of society, the economy, students and parents'.

This research will explore to what degree the discourse of student-consumer has impacted the pedagogic relationship. It will investigate to what extent are students articulating the government discourse that Brown (2105) identifies as being fair. Naidoo and Jamieson (2005) have suggested that the consumerist discourse will apply pressure on academics to change and meet the demands of students, this research will seek to gain an understanding in which contexts this maybe happening. The second part investigates the extent to which academics and students are articulating and/or resisting a consumerist discourse using a typology based on some of Foucault's concepts of resistance.

Hence, the discourse of the student-consumer becomes normalised through government policy.

### 1.1.2 Student-consumer Context

The construct of the student as fee payer resonates with the discourses of consumer and customer, both of which are founded on a relationship based on exchange for a service or product (Williams, 2011). Williams suggested that this could be problematic as students may decide upon a short-term instrumental perspective to obtain their degree product. Students adopting an instrumental approach could be viewed as an educational strategy whereby the focus is on the outcomes of their education, grades for example, as opposed to a holistic pedagogical experience.

When discussing the discourse of the student-consumer, Maringe (2011, p.150) suggested that the view of students as 'co-producers of knowledge and understanding is minimised while their role as passive consumers is given prominence'. Maringe continues 'students in HE are not supposed to be passive recipients of knowledge and information, but active producers in the creation and co-creation of shared understanding and ideas'. However, as a full-fee payer, the student has a financial stake in their education and, therefore, has the choice over how they want to consume their university product. Barnett (2011, p.46) suggested that, as customers, students are free to absolve themselves from 'much, if any, involvement in the character of the [pedagogic] experience'. Equally, the student may take a higher interest in their learning and put in greater effort towards learning engagement and, perhaps, scrutinise the pedagogic experience to a greater degree (ibid). Using these two simple perspectives, it is possible to observe that the Government's construction of the student-consumer identity is not easily defined and is likely subjectively interpreted. Students, possibly, could adopt either of these suggested identities in a variety of forms or they could slip between them as their consuming needs required. Both options offer perspectives on how the discourse of the student-consumer may play out; Barnett, (2011, p.46 original emphasis) raised concerns about a fully marketized situation noting that it may 'lead [...] to a *heightened* attention to the teaching function on the part of student's lecturers and teachers'. This, arguably, is the Government's preferred discourse, as student-consumers are encouraged to monitor their pedagogic experience and the performance(s) of their academics. Nonetheless, the construction of the student-consumer discourse requires universities to adapt their business offer and respond if they are to operate in the marketized HE environment.

Shifts in Government legislation construct new measures by which universities and academics are measured to encourage market competition and embed the notion of the student-consumer. The most recent of these is the introduction of the Consumer Rights Act of 2015 (TSO, 2015),

which consolidated the rhetoric of the student consumer as 'an objective legal fact' (Neary, 2016, p.690). Neary went on to say: 'The Act confirms the university is a trader and supplier of educational service to the student in what amounts to a direct, individual contract'. In 2016, the Higher Education Research Bill (DBIS, 2016, p.2) was introduced stating that it would:

> 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.

A reasonable concern is that less well-off students who need the student loan are effectively purchasing something on credit that may take a working lifetime to pay off; or, at worst, for the Government, the student loan may have to be written off. Baudrillard (2005, p.170) is useful in helping to understand the student-consumer debt dilemma, claiming that 'an object bought on credit will be mine when I have paid for it: it is conjugated, as it were, in the future perfect'. Theoretically, some student-consumers may never actually own their degrees as some may never pay for it in full. The shift to the full marketisation of HE and the construct of the student-consumer has required the integration of new managerial practices within universities. Managerialism can be viewed from a variety of perspectives; in this thesis, management is defined as a 'way to control and limit people, enforce rules and regulations, seek stability and efficiency […] and achieve bottom-line results' (Daft, 2021, p.XV). Management constructs the values and beliefs of an organisation, the social arrangements, and the prioritisation of resources, and provides a guide to the justification of behaviour(s) (Hartley, 1983). New Public Management (NPM) is the managerial style that has been adopted by most English universities as it encompasses neoliberal ideals (see Lorenz, 2012; Radice, 2013; Bessant et al., 2015; Bleiklie, 2018). As Bessant et al, (2015, p.419) comment:

> NPM is characterised by the use of markets (and quasi-markets) which drive competition between public sector providers; empowered entrepreneurial management; explicit standards, measures of performance, goal setting and quality assurance mechanisms; and a focus on outputs

In the next section, some NPM practices are explored and how they have been implemented by the universities in this study

### 1.1.3 Managing the Student-consumer Discourse Context

New Public Management (NPM), at its most basic level, is a neo-liberalist concept, fundamentally focusing on accountability within the public sector; this is achieved through disciplinary knowledge systems (Olssen et al., 2004). NPM, when applied locally in universities, reactively constructs new discourses of accountability and responsibilisation to manage the student-consumer discourse, and these are aimed at both students and academics. These reactive NPM discourses, subject to government policy shifts, now construct, [de]construct, and continue to [re]construct the pedagogic student-academic relationship.

Student Charters and Codes of Conduct can be seen as examples of NPM that further embed the construction of the student-consumer. Charters provide the legitimacy of the marketisation of HE and the construction of the student-consumer discourse. They make explicit the status of student-consumers as they 'provide an indication of the level of service that students can expect to receive and what they will be expected to do in return' (Williams, 2011, p.78). Technologies such as student learning management platforms have been integrated by universities to manage the student experience. These can be seen as adjuncts to NPM and they afford 24-hour surveillance of student engagement learning activities both online and within the university campus. Additionally, technologies such as virtual learning environments (VLE) 'provide the opportunity to deliver blended learning approaches that combine mixes of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) with various [pedagogic] delivery methods and media' (Osgerby, 2013, p.85). Students are actively encouraged to engage with VLEs as part of the pedagogic experience. These can be used either as support mechanisms for students to catch up should they have missed a lesson or as a means to enhance understanding. Examples such as Blackboard™ or Moodle™ can be used to monitor student engagement. These technologies provide new knowledge(s) for NPM to manage the student experience or conversely monitor those who may be likely to, in the worst-case financial scenario for the university, discontinue their studies or fail to graduate.

To manage the student-consumer universities use Customer Relationship Management (CRM) strategies. CRM is a strategy that involves 'identifying different types of customers [students] and then developing specific strategies for interacting with each one'. (Kumar & Reinartz, 2018, p.4). CRM, within the context of HE, has been investigated by a range of researchers. Tapp et al. (2004) explored how CRM is used for marketing, sales, communication, service and customer care; Seeman and O'Hara (2006, p.24) examined how CRM could be used to provide a student-

centric focus with improved data and process management; this they suggested 'increased student loyalty, retention and satisfaction'. Fred and Tiu (2016) investigated CRM as a means of understanding customer [student] expectations and service quality delivery for UK international students, the main focus being customer satisfaction and advocacy. These researchers have focused on how a positive relationship can be maintained with students and customer satisfaction ensured, thus producing happy and profitable customers. This research offers a different way of understanding CRM as it adopts a critical sociological approach as opposed to the managerial interpretations given above. For Foucault, CRM could be viewed as a form of omnipresent surveillance of students that produces new knowledge which can be acted upon. Normally, a relationship with an unprofitable customer would be terminated. However, once a student-consumer has enrolled on a university course, it would be reasonable for them to expect to pass as they have met the university's entrance criteria. Here it is possible to see the precarity of the university business model as students can be both an asset and a liability. On the one hand, students, when they enrol, become an objectified/predicted asset on the university's financial spreadsheet; the students will graduate and the universities can future-plan. A student who graduates has *customer* or *economic value* as they have contributed to the gross profit; the university will receive full payment of fees. On the other hand, students can become liabilities if they do not engage in their studies. Universities have mechanisms in place to support students in such circumstances such as deferring their studies for a semester or a year. These are generally viewed as *mitigating circumstances.* However, in such cases the students are still on the financial spreadsheet, and now may be viewed as a deferred asset or future income.

Students who do not have *mitigating circumstances*, therefore, become objectified liabilities on the University's financial spreadsheet. It is argued that such student liabilities are managed through the technologies of CRM. This contributes to the literature as the use of technology as a practice of CRM has not been analysed to any great extent. This is explored in Chapter 4.

### 1.1.4 Student/Academic Pedagogic Context

The extent to which students adopt the identity of the consumer has been problematised by some academics. For example, Tomlinson (2017, p. 450) found that despite there being evidence of some students adopting a consumer-orientated approach, there were still those who perceived HE 'in ways that do not conform to the ideal consumerist approach'. Bunce et al's. (2017) research suggested that a higher student-consumer orientation was associated with lower academic performance. This they found to be considerably evident in students studying Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. Nixon et al. (2018) used a psychoanalytically

informed interpretation of undergraduate student narratives. They found that the market ideology in HE amplified 'the expression of deeper narcissistic desires and aggressive instincts that appear to underpin some of the student 'satisfaction' and 'dissatisfaction' so crucial to the contemporary marketised HE institution' (ibid, p. 927). Nixon et al's research is concerning, as it indicates a notable shift in how some student-consumers are approaching their HE studies. Their research suggests a new pedagogic discourse is developing and this will have to be navigated by academics and student-consumers. Student-consumers and academics do have some agency in how they want to engage in the new discourse, this is explored in this study.

This research focuses on the potential damage that may be inflicted upon pedagogy by unreflective neoliberal discourses. These concerns arise from government HE policy which appears confused at times. Policy statements, on the one hand, articulate narratives of high quality in teaching, rigour in assessments (DBIS, 2016) and ambitions for more students to consume HE; on the other hand, state support is eroded. Students, 'those who benefit' (ibid, p.7), are normalised as consumers who must take out a loan if they cannot pay upfront. However, not all students are afforded the same opportunities for their money due to the stratification of English universities. This is explored in chapter 2. Interestingly, even the government's policy indicates that only 'graduates who *become* high earners will contribute the full cost of their tuition' (DBIS, 2011, p.17 my emphasis). High earners are constructed as those who will have repaid their loans before the write-off period. Therefore, the notion of those who benefit may not be the same for all student-consumers. Equally, the narratives of the Government discourse for HE can be seen as problematic as organisation/employer needs appear to be prioritised 'over that of students or graduates whilst emphasising individual responsibility for development' (Hordósy & Clark, 2018, p.175).

This section has shown how the student-consumer has been constructed through successive government policies. Similarly, the research has investigated how universities are interpreting the discourse at the local level and are constructing new NPM practices to manage academics and students. The study has problematised how the constructed student-consumer may negotiate their consumer identity in different ways: the passive learner who sees themselves as an entitled student-consumer or an active student who wants to engage in the pedagogic experience. The chapter has also sought to show how NPM practices have been normalised as part of managing the student-consumer as both asset and liability.

## 1.2 Rationale for the study

### 1.2.1 The Implications of the Full Fee Environment for Students and Academics

The impetus for this study stems from the incremental rises in student fees since their introduction in 1998. Before this, HE was 'effectively free as the state paid students' tuition fees and also offered maintenance grants to many' (Anderson, 2016). In 2012, student fees of £9,000 were introduced. The research problematises how the construction of the consumerist discourse may be having an impact on the student/academic pedagogic relationship as the student customer experience appears to now dominate this relationship (Douglas & McClelland, 2008; Mark, 2013; Koris et al., 2015; Allen & Withey, 2017). The issue of the student-consumerist discourse is significant for the government, HEI's, students, and academics as this may change the way HE is constructed in the future. For governments it is important that the public, and in particular students, accept the discourse of the student-consumer, it must be normalised. This study seeks to explore if this discourse has been normalised through the narratives in student focus groups. For HEIs the discourse of the student-consumer is significant as the likelihood is that they will be expected to change to meet increased consumerist demands. For example, should students-consumers adopt a consumerist subjectivity or market view and expect an academic service for their money this may change the dynamics of the pedagogic relationship. As Chapleo (2011, p.104) noted 'A market view may turn students into consumers and educators into service providers'. Should academics view themselves as service providers this may be problematic as they may instrumentalise their teaching at the cost of the student's pedagogic development. This research will investigate to what extent, if any, HEI's and academics are adapting to the new discourse. For students and academics new identities will have to be negotiated as the discourse of the student-consumer gains traction. This research investigates how students and academics are positioning their identities within the new discourse. To address these areas of investigation and contribute to knowledge, this study will use a range of Foucauldian concepts to provide a new understanding of how the student-consumer discourse is playing out.

This research adds to the literature as it critically explores the perspectives of how some students and academics are negotiating the student-consumer discourse using Foucauldian discourse analysis. Tomlinson (2017) and Bunce et al. (2017) explored student consumerist perceptions of the student-consumer discourse in their research at a range of HEI's. However, they did not investigate how academics at those HEIs were negotiating the discourse to make a critical

evaluation of either similar or divergent interpretations. As such this work offers an original contribution to the literature. Parlour (1996), Naidoo and Williams (2014), and Williams (2016), for example, have investigated the impact of charters in HE. Parlour (1996) investigated charters using a legal perspective, Naidoo and Williams (2014) used the work of Bourdieu to provide an interpretation of how charters can be seen to operate and Williams (2016) investiagted them from a marketing perspective. This research builds on their research of charters; however it offers a different perspective. It uses Foucauldian discourse analysis to critically evaluate the discourses they construct within a student consumerist environment. Charters, it is argued construct discourses of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) to manage academics and students.

The study further develops the literature as it use Foucault's concepts of homo œconomicus and the entrepreneurial self to provide an understanding of the attitudes of some students to their education and their expectations once completed. Foucault's concept of responsibilisation is used to provide a different awareness of how students and academics are managed through New Public Management technologies. Using Foucault's concepts of resistance, a typology has been developed to add to the literature to show how different forms of resistance are enacted by academics.

### 1.2.1 Social Injustice Context

With any shift in government policy there is always the potential for social injustice as similar opportunities are not available to all students, for example, as a result of their class and ethnicity (Voigt, 2007). Naidoo and Jamieson (2005, p. 267) raised concerns over what they consider to be a restructuring of 'pedagogical cultures and identities to comply with consumerist frameworks [as these may] unintentionally deter innovation, promote passive and instrumental attitudes to learning, threaten academic standards and further entrench academic privilege'. This research seeks to explore to what extent this is articulated by students and academics.

The realignment of academic identities to meet the increasing metrics of quality calculus is a key interest in the research as this may create new power struggles/inequalities between academics and students which could be viewed as social injustices. Clegg (2006) detailed the complexities of changing academic identities, the difficulties of performativity measurement, and how some academics nonetheless find forms of resistance through personal autonomy and agency. Resistance(s) to student-consumer discourse provides a further sub-theme of the study. As iterated previously, the UK Government has fabricated the discourse of the student-consumer. However, both academics and students do have the agency (possibly limited to the realities of

life) to decide upon how they will navigate or resist the discourse. Agency is not unproblematic; this is explored in chapter 7. The research builds on the literature as it explores the experiences of some first and final-year students who have been positioned as consumers of HE, and it investigates how some academics are negotiating the student-consumer discourse. Therefore, the research is important as it aims to contribute to an understanding of how the student-consumer discourse is being navigated by academics and student-consumers. Additionally, the research seeks to explore how the student-consumer discourse maybe impacting upon the student/academic pedagogic relationship.

### 1.2.2 Adding to the literature

This study contributes to the literature through its specific focus on the construction of the student-consumer discourse and how this is impacting upon English Higher Education. Most research to date has investigated the discourse of the student-consumer in individual HEIs and has either focused on students or academics separately (see for example Read et al., 2003, Nixon et al., 2018) rather than the relationship between them. At the time of writing researchers had not used a cross-institutional approach, therefore the research method makes this an original contribution to further understanding of the impact of the student-consumer discourse. The use of a cross-institutional approach has provided the opportunity to explore in-depth the accounts of both academics and students as they navigate the discourse of the student-consumer.

## 1.3 Introducing Foucault: Theoretical Concepts to Explore the Student-consumer Discourse

The Foucauldian concepts chosen provide a means to examine the power relations that can be found in the textual discourses articulated in government policies, university policies and charters as well as the narratives produced in the focus groups of this study. Genealogy in conjunction with discourse analysis is used to examine the contingencies and power plays that English Governments have used to justify the construction of the student-consumer. The Foucauldian concepts of dressage, responsibilisation, the panoptic audit, resistance and parrhesia were chosen to explore the data as these appeared most suitable to interpret the discourses produced in the narratives found in the focus groups. These concepts are used to offer some new ways to interpret how power relations within the student-consumer discourse are being negotiated by the academics at the local level using a Foucauldian perspective.

As Deacon observed (2006, p.177), 'Foucault's work is already well-known in the field of education'. Examples of the application of Foucault's concepts in education can be found in, for example, Deacon (2006), Biesta (2007), Lorenz (2012), Ball (2013) and Moghtader (2017). Therefore, the research builds upon and extends the works of some of these Foucauldian researchers. Foucault's work can be seen as complex, multifaceted, playful (McKinlay & Starkey, 1998), gifted and elusive (Power, 2011). His early work can be interpreted as being deterministic (Fox, 1998), the philosophical view that all events are determined by causes external to the body. This work concentrates on the later Foucault writings where his main concerns were about power and knowledge. 'Foucault identified certain knowledges - the human sciences – and certain attendant practices as central to the normalisation of social principles and institutions of modern society' (Ball, 1990, p.2). For Foucault, normalisation was the establishment of the measurable; therefore, judgments can be exercised as to what is considered normal or abnormal. The understanding of how practices are measured, and how they produce new knowledges which become normalised, will help provide an interpretation of how the construction of the student-consumer can be seen to be changing the pedagogic environment.

The study of discourse is central to Foucault's analytical framework. Within the context of this study, the construction of the student-consumer discourse through government policy is of interest, as are the discourses articulated in the narratives produced in the focus groups. For Foucault, discourses function in four different ways. Discourses indicate what can be said and thought; they say something about the people who articulate them, for example, the medical discourse provides doctors with the authority to speak; they generate knowledge and 'truth' –

statements that are accepted as true. They construct the world we inhabit by shaping our perceptions to produce meaningful understandings and then organise the way we interact with objects and people.

To gain an understanding of how the student-consumer discourse has been constructed through government policy, Foucault's genealogy was operationalised. Foucault's genealogy seeks to disturb what has been normalised by making visible 'the accidents, the minute deviations - or conversely the complete reversals - the errors, the false appraisals and the faulty calculations' (Foucault, 1986, p.81) of any historical inquiry. The process seeks to problematise taken for granted knowledge and investigates the multiplicities/contingencies to provide a history of the present, in the case of this research, the construction of the student-consumer. This concept is used Chapter 4.

Foucault's (1991) concept of dressage will be used in two ways to provide an understanding of how the student-consumer discourse is managed within universities and how academics can use it as a form of resistance. Dressage, for Foucault, in one form is a technique to train and construct an easily managed people/society. Dressage, in a second form, can also be used as a strategy to be seen to be doing the right things at work. These concepts of dressage will be used to provide an understanding of how NPM is enacted in HE, and how some academics ensure they are seen in a positive light.

Ball, in an interview with Mainardes, (2015, p. 189) observed that many researchers are uncomfortable with an over-reliance on a 'single theoretical position'. He goes on 'What is important is to acquire and develop a set of theoretical tools that work - that are useful - that have leverage in relation to what you are trying to understand'. That said, this work will use some of Foucault's lesser-known concepts such as responsibilisation and the parrhesiastic contract to build upon the work of those who have previously used Foucault. Within this research, Foucault's concept of responsibilisation is viewed as a form of power used to manage student-consumers and academics through what can be seen as the contractualisation of obligations through NPM. These are explored in Chapter 6. The concept of the parrhesiastic contract is concerned with the opportunity to speak freely with the expectation that the other party is prepared to listen. In essence, the parrhesiastic contract is about truth-telling. This is important in this research, because of the concerns identified in the rationale, that 'truths' may be constructed to please student-consumers and external bodies. This is explored in Section 2.6.7

Foucault's concept of resistance to power has been used considerably in educational research. Legg (2018, p.27) suggests that 'Foucault viewed resistance *as* power; power which

problematised governmentalities but could also be analysed as a governmentality itself'. However, Foucault's ideas of resistance are problematic as they are difficult to pin down and apply, this is explored in Chapter 7. These problems do not appear to have been addressed to any great extent by scholars. Therefore, a typology using some of Foucault's ideas was developed to provide an insight into how some students and academics can be seen to be resisting or complying with the student-consumer discourse.

The work of Foucault can be difficult to use analytically due to 'his unwillingness to be overtly prescriptive' (Foucault, 2003a, p.4). Foucault (1994, p.228) even stated 'I take care not to dictate how things should be'; therefore this reasearch aims to work with Foucault as opposed to interpret him. Foucault's work focused predominantly on how power circulates, how power is productive and the forms of agency or resistance subjects may choose to negotiate a given discourse. The Foucauldian concepts chosen afford a lens for this investigation to explore how the student-consumer discourse has been constructed and the discourses that now appear in the narratives found in the focus groups. Genealogy in conjunction with discourse analysis is used to trace the construction of the student-consumer through government policy. Discourse analysis is local HEI policies and the narratives from the focus groups; Foucault's concepts of dressage, responsibilisation and surveillance are used to explore how the discourse of the student-consumer is managed at the local level; the concept of parrhesia is used to investigate the integrity of the student/academic relationship. Forms of resistance are examined to gain an interpretation of the types of agency that student-consumers and academics use to negotiate the consumer discourse. The overall framework pulls together these specific Foucualdian concepts to explore the production of subjectivities within the student-consumer discourse.

## 1.4 Outline of the Chapters

Chapter 2 is the literature review which is split into two Sections. It commences with a quote from Veblen (2009 [1918]) who voiced concerns over the instrumentalisation of HE in American universities one hundred years ago. The introductory chapter is then expanded upon to review a broad range of literature that has problematised the neoliberal construction of the discourse of the student-consumer and the full marketisation of UK HE. Naturally, any government discourse must be managed. The literature review thus explores, in Section 2.7, how NPM practices, a form of neoliberal management, have been used to administer the student-consumer discourse. The work of the scholars included in the literature review is then reflected upon to help formulate new perspectives that can be used to develop the field of educational studies. Section 2.8, outlines the understanding of some of Foucault's concepts and how these

will be used to give an interpretation of the way the student-consumer discourse is being negotiated by academics and students. The problems encountered using Foucault's work are reflected upon and how these were resolved are made transparent for the reader.

Chapter 3 explains the methodology. The study's social constructionist approach is contextualised within the context of the student-consumer and a justification is provided for the suitability of the methodology. Consideration is given to my ontological position and I acknowledge that this will influence my interpretations of the data. The reasoning for using the focus groups as a means to explore the discourse of the student-consumer is then discussed. The rationale is then provided to justify the choices of the HEIs used for the study as well as explaining the sampling and recruitment strategy. The difficulties that can arise from focus groups are examined as I acknowledge these are constructions for my own purpose(s), and that this can be problematic. The process of data analysis is then described. Finally, the ethical considerations pertinent to my research are examined.

Chapter 4, 'United Kingdom Higher Education Policy Analysis', is divided into two Sections. The first uses Foucauldian discourse analysis to explore how successive UK governments have incrementally constructed the student-consumer, and eventually the full marketisation of HE in England through policy. Section 4.2 investigates how the discourse of the student-consumer has been interpreted at local HEI levels and how it is managed through technologies of NPM.

Chapter 5, 'Students: Negotiating the Discourse of the Full Fee Environment', is the first to use the data from the focus groups. The chapter explores, initially, how students are negotiating the identity of the consumer and the responsibilities this can be seen to entail. The first part explores the data from the student focus groups concerning their motivations for going to university and the problems faced by students as they transition into HE in Section 5.3. Section 5.4, investigates how the construct of the independent learner can be difficult to navigate for some student-consumers. Additionally, the section explores how this construct may be at odds with the discourse of the student-consumer, and how this appears concerning for academics.

Chapter 6, 'Dynamics of Responsiblisation in the Academic/Student Relationship', uses Foucault's concept of responsibilisation to provide an understanding of what can be interpreted as possible tensions that arise from contradictory discourses. The study offers a new understanding of how responsibilisation can be seen as a construction of dressage, and, equally, that dressage can be used as a technology to construct responsibilisation. These technologies can be seen to be enacted through localised NPM. These include, for example, student codes of conduct and charters. Dressage and responsibilisation can be interpreted as two sides of the same coin. Both can be used to construct academics and student-consumers as identifiable

objects expected to act in specific ways. The conclusion here is that these technologies can be seen to be constructing what can be seen as a schizophrenic environment where student and academic identities are pitched against each other due to the inconsistencies found in the texts produced by NPM.

Chapter 7, Resistance, Compliance, and Complicity within the Student-consumerist Discourse, investigates how academics construct forms of resistance as they navigate the demands of NPM and student-consumers. The study seeks to show discourse is a form of power and that this is productive as it affords some agency for academics in the strategic choices they make. The investigation problematises how academics can be seen to be reluctant to move on from what could be viewed as a nostalgic discourse of the student and how this may be at odds with the perceived reality of student-consumers. This nostalgic discourse is interpreted as being 'a self-relevant emotion ccolouredwith positive affective qualities and potential self-relevant qualities' (Vess et al., 2012, p.4 citing Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2008). The difficulties of Foucault's elusiveness regarding what resistance is are problematised and a typology is constructed to investigate how resistance, compliance, and complicity can be viewed as being enacted by academics and students. The typology constructed is based on interpretations of the act of saying *no*, nostalgic resistance, and dressage as an act of compliance.

Chapter 8 draws together the interpretations of the data and discusses how the discourse of the student-consumer can be seen to be playing out for the academic and student participants in the focus groups. It will show how the research questions have been addressed using the chosen concepts. The contributions and limitations of the research are discussed and the implications for universities, academics and students. In the final section suggestions are made for future research.

# Chapter 2: Literature Review

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews and summarises a broad range of literature pertinent to the construction of the student-consumer and the commercialisation/marketisation of Higher Education (HE). The literature explores the shifting discourse of the student-consumer rather than pedagogy *per se*. In Section 2.2, a brief overview of how the direction of HE was concerning for some academics over a century ago is provided. These academics were worried about the perceived commercialisation of HE and how this may impact student pedagogic motivation. These changing discourses have been the focus of many contemporary academics (see, for example, Naidoo, 2003; Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006; Lambert et al, 2007; Williams, 2010; Robertson, 2010; Head, 2011; Brown, 2015). Their work is drawn upon and used to explore how the discourse of the student-consumer appears to be subtly changing the student/pedagogic relationship. These concerns were voiced before the nascence of the neoliberal policies that would be subsequently adopted by the majority of the world's governments (Giroux, 2005; Ferguson, 2009; Greenhouse, 2010; Bockman, 2013; Dean, 2014; Harvey, 2014). In Section 2.3, the education literature is explored that has been concerned with the construction of the student-consumer, and the commercialisation and marketisation of HE in England. The commercialisation of HE is investigated and how this has constructed students as investors in their education. Through this investment, students are encouraged to take on the burden of risk for their futures. In Section 2.4, the literature is then used to question how this educational investment may not be the same for all students. In Section 2.5, a range of literature is reviewed regarding the management of the student-consumer experience, the implementation of the audit culture in HE (Section 2.5.1) and how Charters are used as tools to manage academics and students (Section 2.5.2).

In Section 2.6, the interpretations of the Foucauldian theoretical concepts chosen for this investigation are offered to provide the reader with an understanding of how discourses found in the research will be analysed. The interpretation of these concepts will be used to offer some new ways of thinking about how this discourse can be seen to be changing the student/academic pedagogic relationship. In Section 2.7, conclusions are drawn.

## 2.2 Historical Concerns about the Commercialisation of HE

One of the first scholars in the West to comment on the commercialisation of HE was Veblen in 1918 with his book *The Higher Learning in America.* Veblen's comments reflected his concerns over the dominant business philosophy of American universities towards undergraduate work. Veblen believed that through this commercialisation it was conceivable to:

> reduce [learning] to standard units of time and volume, and so control and enforce it by a system of accountancy and surveillance; the methods of control, accountancy and coercion that so come to be worked out have all that convincing appearance of tangible efficiency that belongs to any mechanically defined and statistically accountable routine.
>
> (Veblen, 2009 [1918], p.10)

Veblen's observations suggest the nascence of the instrumentalisation or utilitarian discourse of HE at the cost of the traditional discourses of *Bildung* and *Wissenschaft.* Although Bildung can be interpreted in various ways (see Masschelein and Ricken, 2003), in this context the understanding of the term refers to the German ideals of ''self-cultivation', 'self-actualisation' and 'self-development" (Kivelä et al., 2012, p.304). Nordenbo, (2002, p. 345 citing von Humboldt, 1792) suggested that self-formation should be free from external influences. Nordenbo (2002, p.345 original emphasis) explained that:

> *Bildung* manifests itself through an individual process of *self*-formation that can only succeed if external influences are not allowed to interfere with its impure material and imposed demands from the outside.

*Wissenschaft* can be viewed as scholarly (Elton, 2009) or systematic research. Veblen (2009, p. 77) further argued that universities will in future have to manage:

> a large body of students, many of whom have little abiding interest in their academic work, beyond the academic credits necessary to be accumulated for honourable discharge.

Veblen's work could be considered an insight into the direction international and English HE would be forced to take in the future. Fifty years after Veblen, Lyotard (1984, p.4) similarly voiced concerns regarding the instrumentalisation of HE:

> The relationship of the suppliers and the users of knowledge to the knowledge they supply and use is now tending, and will increasingly tend, to assume the form already taken by the relationship of commodity producers and consumers to the commodities they produce and consume - that is the form of value. Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold […] [It] ceases to be an end in itself, it loses its "use-value".

Lyotard's observations were based on what he described as the acceptance 'that knowledge had become the principal force of production over the last few decades' (ibid, p. 5). Neoliberalism,

*per se*, did not exist at the time of Lyotard's writing; however, its nascence was not too distant. In the early 1980s, many governments adopted neoliberal based policies concerning the power of the market and the inutility of state intervention (Brown, 2011, p.21). The incremental implementation of neoliberal market-based discourses and the massification of Higher Education (HE) can be argued to have changed the primary focus of HEIs in the UK. The massification of HE was borne from government policies which shifted from an élite system to one of mass participation which sought to enhance the number of students attending universities and to 'include strata of society previously excluded from them' (Giannakis & Bullivant, 2016, p.632 citing Scott, 2005). Humes and Bryce, (2003, p.181) problematised mass education and argued it does have a downside as 'it leads to conformity and uniformity [and] the principal of performativity comes into play'. Part of this massification required universities to be measured by their contribution to the economy (Foskett, 2011; Furedi, 2011; Howells et al., 2012); examples of performance metrics include numbers of students enrolled, graduate outcomes and graduate destinations, research outputs, and league tables. These can be seen in part as market metrics 'that strengthen the hand of consumers by providing information to aid choice'. Molesworth et al (2009) argued that these measurements construct the neoliberal university. Boden and Nedeva (2010, p. 40) suggested that universities function now in three complementary but different ways:

> They can produce the knowledge that underpins the economy […] [they] can produce worker/consumer citizens […] 'docile bodies' (Foucault, 1977) [or] represent important areas of profitable business opportunity in a globalised business environment.

Despite these academic concerns about the direction of HE, it is also worth remembering the non-instrumental role of universities which still contribute to their societal value. As Barnett (2011, p.45) noted, the other benefits of HE include that 'graduates are more likely to be 'citizens', being involved in the working a of democratic society, being socially responsible and living a more healthy lifestyle'.

This Section has provided a brief overview of the historical concerns over the direction of HE. In the next Section, the construction of the student-consumer is explored which can be seen to have begun in the 1980s in England.

## 2.3 The Construction of the Student-consumer Discourse

This Section reviews a range of literature concerned with the construction of the student-consumer discourse. The changing government discourses of student funding since the 1980s have co-aligned with the broader moves in 'welfare policies towards individualisation [...] and

away from collective provision' (Callender & Jackson, 2005, p.513). Individualisation and responsibilisation can be seen through the removal of the costs from the state and families to the students themselves who are encouraged to act as consumers in a marketised HE environment. In tangent with these policy discourses, explored more in Chapter 4, it can be seen that the student-consumer profile is 'changing, partly in response to government initiatives, and partly in response to demographics, globalisation and the rise of the middle classes' (Redding, 2005, p.414). Universities have been encouraged to recruit new types of student-consumers into the market termed as 'non-traditional' students, that is 'those with little or no family history of HE experiences, the socioeconomically disadvantaged, students from ethnic minorities and students with disabilities' (McPhee & D'Esposito, 2018, p.156). This constructed environment is described by some scholars as a 'quasi-market' (e.g. Glennerster, 1991; Le Grand and Bartlett, 1993; Ball, 2003; Marginson, 2012) where government 'provides significant guidance and influence on how the market operates' (Foskett, 2011, p.30). Students have been incrementally constructed as consumers with empowered consumer choice in the HE market through government discourse (Baldwin & James, 2000; Williams, 2011). Student-consumer empowerment can be seen, for example, through the marketisation of HE as students are encouraged to act as rational economic actors (Baldwin & James, 2000), and the empowerment of the student-consumer voice through the National Student Survey (NSS) (Redding, 2005). Freeman (2016, p.860) suggested that this formalisation of the student voice:

> has provided students with new forms of power within the sector. This power can be productive but also marks an intensification of policy guidance about what it is to be a student, and […] an academic

The concept of the student voice, though a simplistic discourse, can be problematic as students are required to employ a range of identities to be heard. Seale (2009, pp.1,015) identified five main roles that could be adopted by students, namely student as story-teller; student as teacher or facilitator; student as evaluator or informant; student as stakeholder or representative; and student as customer or consumer. Seale argued 'that these different roles raise interesting questions about the nature of the relationship between students and teachers' (ibid). Each of the roles identified by Seale can operationalise different forms of power and potentially modify the student/academic pedagogic relationship. The student voice can be heard through a variety of formal mechanisms; at a basic level this can be through module evaluations, student/staff committee meetings, the National Student Survey (NSS) and the evaluation of teaching (Naidoo & Jamieson). At a deeper level the concept of the student voice is seen as a form of involvement that envisages staff and students working in partnership as equals who influence change 'empowering them to take an active role in shaping or changing their education' (Bishop, 2018, p.4 citing Seale, 2010).

Fielding (2001 p.100), after reviewing a number of initiatives, offered another perspective and raises suspicions about the student voice:

> What are we to make of it all? Are we witnessing the emergence of something genuinely new, exciting and emancipatory that builds on rich traditions of democratic renewal and transformation? […] Or are we presiding over the further entrenchment of existing assumptions and intentions using student or pupil voice as an additional mechanism of control?

The discourses of choice and empowerment, it could be argued, may fundamentally change the way students visualise education. Tomlinson (2017, p.452) suggested students may view their education as a consumer rights-based issue due to the 'increasingly private nature of their contribution'. Williams (2011, p.172) problematised this notion as some may seek 'satisfaction in the fulfilment of their rights as opposed to a struggle with theoretical content'. Williams indicated that consumer rights could construct an intellectual shift from learner engagement to passivity. She goes on to say that universities are complicit in this as they place so much attention on the student-consumer experience, creating the idea 'that the purpose of HE is the creation of satisfied consumers' (ibid).

### 2.3.1 Student-consumers as Rational Economic Actors: Shifts From the Pedagogic Discourse to an Instrumentalist Student Consumer Discourse

The discourses of graduate premium and social mobility construct students as *'economonic maximiser[s]'* (Lynch, 2006, p.3) who become *homo œconomicus* or *'enterprising selves'* (Rose, 1992). These metaphors construct students as rational economic actors whose self-interest directs choice. DesJardins and Toutkoushian (2005, p. 205) noted that 'the idea of self-interest is one of the cornerstones of the theory of rational behaviour and the economic theory of consumer choice'. In the context of this research, this appears to be important. Jones-Devitt and Samiei (2011, p. 94) suggested 'an outcome-focused student body who rely on extrinsic motivation […] [may] regard failing as an impossibility'. Gibbs, (2011, p. 59) noted that universities 'promote education as a commodity by offering hedonistic gratification and routes to careers'. Gibbs' framework suggests that students, as rational actors, generally will have chosen their degree course as a means to an end, a better career and financial future. Should this be the case, then logically students should study subjects such as law, economics, and management which are proven to give higher returns (Williams, 2013, p.64). Elias & Purcell (2004, p.61) noted that 'traditionally, the link between a professional career linked to university education was clear'. Traditional graduate jobs would have included, for example, medicine, law, the sciences, academia and the clergy. This arguably may no longer be the case as many students, as rational actors, may be in a position where they simply need a degree to enter their

chosen career path. This is because many jobs that were not considered graduate careers now require a degree qualification. This has been problematised by scholars, for example, Purcell et al. (2004, p.10) who, in their work-based study, found that a degree, for some employers, could be viewed as nothing more than a basic 'threshold to requirement in addition to other evidence of suitability' for employment. Tomlinson (2008, p.49) highlighted the problem that some students in his research 'perceive[d] that their academic qualifications […] [had] a declining role in shaping their employment outcomes in […] a congested and competitive graduate market'.

The construct of the HE product and the student-consumer is problematic and difficult to define as a straightforward business relationship. The problem faced by HE providers is that the product they want to offer, to be successful for both parties, requires 'a conjoint activity between teachers and learners where new knowledge is gained as a result of the conjoint effort of both teachers and learners' (Maringe, 2011, p.148). Students have to 'give of themselves, give themselves up to the material and experiences before them such that they can form their own authentic responses and interventions' (Barnett, 2011, p.42). Academic success, however, is no longer primarily measured on academic principles, as performance metrics have been narrowed to criteria relating to 'income generation […] student [as] customers […] courses sold […] involvement with commercial interests […] and financial surplus' (Naidoo, 2008, p.47). Arguably this may be at the cost of 'the three-cornered conversation between the student, the teacher and the object of inquiry' (Nixon, 1996, p.11). Naidoo (2008, p. 47) suggested performance metrics will transform the pedagogic relationship into a 'commercial transaction'. Nixon et al. (2011, p.199) noted that one of the potential problems for students making choices as consumers is that:

> Consumer choice privileges instant gratification, allowing us a sense that we can establish our identity without recourse to lengthy and complicated procedures or activities, but rather through purchasing something.

Nixon et al. went on to suggest that people define themselves with a profile of wants and desires. These are articulated as needs and indicate that 'the only person who can legitimately know our needs is ourselves. This may potentially reduce the role of tutors to service providers who must meet the instant needs of [the consumer]' (ibid, p.199).

Swain (2017 citing Alison Jones, chair of the Higher Education Strategic Planners Association), suggests that the student discourse, measured in the NSS, is driving some universities to change the way they deliver pedagogically. The example cited concerned innovations around assessment such as providing online resources 'that allow students to upload an assessment and receive examples of similar kinds of work that would earn a higher grade […] so that students can progress from an average 2.1 to a First'. This could suggest that universities are fearful of a

poor NSS score are adapting their pedagogical approach to instrumentally ensure student-consumer satisfaction. Grade inflation has been a concern for researchers. For example, Kolevzon (1981) investigated the implications of grade inflation concerning the credibility and accountability of academics; Bachan (2015) in his research, found that students graduating with good honours degrees had risen by 113 per cent between the academic years 1994/95 and 2011/12 and questioned the validity of the classification system. Stroebe (2016) questioned how students' grades were increasing despite the less time students invested in their studies. He suggested that this was due to pressures from administrators who made personnel decisions based on student evaluations of teaching. In Section 2.4, the notion that student-consumers, as investors in their working future, may not all get the same opportunities to attain the graduate premium is explored. These concerns persist with the most recent publication by the Office for Students (OfS, 2020, p.3) noting 'the proportion [of students] attaining a first or an upper second class degree has increased from 67 percent in 2010-11 to 79 percent in 2018-19.' The OfS concerns were that these increases could not be explained by providers.

## 2.4 It's Not the Same for Everyone: The Discourses of Economic Speculation in an Unequal Market

This Section commences with problematising the discourse of the student-consumer tasked with investing in themselves to attain the graduate premium. Kelly and McNicoll (1998, p.74) described this as 'graduates having a higher probability of being in employment than non-graduates [and] graduates have a higher probability of gaining positions in employment which command a higher salary'. How this investment may not be the same for all students is explored and how culture, class, gender and ethnicity still appear to construct barriers for some.

Successive British governments have avoided using terms such as student customer/consumer within policy documents, arguably due to its contentious connotations. The Dearing Report (1997) was the first to promote the construction of the student as a potential customer who should 'seek value for money and a good return on their investment' (ibid, p. 22.19). The certainty of success (exogenous risk) for students cannot be guaranteed in their studies/prospects in the labour market, thus the justification for investing in the self becomes an endogenous risk (Agasisti & Catalano, 2006). Investment is a form of speculation; it is the procurement of some form of goods that are not consumed but held back with the expectation they will create future wealth. Few investments 'guarantee' a future return, and, therefore, for the less advantaged students e.g. those from working-class backgrounds or ethnic minorities, the investment can be seen as an economic speculation discourse. Scholarly investigations of student perceptions of

debt have found that, generally, students from middle-class backgrounds tend to be less averse to debt, while working-class or students from ethnic minorities avoid it (see Leathwood & O'Connel, 2003; Callender & Jackson, 2005; Pennel & West, 2005). Researchers such as Chevalier and Conlon (2003), Binder et al (2016), and Macmillan et al (2014) highlight the precarity of the investment for some students. Their research indicated that students from the most prestigious universities have a considerable advantage in gaining employment in professional/managerial positions with higher salaries.

Moreau and Leathwood (2006, p 308 citing Bourdieu & Passerson, 1964, 1970) suggested that 'the influence of social and cultural capital on recruitment has been long established'. For example, Cook et al (2012, p. 1744) found in their research of elite City law firms that:

> homologous elite cultures and social groups are maintained and legitimated as part of attempts to reproduce 'normalised' expectations about the identity of a City professional. Maintenance is ensured by assessing the objectified, institutionalised, and embodied cultural capital of applicants in recruitment and selection processes.

Similarly, Jacobs (2003, p. 571) noted that 'by recruiting staff from middle-class and professional backgrounds professions maintain their perceived superiority, status, prestige and income levels'. Another problem faced by students is that 'the relationship between employment and employability *is* heavily mediated by unequal access to employment opportunities and labour market preferences for certain groups of graduates' (Knight, 2001, pp.93-94 original emphasis). For example, the marginalisation of women and ethnic minorities in the professions has been evidenced by scholars (see Roberts and Coutts, 1992; Pilkington, 2012; Savigny, 2014; Savigny, 2019; Dar and Ibrahim, 2019). Such research, to an extent, demonstrates the social inequalities post-graduation and that not all investments in the self will produce the same results for student-consumers. Currently all student-consumers in public HE pay the same fees; however, the potential return on investment (ROI) appears disproportionate. The Sutton Trust report (de Vries, 2014, p.5) noted that 'Oxbridge graduates enjoy starting salaries approximately £7,600 (42 percent) more per year on average, than graduates from Post '92 universities' and that 'they earned approximately £3,300 more than graduates from other highly selective universities'. Many universities promote graduate attributes, by which is meant, the product the university has constructed that fits the institution's 'concept of work readiness' (Daniels & Brooker, 2014, p.68) and entrepreneurialism (see Hermann et al., 2008; Sewell and Dacre Pool, 2010; Lourenço et al 2013), and graduates being risk-takers, daring and business ready.

Entrepreneurialism suggests equality of opportunity and social justice as there are no barriers to participation. Ahl and Marlow (2012, p. 545) disputed this, suggesting that 'the defining

characteristics of the entrepreneur are those which define 'masculinity' and that 'women are positioned in deficit unless they acknowledge and subscribe to a masculinised discourse'. Researchers such as Goffee and Scase (1985), Fagenson and Marcus (1991) and Bourne (2010) viewed entrepreneurship as a masculine discourse that constructs a Darwinian hero (Bruni et al., 2004), 'the heroic self-made man' (Ahl, 2006, p.599) who is daring, decisive and 'driven by the will to conquer'. Arguably, these attributes, though constructed as predominantly male, are very much focused on personal individual success, so that they responsiblise the student-consumer as *homo œconomicus,* expected to succeed on their own. As Parker (2011, p.438) noted, concerning the neoliberal discourse, 'the opportunity to climb up the ladder of success, and failure to do so is considered primarily the individual's own failing to take up the available opportunities'. Parker did not, however, consider how such opportunities can be gendered, racialised or class-based; therefore it is misleading to assert that everything is within the individual's control. For example, Shauman (2016) found pay inequalities in her research. This is, in part, due to women gaining what Shauman described as non-traditional qualifications or 'gender-normative majors' (ibid, p. 154) and then competing with men in the jobs market. Sterling et al. (2020) had similar findings concerning science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and suggested that this could be partly due to the idea that 'cultural beliefs about the "fitness" of women and men for these fields may correspond to pay' (ibid, p. 30303). Lažetić's (2020) study of pay gaps across Europe found that male HE graduates, at the start of their careers, received higher wages even in sectors where women were predominant.

Ethnicity is also a contributing factor to employment opportunities for graduates. Zwysen and Simonetta (2016) found employment gaps between white and ethnic minority groups. Their research found that Black Caribbean graduates faced the smallest employment gap compared to other ethnic minority groups, whereas Pakistani and Bangladeshi graduates faced the largest. These findings suggest the graduate premium is far from equal and gender, ethnicity and class inequalities persist. However, it should be noted that the findings of Zwysen and Simottea and arguably, some of the other cited research above, appear to be derived from a single axis, therefore the critique being a lack intersectionality. Atewologun, (2018, p.1) suggests intersectionality can be viewed as a framework which helps investigate 'the interconnections and interdependencies between social categories and systems'. The findings of the researchers above suggest that the ability for students to climb up the ladder of success are far from equal due to differing forms of social injustice in the employment market. Therefore, the capital of a degree is not equal for all students who graduate, despite them all paying the same fees. Therefore, gaining a degree can be viewed as a discourse of economic speculation with no guarantees.

In the following Section, the way in which the student-consumer discourse at the local level is managed by some universities is explored.

## 2.5 Managing the Student-consumer Discourse: Customer Relationship Management and Technologies of Surveillance

This Section reviews a wide range of literature regarding some of the New Public Management (NPM) practices that are used to manage the student-consumer discourse and academics. The section additionally explores how NPM practices are supported with online technologies that are used to constantly survey student-consumers/academics.

Historically, universities have been managed by academic leaders and perceived as 'communities of scholars researching and teaching in collegial ways' (Deem, 1998, p.47). Arguably, this is a nostalgic discourse, in conjunction with the consequence that the view that academic activities and cultures should be managed 'would have been regarded as heretical' (ibid). Ylijoki (2005) suggested that nostalgia is an idealisation of the past, the function of which helps to clarify the values and morals of an organisation. The dominant discourse requires a highly managed, instrumental environment predicated on economic as opposed to educational models. This environment is managed through NPM practices, structured around disciplinary audit knowledge systems (Olssen et al., 2004). Ferlie et al (2008, p. 335) suggested that these practices 'stress […] incentives and performance […] as opposed to democracy or legitimacy'.

The public role of universities has changed; universities are now viewed as contributors to the global knowledge economy (Watermeyer, 2016) and are expected to 'prepare students for the world of work' (Harvey, 2000, p.4). Universities, as educational providers, are tasked with ensuring a measurable quality student experience and value for money. The concept of the student-experience, as a 'distinct set of linked activities to be managed institutionally, is a relatively recent one' (Temple et al., 2014, p.8). The problem faced by universities is that there cannot be a uniform student-experience as experiences vary across groups, social classes, and institutional providers. Read et al. (2003, p.263) investigated how academic culture is 'not uniformly accessed or experienced' and cites Mirza (1995) and Grant (1997) who suggested that the dominant 'discourse of the student learner [is] […] white, middle-class and male'. Boliver (2011, p.230) found that, despite the expansion of access to HE, 'social class inequalities in British higher education have been both maximally and effectively maintained'. Boliver argued that this was due to the inequalities between the social classes in the odds of enrolment 'on more traditional and higher status programmes and at 'Old' universities' (ibid). The potential problem for universities could be that some students, from whichever background may, view

themselves as consumers focused on the degree product as opposed to academic development. Academics may consider these students to be superficial learners or unworthy, whereas other students may want to be viewed as students who engage in deep learning and see themselves as part of the academic community (Bliuc et al., 2011). The challenge, it could be suggested, faced by students/academics is that the HE consumer discourse focuses on extrinsic rewards such as grades or qualifications. Williams (2013, p.95) argued that these 'disincentivise intellectual risk-taking on behalf of both academics and students.'

The challenge to be negotiated by academics and students is that any form of risk-taking is dangerous as outcomes are no longer predictable and New Public Management (NPM) relies on predictability. To ensure a quality experience, universities have adopted NPM practices such as student monitoring and quality management techniques. The principal ideologies of NPM are 'decentralisation and organisational autonomy', with their latent function being to facilitate 'indirect rather than direct regulatory control over performance' (Elliot, 2002, p.500). To meet these performance metrics, some universities have introduced student management technologies such as learning contracts, Student Charters, Codes of Conduct, learning outcomes, assessment criteria, and the surveillance of student attendance and performance. Student Charters and Codes of Conduct, within this research, are interpreted as Foucauldian technologies of responsibilisation and dressage for academics and students. The surveillance of students' attendance and performance is considered as part of the ever-present Panoptic audit that governs at a distance. These can be viewed as Customer Relationship Management (CRM) technologies that contribute to the commodification and instrumentalization of HE. CRM technologies can be used to track customer behaviour and facilitate organisational learning by monitoring customer touchpoints (Mithas et al., 2005). Student-customer touchpoints for a university would include applications; enrolments; attendance, or lack of; use of online materials; submission or non-submission of work and progression rates. These technologies allow university administrators to monitor students, objectify them as economic assets/liabilities, and intervene when the system suggests the student-consumer is jeopardising required university outcomes. These technologies present various ways which systemise (instrumentalise) student/teacher interactions (Morley, 2003) as they make visible performativity expectations with calculable measurement and delegate individual responsibilities.

The instrumentalisation emphasis devolves managerial work down, as academics are individualised and responsibilised as to the measured outcomes of themselves and students (Blackmore, 2009). With these technologies, 'the consumer citizen becomes an active agent in the regulation of professional expertise' (Rose, 1999, p. 59). Government and university surveillance technologies, such as the student voice and module evaluations, construct student-

consumers who are empowered to direct the way universities operate. Macfarlane (2017, p. 46) suggested these technologies 'have become ever more detailed, correspondingly diminishing the room for professional judgment'. Macfarlane concluded that they devalue professional behaviour as 'rather than internalising values as part of a sense of identity, professionals now understand them as merely an audited element of their practice'(ibid). It can be argued that these technologies are not viewed as CRM by academics or administrators. Therefore, the analysis of these technologies as components of CRM offers a new interpretation of how students and academics are managed within the discourse of the student-consumer. Section 2.5.1 explores how the implementation of the HE audit culture through government policy can be seen to have changed the way academics are managed and how this has impacted the student-consumerist pedagogic discourse.

### 2.5.1 Key Performance Indicators: NPM and the Audit Culture of Higher Education

In 1998, the Government established the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) that introduced subject Benchmarks, Codes of Practice, and the Higher Education Quality Framework (HEQF) as mechanisms to pressure HEIs into additional levels of accountability. The rationale for these mechanisms lay in:

> the perceived need to satisfy the funding councils and ultimately government as to the quality and standards of higher education within a public sector policy agenda increasingly influenced by a consumerist approach.
>
> (Hodson & Thomas, 2003, p.378)

The introduction of these mechanisms of audit and control was legitimised with discourses of transparency, accountability, and good service (Hoecht, 2006) and 'presented as a form of student empowerment' (Williams, 2013, p.48). Each metric, therefore, becomes a Key Performance Indicator (KPI). KPIs are the comprehensive quantifiable objectives that direct managerial activities and are considered of significance in quality improvement (Azma, 2010, p.5408). Critics of the audit culture suggest it deprofressionalises academics (Seddon, 1997), 'produces new teacher subjects' (Ball, 2003, p.217) and McDonaldises education (Hayes et al, 2006). These technologies create a risk-averse environment where academics are not trusted and are managed with metrics of high accountability (Graham, 2000). Shore (2008, p. 292) suggested that 'these auditing processes are having a corrosive effect on people's [academics'] sense of professionalism and autonomy'. Such constant surveillance creates 'performance anxiety' (Hall, 2017, p.196) where 'dealing with the new performance measures has itself become a 'performance' in both the theatrical as well as the sociological sense' (Lorenz, 2012,

p.620). Under such surveillance, the student-consumer discourse becomes homogenised as 'individual lecturers are expected to comply with demands for courses to be taught in credit-bearing modules with predetermined outcomes' (Williams, 2013, p.49). These demands potentially create their own form of social injustices insofar as 'modularisation results in a fragmented learning experience which does not reflect the complexity of the real world' (ibid). Hall and Smyth (2016, p. 12) commented that 'in turn, this also simplifies the range of ways in which knowledge is created, shared, challenged, and re-created outside of formal HE.'

NPM relies on practices of control including audit or surveillance of activities (Lorenz, 2012). Each department within the university has an economic space in which it must visibly perform and be measured accordingly. These visibilities provide NPM metrics of calculability. John and Fanghanel (2016, p.3) suggested that these include marketing and strategic planning departments, 3rd stream income generating units, and departmental cost-centres, all of which are 'underpinned by governance structures that resemble the corporate world'. Administrative functions of management, policing functions and the economic functions of control and checking are now largely the functionality of machines, producing big data. Big data can be viewed as a form of governing the student-consumer discourse. It is used to 'guide reforming activities in higher education; and […] assist educators in improving teaching and learning' (Siemens & Long, 2011, p.30). Examples could include the monitoring of student/staff performance(s). All student 'engagement' activities within the university are recorded, from initial course inquiries, enrolment, presence on-site, class attendance, mental health issues, assignment hand-ins and results, degree classification, degree awards and job destination. These 'engagement' activities not only provide universities with new forms of knowledge, they also provide opportunities to manage the student-consumer discourse with technologies that could be seen to modify behaviour(s). Student-consumer retention is now a calculable commodity. Civitas™ Learning claims that 'the core addressable market for student retention […] is $1 billion globally' (Schieber 2015). Hall (2017, p.192) suggested that these technologies 'reduce all academic activities to flows that take place in real-time, through structures that are always-on, with feedback and inputs that are 'just in time''. Hall stated that these technologies mean 'less trust in the unprogrammable human, and more trust in the objectified, programmable and knowable data' (ibid, p.193).

These technologies, it could be suggested, are now normalised as forms of HE governance (see Shore and Wright, 2000; Apple, 2005; Grek, 2008; Shore, 2008; Ball, 2016) within HEIs. Hochschild (1983, p. 185) argued that:

> although the individual personality remains a 'medium of competition', the competition is no longer confined to individuals […] It is not simply individuals who manage their lives in order to do a job; whole organisations have entered the game.

This Section has sought to show how the construction of the student-consumer can be seen to be managed through technologies that are argued to be forms of Customer Relationship Management. This section has explored how it is possible to see that the student-consumer discourse is now managed through big data. The following Section will investigate the literature regarding how the student-consumer discourse and the management of academics appears, in part, to be managed through NPM technologies of charters and codes of conduct policies.

### 2.5.2 Student Charters, Codes of Conduct and university policies: some of the tools of Customer Relationship Management

The marketisation of HE and the normalisation of student-consumer discourse has encouraged universities to construct new forms of bureaucracy to describe and manage their business activities. These, in part, can be seen through the enforced construction of localised charters and the supporting documentation such as codes of conduct and policies. The Department for Education (DfE) published the first charter for HE, *Higher Quality and Choice,* in 1993 (DfE, 1993). This explained the standards of service that students, employers and the general public could expect from a university. Student Charters have been a requirement in every HEI in England since 2012 (DBIS, 2011.a). These are institution-specific and detail 'the minimum level of service a student can expect from their university and, in return, what will be expected from them' (Williams, 2016, p. 69). Naidoo and Williams (2014, p.209) suggested charters portray 'a particular image of HE which regulates students' expectations and identities'. Student-consumers are therefore made aware of the relevant academic expectations, standards, and effort required to gain their university credentials (Mark, 2013). The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills report *(2011.a)* required that students, the University Student Union, and staff, must have all contributed and agreed upon the final version of the charter to be signed off by the VC. These charters can be viewed in two ways. In one context, they reinforce the student-consumer discourse as they construct a contractual obligation despite DBIS (2011.a,p.8) stating 'it is not a detailed personal agreement or contract'. Secondly, they can be viewed as a governmental method of championing the rights of the student-consumers by using them as measures of an academic accountability discourse. Student Charters, Codes of Conduct and policies can be seen as technologies of Customer Relationship Management. Government performativity measures construct the discourse(s) that have to be interpreted and enacted into

the localised Student Charters and Codes of Conduct by universities. Temple et al. (2014, p. 3) found that these externally driven requirements have led to 'changed institutional cultures', subject to the type of institution. Charters are used as marketing/communication tools to attract new student-consumers and to manage the expectations of existing students regarding service, satisfaction, quality, and expected student commitment (Aldridge & Rowley, 1998).

Charters or Codes of Conduct construct a business-like relationship as the student-consumer must have an experience that meets, if not exceeds expectations, providing they engage as stipulated (Gruber et al., 2010). This business-like relationship is not unique as it requires the customer to do something so that the provider can 'effectively deliver the service outcome' (Bitner et al., 1997, p.195). Student-consumers must attend classes, study and engage with their learning. The satisfactory student discourse, therefore, is 'linked to the quality of their efforts and inputs' (Mark, 2013, p. 3 citing Hill, 1995; Kotze & du Plessis, 2003; Lengnick-Hall, 1996). Thus, it is not possible to be a passive recipient of the educational service they are purchasing. Additionally, students need to be highly self-motivated and apply their intellect to attain their goals. From this perspective, students, through their managed pedagogic engagement, become co-producers of their education and university experience. Within these contexts, students are positioned as having to engage in the consumerist discourse as constructed by the HEI they have chosen. The rules are clearly articulated; these indicate how to attain a successful outcome to the student-consumerist discourse. Should students fail to engage as directed, they are, through these codes of conduct, responsibilised for their failure.

A broad range of scholars have shown how charters, policies and codes of conduct can be seen to construct a specific, localised student discourse. For example, Naidoo and Williams (2014, p.208) investigated how charters are used to construct an image of a 'good student which is promoted to prospective students, which simultaneously regulates current student expectations'. Aldridge and Rowley (1998) explored how charters can be used as technologies to manage performance through feedback mechanisms. Parlour and Burwoord (1995) problematised how charters could be seen to confer rights to students and the legal complexities that these could create. Pitman's (2000, p.167) research noted private sector charters are different as they guarantee a minimum service standard whereas student charters are 'a two-way agreement between the university and the students, that clearly spells out the expectations that each group has upon each other'. This work will build on and contribute to the literature through viewing the technologies of charters, policies and codes of conduct as forms of Customer Relationship Management. These, it has been argued, indicate certain performance(s) expected from students/academics whilst responsibilising them at the same time.

## 2.6 Theoretical Conepts Used to Inform the Study: Situating Foucault

> During the 1980s, educational policy sociology became much more concerned with the nature of policy discourse. This was due, in large part, to influences from the writings of the French post-structuralist, Michel Foucault.
>
> (Olssen et al., 2004, p.18)

This research is based primarily on some of the theoretical concepts developed by the post-structuralist thinker Foucault. Post-structuralist theories focus upon the social distribution of power associated with the construction of knowledge, which has come to be known as the 'power/knowledge' critique.

Foucault's work is well known as a means of providing alternative understandings of educational discourses both nationally and internationally (see, Olssen et al., 2004; Perryman, 2006; Jansen, 2008; Osgood, 2012; Ball, 2013). Examples of how researchers have used his work in education include Shore and Wright (2000, p.57) who explored how Foucault's concept of the audit culture could be used to 'engender amongst academic staff new norms of conduct and professional behaviour'; Deacon (2006, p. 178) used Foucault's concept of problematisation to examine 'how the experience we call education has been produced through historical forms of constraint and their analytical corollaries'; and Morrisey (2013) explored how discourses of individualisation and competitiveness had been normalised through staff-performance management systems.

Foucauldian scholarship is primarily concerned with the analysis of power, the construction of identities through new knowledge(s), normalisation, and the contingencies that shift discourses. Originally, Foucault's concepts of pastoral power (2009) and experience metrics (1992, 2002, 2003) were going to be the primary concepts for the investigation; however these did not fit in with the analysis of the data and were therefore refined. This is to be expected when using a broadly inductive 'bottom-up' research approach as the data drives the research. As Colley (2010, p.190) noted 'unless the qualitative inquiry drives the methods, the methods will drive the inquiry'. Within this research, interpretations of Foucault's concepts of discourse analysis, genealogy, dressage, responsibilisation, the panoptic audit, resistance, and parrhesia are the primary tools of investigation. These are discussed in the following sections

### 2.6.1 Discourse Analysis

Foucault's theory of discourse affords a theoretical concept to examine the social world from the perspective of normalisation, identity, and power. Foucault (1972) established, in the development of his theoretical concept, that discourse consisted of 'discursive regularities' or 'enunciative modalities' that formulate and regulate and structures the production of the statement. Discursive regularities provide the rules and norms that belong to the discourse itself; however these can be subject to interpretation to 'those who use it or try to break free from it' (Long, 2008, p.121). Interpretations or meanings, Ball (1990, p.2) suggested, 'are preempted through the social and institutional position held by those who use them'. Foucault (2002, p. 49) viewed discourses as 'practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak […] Discourses are not about objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own intervention'. Within this context, discourses construct a range of positive statements that are sayable whilst simultaneously inhibiting other statements that are not (Jager & Maier, 2009 citing Link and Link-Heer, 1990). Discourses are never singular, as by their very merit they are productive; 'they stand in antagonistic relationship to other discourses, other possibilities of meaning, other claims, rights and positions' (Ball, 1990, p.2). Foucault (1972, p.323) described these as the discontinuities of discourse and suggested:

> the discoursing subjects belong to a discursive field – they have their place (and possibilities of their displacements) their function (and the possibilities of their functional mutation). The discourse is not where pure subjectivity erupts: it is a space of positions and differentiated functioning of the subject.

Foucault's concept of discourse analysis in conjunction with genealogy is used in Chapter 4 to provide an interpretation of how the student-consumer has been constructed through a range of Government policy texts. Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine (2017, p.115) suggested that 'given the historical dimension of Foucault's analyses, a corpus of statements should include examples of how the construction of objects varies over time'. Using Foucault's work, as with any other form of poststructural analysis, the object 'is not to establish a final 'truth' but to question the intelligibility of the truth/s we have come to take for granted' (Graham, 2011, p.666).

Discourse analysis is operationalised in Chapters 5,6, and 7 to explore the narratives constructed in the focus groups. Within this context the exploration seeks to gain an interpretation of the discourses produced by the students and academics during the focus groups. The understanding is that the participant's discourses '*actively* construct rather than *report* a reality' (King et al, 2019, p.273 original emphasis). In effect, 'our knowledge never objectively reflects external

reality; it is always a creation (a construction) that is brought into being through language' (ibid, p.287). The analysis does not seek to speak for the participants nor provide a definitive account; using a poststructuralist perspective this would be considered 'illusory because there will always be other perspectives from which to interpret the [data] under review. To seek a definitive account is, thus, a misguided undertaking' (Humes & Bryce, 2003, p.180). However a Foucauldian discourse analysis of the data does provide an interpretation of how the participants in the focus groups can be seen to be constructing their realities.

### 2.6.2 Genealogy

The Genealogy or the 'history of the present' is a Foucauldian method of understanding a present-day condition. Thus, 'genealogy aims to trace the struggles, displacements and processes of repurposing out of which contemporary practices emerged, and to show the historical conditions of existence upon which present-day practices depend' (Garland, 2014, p.373). When using Foucauldian concepts, it is important to look for the 'contingencies instead of the causes' (Kendall & Wickham, 2003, p.4) of a change in discourse. For Foucault, the 'central features of our present which we take to be necessary have been contingently constructed' (Koopman, 2011, p.5). Using this concept, the researcher seeks to understand how a particular discourse was chosen and how it was 'contingent upon existing historical contexts, geographical landscapes, institutional legacies, and embodied subjectivities' (Springer, 2012: 136 citing Peck, 2001: Peck & Tickell, 2002). Using this concept in conjunction with discourse analysis in Chapter 4, the research explores how the discourse of the student-consumer became normalised.

### 2.6.3 Dressage

The performance metrics of dressage are illustrated in an easily disciplined/managed society, 'subject to permanent coercions, not to fundamental rights, but to indefinite forms of personal training, not to the general will but to automatic docility' (Foucault, 1991, p.169). Foucault's concept of dressage appears to have been used predominantly as a means of interpreting business management and organisation theory (see for example Jackson and Carter, 1998; Lynch, 2004; Berente and Yoo, 2006). This research offers an alternative interpretation to how the concept has been used so far, by exploring how dressage is enacted through New Public Management at the local level in HE to construct academic/student performances. The study also examines how academics can use dressage to be seen to be doing the right thing for NPM. These are explored principally in Chapter 7; however, elements of 'dressage' can be seen in other data chapters.

### 2.6.4 Surveillance

Foucault's concept of surveillance is useful to provide an understanding of how academics are monitored through a range of New Public Management practices. Foucault's original conception of the surveillance society was based on Jeremey Bentham's[1] idea of an ideal prison system. Foucault (1991, p.201) described the effects of constant surveillance in that people regulate themselves subject to the possibilities of being seen:

> The major effect of the Panopticon is to induce in the [employee] a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action, [creates possibilites] which the employee should be caught up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers.

This surveillance has been a concern for some academics. For example, Webb et al. (2009, p.7) investigated 'how educational accountability schemes […] utilize fear and terror through the continuous measurement of students' and teachers' academic performances.' Shore, (2008, p. 278) investigated how audit culture was refashioning the HE working environment and what the effects 'have on the behaviour […] of academics'. Wilkins and Wood, (2008, p.296) explored how performance targets and measures of performativity have constructed a teaching profession that fully polices itself, suggesting that 'dissent becomes increasingly ineffectual because it is viewed with suspicion and alarm from within'. Arguably, these researchers have sought to demonstrate how surveillance is a constant 'companion' for academics through these internal/external performativity metrics.

This research builds on these studies to explore how surveillance has been extended in universities to monitor students' engagement in pedagogic activities. Using the data from the focus groups, the study also explores how the construction of the student-consumer as a part of the surveillance tool, through technologies such as Module Study Guides may impact the student/academic pedagogic relationship in Chapters 5, 6 and 7

[1] Bentham's panopticon consisted of an annular building circling a tower. The outer building consists of cells for the inmates. These cells have a window facing out of the building and another facing the tower, creating a backlighting effect that allows for anybody in the tower to see all the inmates. The key point about the tower was that it was designed in such a way that the inmates could not know if it was occupied; however they were sure that this was always a possibility. This architecture for Foucault was an exemplar as a modern means of social control as it 'arrange[d] things so that the surveillance is permanent in its effects' (Foucault, 1991, p.201)

### 2.6.5 Responsibilisation

This section draws on Foucault's (2004) concept of responsibilisation which, he argued, is part of the neoliberal biopolitical process that manages the body. Amsler and Shore (2017, p.123) suggested that discourses of responsibility are technologies of indirect management where 'Responsibilisation language stipulates 'expectations' for workers and integrates academic work […] into an administered regime'. Foucault's concept of responsibilisation has been used to some extent in HE research. Torrance (2017) investigated how students and academics had been responsiblised through the outcomes of exams. Rawolle et al's (2017) research focused on how academic contracts appear to be apportioning responsibility. Amsler and Shore (2017) investigated how responsiblisation is used to modify academic behaviours through indirect management. This work adds to the literature by developing the concept of responsibilisation to show how it can be linked to acts of dressage through Student Charters, Codes of Conduct, instrumental module study guides, and how New Public Management frames the responsibilities of academics towards student-consumers. This is investigated in Chapter 6.

### 2.6.6 Resistance

Any researcher using Foucault's work must seek to explore how actors negotiate forms of resistance within the discourse they are positioned. For Foucault, power and resistance construct an ongoing relationship that is mutually reliant. Heller (1996, p.99) is helpful here as he interpreted Foucault's concepts of power and resistance 'as no more than two names that Foucault gives to the same capacity – the capacity to create social change'. Heller goes on 'Power and resistance are, for Foucault, ontologically correlative terms'. Foucault (1978, p. 96) noted the unpredictability of resistances:

> There is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case, resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial by definition.

This statement demonstrates the difficulty of pinpointing exactly what Foucault considered to be resistance, which, arguably, could be said to be futile. Prado (2018, p.3) appears to concur: 'Foucault employs a measure of provocative intellectual craftiness. Some important shifts in his thinking conspire to invite misunderstanding'.

To simply say *'no'*, for Foucault (1997, p. 168), 'is the minimum form of resistance'. This again adds confusion regarding Foucault's concept of resistance, since as noted in the previous quote if compromise and sacrifice are also forms of resistance, therefore these must be the minimum

forms of resistance. To simply say '*no'* requires a conscious effort and has the danger of making oneself visible. Equally, resistances of compromise, interested or sacrificial, can be viewed as acts of dressage playing out, or simply academics enacting constructed obligations.

Foucault never actually gives examples of resistance as these in themselves could be viewed as regimes of truth, and therefore open to scrutiny. Butin (2001, p.159) noted:

> To demand from him [Foucault] normative criteria for judging, as many critics and supporters do, is therefore not a neutral request of validity-checking but rather a counterthrust in attempting to determine which truth-claims are to take precedence.

Foucault (1980, p. 98) argued: 'The individual is an effect of power, and at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation'. Therefore, through resistance, 'we create ourselves' (Butin 2001, p 169). Again, Foucault intentionally does not give much to work with. Ball (2018, p. 2) is helpful with this dilemma as he indicates that 'Foucault identified a set of 'problems' and outlined some methods of analysis […] and developed a toolbox of concepts, which he hoped others would use and develop further'. Within this spirit, a typology was developed to explore what can be seen as different forms of resistance in the focus groups' data. The typology is structured into three levels: resistance as in saying *no*, nostalgic resistance or dressage and compliance. Though this maybe considered 'unFoucauldian', it was felt that to aid the research some specific parameters were required to work within. Further discussion of this typology is presented in Chapter 7 which focuses predominantly on resistance, though elements of resistance can also be seen in other data analysis chapters.

### 2.6.7 Parrhesiastic Contract

Foucault (1999) discussed the term of the parrhesiastic game where one is allowed to speak freely about one's concerns and the other party is prepared to listen. Foucault (2011, p. 12-13) explained in greater detail:

> Thus the true game of parrhesia will be established on this kind of pact, which means that if the parrhesiast demonstrates his [sic] courage by telling the truth despite and regardless of everything, the person to whom this parrhesia is addressed will have to demonstrate his greatness of soul by accepting being told the truth. This kind of pact between the person who takes the risk of telling the truth and the person who agrees to listen to it, is at the heart of what could be called the parrhesiastic game.

Ball (2016 citing Peters 2003) described the 'parrhesiastic contract' as where the academic should be able to establish a pedagogic arena in which academics can both speak freely and take the chance on the unpredictable. Tambouku (2012, p.861) is useful to help in understanding the

dilemma for academics suggesting that 'Parrhesia is entangled in a network of power relations wherein the freedom to tell the truth is interwoven with the risk of being exposed to 'the powerful other'. Foucault is elusive as to what is meant by *truth.* Rather, Foucault (2001) evades the question and focuses upon *truth-telling* as the pursuit. Steele (2010, p.50) is helpful to clarify:

> This truth is thus intersubjectively constructed but always subject to interrogation, and impels us to never act 'as if' some relationship we have uncovered is timeless or, for instance, an 'empirical law'. Parrhesia works from a pragmatic truth - related to the temporal and spatial.

Foucault's concept of parrhesia has been used by a range of scholars to problematise aspects of HE. Gaus (2019) examined how academic values could be susceptible to political power manipulations; Torres (2011) argued that it is time to speak the truth about how neoliberalism is [re]constructing HE and Ball (2016) used it to explore what he terms as 'sites of veridiction', such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), annual staff reviews [and] performance-related pay' (p.1131). This research builds on this work as it explores how truth-telling can be seen to be influenced by the requirements of New Public Management and those of student-consumers.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to show how the commercialisation/marketisation of HE has been a concern for scholars for over a century. It has provided a view of how the neoliberal university has been constructed and an account of how successive UK governments can be seen to have disentangled themselves from funding HE students. This has led to the commercialisation/marketisation of HE and the construction of the student-consumer. The chapter has explored how the reconceptualization of the student-consumer discourse requires their engagement or lack of to be managed through a range of technologies; these are interpreted as forms of Customer Relationship Management. The interpretation of these technologies as CRM gives a different insight into the management of the student-consumerist discourse and contributes to new knowledge in this field. The chapter has also introduced the Foucauldian concepts that have been used to inform the study and provide an overall framework to investigate the discourses that emerge form the data.

The next chapter describes the methodological approach used for this research.

# Chapter 3: Research Design

## 3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the methods used to obtain the empirical data for the research. The significance of Foucault's work in this research will be drawn on throughout the chapter. Section 3.2 describes the aims of the research and describes my theoretical positioning. Section 3.3 provides an understanding of my ontological and epistemological perspectives. Section 3.3.1 examines the potential issues that have to be addressed through reflexivity.

In Section 3.4, the rationale for using focus groups is explored, followed by reflections on the pilot study. The sampling strategy is then addressed and demonstrates why the study sought the views of academics and students from HEIs that broadly reflect the marketised HE environment. Access to the students and academics for the research is explained as well as some of the issues that were encountered. The next Sections provide an overview of data management methods, tools for analysing the data and the ethical considerations when conducting fieldwork. The conclusion summarises the essential points of the chapter.

## 3.2 The Research

The research aimed to explore the impact of consumerist discourses on student/academic identities and pedagogic relationships in the increasingly marketised HE system in England. The research specifically explored:

- To what extent and in what ways are consumerist discourses evident in national and institutional Higher Education policies?
- How do consumerist discourses influence the academic/student pedagogic relationship and experience?
- How are students and academics negotiating and constructing identities within a pedagogic environment influenced by consumerist discourses?
- To what extent are students and academics articulating and/or resisting a consumerist discourse?

The research sought to produce new knowledge about how academics and students were positioning themselves within the student-consumer discourse. This study was designed to

investigate the student-consumer discourse through the focus group narratives of academics and students from six higher education institutions (HEI's). The focus group method was chosen as a means of data collection as the research sought to understand the respondents views and how these could be interpreted using discourse analysis. Discourse analysis, in this context, assesses the language people use when talking about a subject, 'in the belief that this is intricately bound up with how they act' (Guiver,p.235). The ontology underlying discourse analysis is social construction is that the world can only be understood or perceived through representations such as language (Burr & Dick, 2017). The research aimed to explore if there were any variations in the student and academic responses from different types of HEI's. This was a qualitative study using separate focus groups of students and academics in 6 HEIs to give a balanced understanding of how the differently located participants were negotiating the consumerist HE discourse. The research involved 12 focus groups from the HEIs: 6 with academics, and 6 with students. The fieldwork was conducted between December 2016 and December 2017. To gain an understanding of the discourse of the student-consumer, it was essential to complete a genealogy of government higher education policy since 1979 and critique these using Foucauldian discourse analysis. 1979 was significant as this was when the Conservative Government came to power with a neo-liberal ideology which, in part, focused on the increasing marketisation of the public sector.

The research used a relativist epistemological constructivist positioning based on the author's understandings of social construction. Used together, constructivist and poststructuralist theories 'provide a perspective on knowledge that makes space for multiple, even contradictory, positions to be held as truths' (Khoja-Moolji, 2014, p.279). They provide tools to investigate language, meaning, individuals and power and interrogate 'essentialised meanings, final representations and fixed identity categories' (ibid). The methods place an emphasis on the 'situated-ness and constructed-ness of knowledge, and view it as an enterprise that is entangled with the exercise of power and resistance' (ibid). The research adopts a relativist position as this 'embraces subjectivity, recognises that people's views will not remain static and values collaborating and co-building theory with the participants' (Baid 2020, p.102 citing Koelsch, 2013). This positioning assumes 'our understandings and experiences are relative to our specific cultural frames of reference, being open to a range of interpretations' (King et al., 2019, p.9). Foucault (1992, p.8) is useful for understanding a relativist positioning:

> There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all.

This positioning, it can be argued, is consistent with using Foucault's post-structuralist work. Therefore, from an epistemological perspective, a quantitative study would be inappropriate as the research sought to explore the discourses found in the narratives of students and academics produced in the focus groups. As the work adopts a post-structural epistemological position it recognises that there is a limit to knowledge as there will always be a multiplicity of realities. A further reason for not using a quantitative methodology is 'its relative precision and lack of ambiguity' as Gilbert, (2008, p.35) noted. In the case of this research problem, a quantitative methodology would not have given sufficient richness to the research or voice of the participants. St Pierre (2002, p.61) suggested that 'the subject can never be adequate to itself, that it demands reinscription' and it must 'be opened up'. The understanding of this is that underlying themes will emerge from the qualitative data gleaned from the focus groups and that these will give an understanding of the discourses at play. See Appendices 21 & 2 for initial coding og the focus groups, see Appendices 23 & 2 for discourses found in some of the transcripts, see Appendix 3 for the discourses indentifed in the research. To 'open up' the subject requires thinking differently. The research method was chosen to provide the participants with a non-threatening environment in which they could share their thoughts, opinions, and attitudes (Kreuger, 1994) within the context of this research. Social constructionism (Berger & Luckman, 1991; Bruner, 1991; Eberle, 1992) positions itself with the understanding that knowledge is constructed, developed, transmitted, and maintained through the shared understandings of the prevailing discourse. It was assumed that the prevailing discourse would dominate the discussions; however, it was also believed that the limits of the discourse would be made manifest. The focus of this study was to explore the discourses that were at play as the participants who were negotiating their identities within the student-consumerist discourse.

## 3.3 Ontology and Epistemology

> There is nothing new about researcher's thinking about their own bias on the basis of biography, or more broadly insider/outsider status.
>
> (Cousin, 2010, p.1)

This Section provides an account of the ontological assumptions and the epistemological approach used in this research. I needed to be aware of how my assumptions might influence the direction and the final interpretation of the research. As the researcher, I recognise my role within the study in that I have constructed the research study, managed the focus groups and produced my interpretations of the knowledge produced. The research uses a post-structuralist

ontological approach to investigate the relationships between power, knowledge and language. Post-structuralism assumes that knowledge is always contextual, partial and fragmentary; it is never neutral and constructs the power relationships between individuals or groups (Fox, 2014) and assumes that reality is a product of social processes.' (Tuli, 2010, p.101 citing Neuman). Epistemically, the research uses an interpretivist constructivist methodology that views the world as being constructed, understood and experienced by people in their interactions 'among individuals as well as the historical and cultural contexts which people inhabit' (Scotland 2012, p.12 citing Creswell)

My positionality is that of a white male, aged 58, originally working class but now perhaps upwardly mobile, working in a Post '92 HEi, and now researching HE. My interpretation of the 'ontological self' in Foucauldian terms is that it is not a personal given; the 'ontological self' is constructed through social experiences or relations subject to the domain of knowledge, the accepted normalisation(s), the mode(s) of subjectification, and the dominant discourse(s). This interpretation sees the 'ontological self' as fluid, shifting, and changing subjectively. Issues under consideration are likely to be shaped by the researcher's life experiences, political persuasion, ontological positioning, and ethical/moral stance (Scotland, 2012) or axiology (Cohen et al., 2018). Foucault (1988) argued that for discourse to exist there must be resistance; as such one may be positioned as powerless in one discourse but empowered in another. Thus, the ontological self is not a fixed entity as it is positioned and positions itself subject to discourse. Therefore, my ontological perspective is anti-positivist or interpretative. Interpretivism has a relativist ontological perspective. Ryan, (2018, p.50 citing Ritchie and Lewis 2003) argued that relativists 'suggest that reality is only knowable through socially constructed meanings and that there is no single shared reality'. Truth and knowledge, therefore, are subjective, they stem from cultural and historical positions, and they are based on people's experiences and their comprehension of them. Interpretivism, as does a post-structuralist perspective (Devine, 2018), asserts that researchers can never be totally separate from their own beliefs and values and that these will unavoidably 'inform the way in which they collect, interpret and analyse data' (Ryan, 2018, p.49). Cousin (2010, p. 10) suggested that the debate about qualitative research is less concerned with minimising subjectivity and more about:

> thinking about how to bring oneself into the research process through notions of reflexivity and in the light of fresh understandings about language. These notions are informed by an acknowledgement that our knowledge of the world is always mediated and interpreted from a particular stance and an available language and that we should own up to this in explicit ways.

My ontological position is evident in the theoretical concepts used and how these have been self-defined/conceptually mediated (Fleetwood, 2005) to justify my constructed perspective. Knowledge acquisition strategies, organisational methods, and subjective interpretations influence the knowledge claims made by scholars. Haraway (1988 cited in Mauthner and Doucet, 2003, p. 416) described the production of theory as a 'social activity, which is culturally, socially and historically embedded, thus resulting in situated knowledges.' Furthermore, the vernacular/method of dissemination is subject to the author's construction/interpretation, limits of understanding language and ontological position.

### 3.3.1 Reflexivity and Truthfulness

Qualitative research requires an interpretative approach to analysis; it is 'concerned with building descriptions, explanations and theories that are rich, nuanced and comprehensive' (O'Toole, 2010, p.121). Therefore, it was important that I, as the researcher, reflected upon my positionality within the research process. Reflexivity requires an open and thorough consideration of the self so that we understand how we know ourselves (Deleuze, 1990).

Reflexivity necessitates an attempt to challenge the self-imposed limitations of thought and 'to get free of oneself' (Foucault, 1990, p.8) or 'to probe beyond the superficial and the explicit' (O'Toole, 2010, p.121). As the research is using principally Foucauldian theoretical concepts, discussed in Chapter 2, I acknowledge the post-structuralist principle that subject identities are constantly approaching new thresholds from which they must (re)negotiate their positionality. Affiliations to the discourse of the given moment can be (re)positioned in light of new knowledge(s) or the legitimised discourse. Thus, the research is anti-positivist and accepts the findings of the study 'as only ever partial and 'truths' as interpretations held by individuals […] not objective fact' (Osgood, 2012, p.28). Furthermore, I recognise that by using a post-structuralist framework, I must be mindful of my own shifting identity/thinking and 'be alert to the contradictions, tensions, and ambiguities' (Gray, 2007, cited in Osgood, 2012). These might require adjustments to the research as the study unfolds. However, I was cognisant that I must keep the research focus and not stray from my problematisation, because 'to try and focus on too much means there is a lack of focus; complexity is lost and the insights remain sparse and trite' (O'Toole, 2010, p.121). Sociological educational research is concerned with social injustice and the need to 'problematise'. Woermann (2012, p.112) suggested that, for Foucault, problematising is about what:

> we take to be self-evident, not in order to uncover a redemptive truth about human nature nor to reveal the telos of human history, but merely to draw attention to previously neglected issues of change and dimensions of knowledge and power relations.

Methodologically, I concur with Alvesson (2003, p.14) who suggested that a reflexive research approach has the advantages of:

> the avoidance of naivety associated with the belief that "data" simply reveal reality and […] creatively follow from an appreciation of the potential richness of meaning in complex empirical data.

I have employed reflexivity where appropriate as this will demonstrate my thought processes, how I have drawn my conclusions, and in which ways I have problematized my own 'positionality in the research' (Cousin, 2010, p.8). Reflexivity, Doucet, and Mauthner (2002) proposed, should include reflections upon the author's accountability as to the:

> personal, interpersonal, institutional, pragmatic, emotional, theoretical, epistemological, and ontological influences on [the] research and specifically [the] data analysis process.
> (Cited in Duncan & Watson, 2010, p.51)

When reflecting upon my accountability in this research it became evident that I would not be able to use my own students or colleagues for my final piece of work. I did use them for the pilot studies simply as a matter of convenience and as a means of evaluating my own competencies or lack of. The reason why I did not use them in the actual research was due to my positionality as a lecturer and the power relationship this endows between myself and the students; with colleagues they may have been reluctant to describe their true thoughts about the subjects to be investigated. All of the data obtained in the pilot studies was destroyed.

Naturally, my thinking did change as I analised the data. For example, when I applied discourse analysis to government policy documents I became aware of how government policy was shifting the direction of HE to meet the demands of the state and industry. Additionally, I became aware that the original Foucauldian concepts I was going to use, pastoral power and the experience were not evidenced in any of the data; therefore it was necessary to think about his work and see which of his concepts ideas may be more suitable.

During the fieldwork it became evident that a key concern of the students was that they knew they were being monitored with their interactions with the software platforms provided by their

universitys. This made me think about this concern and I therefore had to adjust my research to include a training session with a systems administrator to find out how much information was actually gathered and held about students.

During the data analysis I used reflexivity to try and ensure that I removed any personal bias as much as possible in my interpretations of the discourses found. However as King et al (2019,p.174) noted qualitative research 'does not claim to be objective at all; all research is carried out from a particular 'standpoint' who bring their subjective values and meanings to their endeavours'. I was mindful of my ethical position and that my interpretation of the narratives produced may not reflect those of the participants. Therefore, I always indicated that some students or academics appear to be articulating this discourse, therefore I used phrases such as 'appears', 'could be', 'can be viewed' or 'suggest'. With the initial coding of the focus group data, see Appendices 19 & 20, I tried to ensure that I was open to as many possible interpretations of the data as possible. I then reflected upon these interpretations of the data and started to think about the discourses that appeared to be emerging, I then coded these as discourses, see appendices 21 & 22 for examples.

My reflexivity demonstrates that I have problematised my positionality in the research. It has been my endeavour to demonstrate to the reader the *trustworthiness* of my work and to allay any concerns of *validity* and *reliability* (Cousin, 2010). Issues of validity, reliability and trustworthiness in qualitative research have been questioned by some researchers. For example, Merriam (1995, p.57) raised concerns about the generalisability of qualitative research noting:

> that qualitative researchers rarely select a random sample (which would then allow them to generalise to the population from which the sample was selected); it is thus concluded that one cannot generalise in qualitative research.

Ayodele (2012, p.395) noted one of the problems with qualitative research is that 'two researchers could be studying a single setting and may come up with very different findings but both sets of findings could be reliable'. Arguably, the problem with such views is that the logic of their reliability argument is based on philosophical assumptions and a worldview which is dissimilar to that of qualitative research. To address this, the I have sought to demonstrate consistency and dependability when giving an account of my data analysis, see above. Merriam (1995, p.57) suggested that this approach produces 'a sort of internal reliability in which the findings of an investigation reflect, to the best of the researcher's ability, the data collected.' Guba (1981) suggested four criteria by which the qualitative researcher can be judged. To address credibility, researchers should attempt to produce a true analysis of the area being investigated. This is demonstrated in the interpretations of the discourses at play. See

appendices 19 & 20 for initial coding, see appendices 22 & 23 for transcripts with some discourses found, see appendix 3 for the discourses found in this research. For transferability, appropriate details of the context of the fieldwork should be provided 'for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting' (Shenton, 2004, p.63). Details of the context of field work have been provided in Section 3.4.3 with details of the sampling strategy for HEIs, students and academics. Reliability should be addressed by considering the dependability, that is, the research process should be reported in detail, thus enabling a potential researcher to replicate the research, even though they may not get the same results. Reliability has been demonstrated through a detailed explanation of the methodology used and the process of identifying the discourses at play. Lastly, confirmability should be addressed by the researcher demonstrating how they took steps to ensure that the findings are drawn from the data and not their own predilections. Confirmability can be evidenced in the systematic and methodological approach used for the data collection and analysis. Seale (1999, p. 472 citing Swanborn, 1996) suggested:

> Acceptance of the researcher's case can then partly depend on the capacity of the researcher to expose to a critical readership the judgments and methodological decisions made in the course of a research study.

To ensure confirmability I used exactly the same questions in the focus groups and ensured that these questions could not be seen as leading the participants. At the end of each focus groups I enquired if there was anything else I should have asked or they would like to say , this again provided the participants with the opportunity to discuss anything *they* thought was of relevance. Confirmability can also be seen in the description of how I systematically coded the data, appendices 20 & 21, and then further broke this down into the discourses that emerged from the data, appendices 22 & 23. I have also identified why I felt it necessary to expand the research to include a training session with a systems administrator.

## 3.4. Conducting Research: Methods and Tools

This Section provides an overview of the methods used for this research project. The study includes policy analysis, a pilot study, the sampling strategy, access to both students' and academics' strategy, the focus groups and access to the systems administrator. Data management and data analysis tools are discussed and ethical considerations within the context of the research are explained.

### 3.4.1 Policy Analysis

Policy analysis affords an understanding of how governments and institutions reinforce the discourse; for example, in the case of government, HE policies. Saarinen (2008, p.719) suggested that:

> When policy documents are used as data two basic mistakes are made. First, the documents maybe taken as given, as describing something that really exists in the world. […] Second, documents are dismissed as mere rhetoric, which has very little to do with real-life policy actions.

She continued that using a social constructivist perspective provides the opportunity to explore 'the role of texts in another way: language does not describe social processes and structure, but creates and supports them.' From this perspective it is possible to analyse these policy documents to provide what Foucault would term as 'history of the present' (Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1983) and afford an interpretation of the contemporary discourse.

Using Foucault's genealogy and discourse analysis, the principal UK government policies and acts that have constructed the marketisation of HE and the student-consumer discourse were systematically reviewed. (See Appendix 19 for government documents reviewed). A total of 16 Government documents were reviewed using NVivo®. These were from 1979 to the completion of the focus groups in 2017. These were loaded into NVivo® to facilitate the analysis of the language used and the discourses they constructed. Government policies, acts and party manifestos since 1979 were systematically reviewed to provide an understanding of the contingent and incremental changes that have taken place. The manifestos of the Governments who gained power were reviewed to examine how proposed HE discourses were implemented or subsequently changed through the Government Acts that were implemented. See Appendix 17 for the manifestos reviewed and Appendix 18 provides a screenshot of the discourses identified in the manifestos using NVivo®. See Appendix 19 for a screen shot of the documents reviewed, and Appendix 20 for a screenshot of the initial coding.

Discourse, when using Foucault, refers to how knowledge is constituted. The construction of knowledge privileges and maintains hierarchies, and it maintains power relations at a given time before yielding to a new discourse. Therefore, when investigating the discourse of the student-consumer through the narratives of students and academics, it was important to be aware of the wider educational and societal discourses in play at the time when the focus groups were conducted. These discourses may contribute to the construction(s) of the narratives of the students and academics, whilst at the same time constraining what may be said. To a degree, it might be possible for the researcher to discern a specific discourse at play, for example, should

any of the participants construct their narrative based on a specific political-ideological perspective. However, this would, nonetheless, be speculative. Therefore, the research takes a pragmatic approach, recognising that 'context is *potentially* everything and contextualisation *potentially* infinite' (Blommaert, 2005, p.40 original emphasis). Discourse analysis is used to examine ministerial statements, government HE policy and policy documents on student fees to give an understanding of how language/media is used to reinforce the discourse of the student-consumer. Universities have been tasked with interpreting this discourse at the local level. This has required the construction of local policies, such as learner engagement policies, student charters, and academic codes of conduct, to construct discourses of expected practice(s). The university policies, charters, and codes of conduct explored in the research were purposefully chosen from different HEIs to those where the focus groups had been conducted, ensuring anonymity for all concerned. To ensure the charters, codes and policies were representative of the sector a systematic process was used. This required primarily identifying the status of the universities, i.e. Red Brick, Plate Glass, post '92 or mixed to ensure all sectors were represented in the study. A total of four institutions were used with similar profiles to those of the providers chosen for the research. The texts produced by these institutions are critically evaluated using discourse analysis in Chapter 6 to interpret the discourses they constructed. Appendix 25 provides an overview of the texts found at each HEI.

### 3.4.2 Pilot study

The pilot study was conducted with two focus groups, one with students and one with academics, at the university where I work. Access was granted by the VC in a corridor conversation, as he did not require an email to formalise the granted permission. Holloway (1997, p. 121) suggested that a pilot study is useful when 'the researcher lacks confidence or is a novice, particularly when using the interview technique'. (See Appendix 4 for the Participant Information Sheet). The focus groups were small, four participants in each, and were conducted in October 2016. Small focus groups were chosen as the pilot study was considered to be, in part, personal training, to see if the questions worked, and a rehearsal for the later focus groups. De Vaus (2002, p.54) advised 'Do not take the risk. Pilot test first'. Wilkinson (1999, p.223 citing Morgan & Krueger, 1993) suggested that 'the researcher should take into account not only the purpose of the study, but also the appropriateness of group discussion as a format, the match between the researchers' and participants' interests and the type of results required'. Therefore, it was felt essential that after each focus group feedback was sought from the participants to evaluate any potential pitfalls in the method. The consensus among the academics was that the questions were interesting, thought-provoking, highly topical and constituted a worthwhile research project. The students felt that the

anonymity of the process had allowed them to openly discuss their thoughts. See Appendix 5 and 5 for Student and Academic pilot study focus group questions. During the pilot study focus groups it was ascertained that the prompts could be too leading, and, therefore, they were dropped for the actual focus groups. See Appendixes 7 and 8 for the final questions used. The data gathered from these focus groups were destroyed and did not contribute to the final piece of work. This is because the pilot study was regarded as a tool to determine whether the research could be completed and whether the researcher should proceed. Gudmundsdottir and Brock-Utne (2010, p.360) highlighted the importance of piloting stating 'Piloting is an important tool in order to avoid methodological surprises, and authors who use this research approach claim that it strongly increases the reliability and the validity of their research.'

### 3.4.3 Sampling Strategy

The sampling strategy required the systematic identification of a range of HEIs that reflected the diversity of the sector where the fieldwork would be conducted. Originally the HEIs selected were London based for practical reasons of convenience. The student sample was ideally to be split between first year and final year students and preferably gender representative. The rationale was that the first-year students were new to the discourse of the student-consumer and the final year students would be able to reflect upon how they had navigated the discourse. The academic sample preferably would include members of staff who had a range of years of teaching experience and be gender representative. Access to students and academics was sought with an email to the Vice-Chancellors of the chosen institutes

### 3.4.4 Selecting the HEI's

A systematic sampling strategy was adopted to select HE providers that reflected the sectors within the marketplace. The university providers chosen included one Redbrick, one Plate Glass, one dual, two post '92, (one of which considered itself to be an elite university on its website) and one private. Redbrick or Civic universities were founded in the nineteenth century to meet the requirements of a university level education in technical subjects such as science, engineering and design. Plate Glass Universities were founded principally in the 1960s, in line with the education reforms and 'had a bias towards arts and social studies; and for courses that allow[ed] students to combine several subjects' (Williams, 1986, p.224). 'Post '92 Universities' were created after the Government White Paper, Higher Education: A new framework (DES,

1991) which announced the intention to abolish the 'binary line between existing universities and polytechnics, […] enabling the latter to acquire university title' (Brown, 2004, p. 1). Dual providers are Further Education (FE) Colleges that offer undergraduate programmes (usually validated by universities) as well as a range of educational and vocational and technical programmes for 16-18 year olds and adults. All these providers are publicly funded. Private providers are either for-profit e.g. Hult International Business School, or charitable organisations. These can operate independently, such as the University of Buckinghamshire, or have their courses validated by English universities, for example, the Richmond American International University has some courses validated by the Open University. It should be noted the English public university system is still dominated by a hierarchical structure despite student-consumers paying the same fees. Oxford and Cambridge are considered the best and 'pre '92 universities are held in higher regard than the new post '92 universities' (Boliver, 2015, p. 608).

To get access to the HEIs, the Vice-Chancellors (VCs) of the selected providers were emailed. The emails sent to the VCs (see Appendix 9) detailed the research objectives and highlighted that all information gained would be strictly confidential and anonymised. Most of them failed to respond; those who did indicated that both students and staff would not have the time to participate. In light of this disappointment, ten more VCs were emailed, with the research details to see if access would be possible. Eventually, access was granted by six VCs; it is not known why these VCs were more cooperative.

### 3.4.5 Selecting the Academics and Students

The diversity of institutions afforded access to a potentially wide demographic as each sector arguably attracts students and academics where there are likely to be differences in cultural backgrounds. The criteria for selecting the students would be volunteers who would be a mix of first and final year students from a variety of disciplines; for the academics, a broad range of disciplines and years' experience. In both cases, it was hoped that a mix of genders would volunteer as there may have been differences in how they navigate the discourse of the student-consumer. Ideally, I had hoped for six participants in each focus group. It was anticipated that this purposeful sampling strategy would offer different understandings of the student-consumer discourse from both academics and students. Academics and students were not mixed in the focus groups as the research sought to investigate, separately, how academics and students were negotiating the discourse of the student-consumer. This was to allow the participants to explore the narratives they developed without having to justify their views to an external audience. It

was anticipated that the participants may have differing views about how each member of the group constructed the identity of themselves and each other. Foucault's interpretation of identity 'stresses that individuals construct themselves in different identity forms depending on the contexts and interactions in which they are engaged' (Guichard, 2005, p.116). If the academics and students had been mixed, there was a possibility of constructing an environment in which the separate groups may have sought to justify their perhaps conflicting views. This was not the focus of the research; the study sought to explore how academics and students were negotiating/interpreting/reinterpreting and constructing the discourse of the student-consumer within different, localised contexts. This was with the view that there may be considerable differences in opinions. This approach aimed to capture the multiple perspectives which may be subject to institutional cultures. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.39) suggested that 'purposive sampling enables the full scope of the issues to be explored'.

### 3.4.6 Access to Students and Academics Strategy

Access was granted by the VCs. The focus groups of both academics and students were arranged by key members of staff who had given their permission to be contacted.

As a qualitative researcher, it is possible to use one of three approaches within the research process: that of an insider or outsider researcher, group member, or a stranger (Adler & Adler, 1994). These identities should not be considered exclusive. For example, in this case, I as the researcher was a group member being an academic, but only a partial insider, as I was not an active member of any of the communities in the focus groups. The engagement with these communities was to be fleeting, demanding and mainly one way. Nonetheless, this engagement could be impactful in either the short or long term. The questions asked the participants to reflect upon their values and how they had constructed their positionality within the student-consumer discourse. It should be noted that the introductory letter (see Appendix 10 and 12) may have made the participants reflect upon their positionality within the full-fee environment.

HE in England has its hierarchical identities, Red Brick, Plate Glass, post '92, Dual and Private provider. Red Brick are considered the elite, arguably Plate Glass being considered the second-best, Post '92 following, and Dual providers offer degrees under the supervision of public HEIs. Therefore, students and academics may have made positional judgments when informed of my workplace and for which university the EdD was being completed. The researcher should be aware that their positionality may have been constructed differently by the participants in each

focus group, subject to their ontological perspectives. Narayan (1993, p. 671-672) helps us to understand these slippery constructions:

> The loci along which we are aligned or set apart from those whom we study are multiple and in flux. Factors such as education, gender, sexual orientation, class, race, or sheer duration of contacts may at different times outweigh the cultural identity we associate with insider or outsider status.

Positioning judgments may have been made upon the letters to VCs, the introductory letter, and the letter of consent to both students and academics. (See Appendix 9 for VC letter, Appendices 9 and 10 for academic letters, Appendices 11 and 12 for student letters). As a researcher it is important to recognise that any of the positioning judgments that may have been made by VCs, academics, or students, could have some bearing on the access to institutions, academics, students, and therefore the outcome(s) of the focus groups. However, the interpretation of the researcher's identity or motivation(s) by the VC's, academics, and students are beyond their control.

Despite identifying the ideal criteria for the participants, it became quickly evident that it would not be possible to stratify the volunteers for the research. Jowett and O'Toole (2006, p.455) discussed some of the problems inherent when using focus groups such as the logistics of getting 'people together in the same room who are prepared to talk on the same subject'. For each group, electronic copies of the introductory letter detailing the research and the consent forms (see Appendices 7, 8, 9, 10) were sent. This information ensured that both academics and students were fully aware of the research area and knew that they could withdraw at any time. The original aim was to obtain a wide range of diverse participants to provide a broad spectrum of views to be discussed in the focus groups. To a degree this goal was achieved as demonstrated in the profiles (with pseudonyms) of both student and academic participants in the focus groups (see Appendix 14 for academics, Appendix 15 for students). The diversity of the participants added credibility/rigour and richness to the work and provided a range of perspectives concerning the participants' negotiations of the student-consumer discourse. However, it should be noted that the samples are swayed towards the hospitality industry. All but one student focus group contained males and females, but it was not possible in the majority of the student focus groups to get students from different disciplines. In hindsight, this may have been an advantage as heterogeneous groups in which the participants did not know each other may have caused trust/distrust issues and the members may not have spoken so freely. Nonetheless, it is possible to claim that due to the diverse range of perspectives discussed within the focus groups, this avoided a group-centric perspective. The data gained would suggest that

each focus group had sufficient diversity to stimulate discussion whilst allowing for sufficient 'homogeneity to facilitate comparisons between groups' (Kitzinger, Barbour 1999 cited in Barbour, 2005). This diversity has provided a richness of data to investigate and, as Kanuka (2010, p.100) suggested, 'the aim of a focus group is to gain a greater understanding of a topic, not to determine whether there is agreement among the participants.'

### 3.4.7 Focus Groups

Focus groups have previously been used to explore the experiences of academics and students in HE to generate qualitative interpretations of a variety of pedagogic issues (see, for example, Hill et al (2003); Kolsaker (2008); Gullifer and Tyson (2010); Gourlay (2014). This research follows the qualitative tradition as it sought to 'construct as complete a picture as possible' (deMarrais, 2004, p.52) derived from the narratives of the participants regarding their understanding(s) of the student-consumerist discourse. It should be noted that social constructionism is problematic in its own right for the researcher. Focus groups in themselves are constructions; for example 'participants are selected because they have certain characteristics that relate to the topic of the focus group' (Kreuger & Casey, 2015, p.2). 'Focus group interviews are discussions organised to explore a specific set of issues' (Kitzinger, 1994, p.103) amongst relatively homogeneous groups. As Hughes and DuMont (2003, p.776) explained: 'Unlike quantitative methods, they emphasize participants' perspectives and allow the researcher to explore the nuances and complexities of participants' attitudes and experiences'. Fundamental to this research is the 'assumption that opinions, attitudes, and accounts are *socially* produced […] rather than being discretely formed at the level of the individual' (Tonkiss, 2018, p.238, original emphasis). This form of data gives a richer, and possibly unforeseen, understanding of the subjects' interpretation of the discourse. The avenues that the participants chose to navigate afforded a range of constructed discourses to explore.

Ideally, it had been hoped for 6-8 participants per group. However, the group sizes ranged from a maximum of seven academics in one and nine students in another, the minimum being three students and three academics. (See Appendices 13 and 14 for Participants Profiles). The small groups were not a problem as the lack of participants allowed attendees to explore the subjects in greater depth. Cronin (2008, p.235) suggested that using focus groups of more than 10 people can cause problems as they are difficult to facilitate and often result in data lacking depth and substance. For example, as Morgan (1996, p.142) observed, participants may not feel the need to 'contribute and may rely on the group to carry the discussion.'

The reason for the selection criteria for students and staff was re-emphasised at the beginning of each focus group as. The fact was reiterated that only the researcher and students were present and that any information disclosed would stay within the group. For all focus groups, it was stated that each participant, as well as the institutions they represented, would be anonymised. Therefore, their discussions would be confidential. One of the problems with focus groups is that, despite the participants agreeing to confidentiality, it is beyond the researcher's control what they communicate to each other outside of the group. The research questions sought to enable the participants to discuss anything that they considered relevant around the subject areas to be explored. The researcher needs to be aware that the research topics may arouse thoughts about further areas which the participants may have felt to be important and, therefore, before closing each focus group, the final question was always *'Is there anything else I should have asked or you would like to say?'*

A mobile phone was used to record the focus group meetings so that verbatim transcripts could be gained from the actual voices of the participants for data analysis. Additional field notes were made during the focus groups when appropriate, for example, facial expressions, openness to engage, or crossed arms. The timing of any such incidences was noted against the names of the participants as these data may have provided additional richness to my research. Once each focus group meeting had been completed, time and space were allocated to reflect upon the discourses discussed. Field notes with any additional thoughts that may have relevance when interpreting the data were also made. Qualitative data analysis within the context of focus groups 'occurs concurrently with data collection' (Rabiee, 2004, p.657), thus it is an ongoing process that requires reflexivity and iterative processing. As Bechhofer (1974, p.73) noted:

> The research process, then, is not a clear-cut sequence of procedures following a neat pattern, but a messy interaction between the conceptual and empirical world, deduction and induction occurring at the same time.

The focus group meetings lasted on average an hour each.

Focus groups produce a particular form of data due to their interactive method (Kitzinger, 1994). This method thereby allowed the participants to discuss things they felt relevant to the area of study. Focus groups, by their nature, will produce a public discourse that is acceptable amongst peers and that individual interviews may produce very different results (Smithson, 2000). For example, in one to one interviews, the protocols of trust and anonymity can be preserved with relative ease whereas 'in a group setting, trust and a commitment to confidentiality are more widely distributed' (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2011, p.558). Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (ibid)

continued to argue that ‘the distribution of trust, as well as knowledge and experience, constitutes part of the power of focus groups’. Therefore all forms of research are context-bound and some things will remain unsaid. Mindful of this, a semi-structured focus group guide that formed the basis for the areas to be discussed was prepared. These topics provided a natural transition from one subject to the next (see Appendix 7 and 8). Bryman (2004, cited in Pryor, 2010, p.165) suggested ‘that good research questions should be clear, researchable, linked and neither too hard nor narrow; they should connect with the established theory and show potential for new knowledge’. Furthermore Cronin (2008, p.233) suggested that the researcher should be mindful of the research tools they prepare for focus groups as some ‘topics may be unsuitable or too sensitive for discussion’. However, as long as the groups have ‘shared experiences or similar social identities’ (ibid) these should be successful. Within this guide a range of prompts for each question were formulated, should they be required, to help the participants further explore the themes. Kamberelis and Dimitriadis (2013, p.70) suggested that prompts should be ‘maximally open-ended’ and ‘allow participants to *take over discussions’* (original emphasis) as this should result ‘in richer and more complex conversations that often result in significant learning’. Additionally, focus groups can potentially reduce the power relationship between the researcher and the researched. Jowett and O'Toole (2006, p.455) initially noted that ‘the researcher, by virtue of their research design, provides the direction of the project’. The researched, therefore, ‘often have little control of the conclusions and theories that are drawn from these accounts’, thus producing a form of authoritative power. As a result, as Jowett and O'Toole (2006, p.456) explained, focus groups will not totally disrupt this power relationship. However, they go on to observe that ‘Whether intentional or not, the combined contributions of the members of the focus group might point up new directions and questions to challenge or alter the style, remit or trajectory of the project’.

A key concern for the insider/partial insider researcher is the danger of personal bias within the data collection: for example, omitting data that are unforeseen and create more work, or omitting data that challenge the researcher’s values or trying to manipulate responses to fit the research questions. To avoid this, open-ended questions are asked and prompts avoided as there was a danger of the researcher guiding the conversation. Additionally, all participants should be encouraged to voice their opinions, thus not allowing more dominant voices to take charge. This strategy was nonetheless respectful to the individual should they not wish to engage or contribute further. Ropers-Huilman and Winters (2010, p.39) suggested that:

> those who determine which identities should be framed as dominant have the potential to enact power that could shape both the possibility of social understandings and equitable (or inequitable) social institutions.

The data produced appears to validate a successful approach due to the variety of areas discussed by the participants and suggests that the participants were free to discuss the areas that were important to them. This approach allowed the participants in each group to describe and generate a narrative reflecting their interpretation of the discourse at the time. The richness and diversity data makes the qualitative researcher have to think in new and different ways or start to 'plugin' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) different scholarly perspectives. This resulted in further readings of Foucault to see which concepts may be better suited to help interpret the discourses found within the student/academic narratives.

One of the potential problems of focus groups whose members know each other is that social hierarchies may have been established before the assembly of the group. Jowett and O'Toole (2006, p.455) noted that such a hierarchy may give rise to a danger of censoring:

> where individuals hold back the contributions they wish to make, instead of conforming to an apparent consensus […] or possibly participants wishing to impress others, or for the 'peace-makers' who may try and enforce a mutual agreement.

Similarly, Smithson (2000, p.107) noted the problem of the creation of a 'group view' which is a product of the group's interaction as opposed to that of the individual. Therefore it is necessary to ensure that each participant has the opportunity to contribute to the debate voluntarily, and should they wish to decline to accept this. Ali and Kelly (2018, p.50) argue that 'most research studies involve an invasion of privacy'. Due to the nature of focus groups consensual views can be obtained; however, it was possible that tensions/conflicts and discrepancies may have to be negotiated by the group as they constructed their interpretation of the discourse. Nonetheless, as Kitzinger (1994) argued, the interaction within focus groups is a crucial feature of them. Su et al. (2010, p.85) suggested that 'research is a heuristic endeavour' and 'when we ask open questions, we cannot presume to know the answers'. This interaction articulates their view of the world, the vernacular they use to describe it, and their values and beliefs about a situation. Furthermore, it is possible that the participants' positions might change and develop during the focus groups as new understandings were constructed and participants asked questions to seek clarification.

Due to the nature of the research, it was expected that the data gained from the initial focus groups would influence, guide and focus the direction of the investigation as it progressed. However, the only way in which the focus groups influenced the inquiry was when some students mentioned they felt they were being monitored when using the online platforms used by universities to support their learning. This provided another area worthy of exploration as these students appeared to be raising concerns about how these online platforms could be used monitor

their online engagement activities. Therefore, a training session was arranged with a senior administrator to gain an understanding of how much data universities could amass on students and how this potentially could be used. This introduced a new, unforeseen, dimension to the research which was added to the literature review as it was important to understand how student identities were being constructed through the technologies that are available to universities.

### 3.4.8 Training Session with the Systems Administrator

To gain an understanding of the amount of data that student management platforms could use to profile students, a training session was organised with a senior systems administrator. Permission for the training was not necessary as the administrator was a colleague and the necessary information would be available to any member of staff if they required it. The aim of the training session was to find out what type of data the software was capable of accessing and how this could be used to construct new forms of knowledge about students. During the session, notes were made about the capabilities of the software to ensure accuracy of understanding.

### 3.4.9 Data Management

The meetings were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Each transcript was dated as this may have been important due to external factors such as the developing external political discourse. For example, in May 2017 there were rumours, once again, that should the Labour party win the general election there could be a return to free HE in England (Scott, 2017). This could have impacted the narratives of the focus groups when they were conducted; however, the transcripts suggest that this was not the case. All transcripts were checked against the original recordings for accuracy and reread. Field notes were checked and my primary thoughts regarding each focus group were considered, as these had contributed to the development of the analytical thought processes. All data, transcripts, digital recordings, and notes were backed up securely should any of the files become corrupted or lost. The data gathered were cleaned to remove any information that might identify any HE provider, student, or academic, thus anonymised. Each transcript was uploaded into NVivo® software to analyse and code the discourses found. All university research is bound by the Data Protection Act 1988 as the information gained can be personal and confidential.

### 3.4.10 Data Analysis

Qualitative research is rarely a linear process; it can be fluid as theories emerge/develop while the researcher gathers data that constructs perceptions of 'a' social reality. The human experience is multi-layered, complex; it is an ongoing process that 'cannot be halted for the benefit of researchers' (Polkinghorne, 2005, p.139).

The challenge is to untangle the messiness inherent within qualitative research as situations/perspectives evolved and events/behaviours can change subject to context. Savin-Baden and Howell Major (2010, p.1) helpfully suggested that the 'truths held by individuals need to be uncovered and unpacked to shed light on multiple, and often competing realities' so that the messiness is untangled. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that any research is subject to negotiation(s) and social construction in which researchers are asked to interact. 'Critical post-structuralism requires the researcher to constantly question and unsettle' (Osgood, 2012, p.30), thus the author's subjectivity/data of experience is a construction to be acknowledged with integrity. The acknowledgement that both the researcher/researched (co)construct the knowledge of their world is 'the foundation of constructivist inquiry through qualitative research' (Smyth, 2008, p.132). It is also important to remember that 'meanings are negotiated between the researcher and the researched within a particular context so that another relationship will unfold a different story' (Finlay, 2002, p.531).

The research used the data from the focus groups to explore how the participants were navigating the student-consumer discourse. To achieve this, predominantly an inductive approach was used. Inductive research can be viewed as 'a "bottom-up", data-driven or exploratory as opposed to a '"top-down" deductive approach that relies primarily on testing *a priori* hypotheses' (Woo et al., 2017, p.255). This was used to explore the discourses found in the data from the focus groups using the work of Foucault.

Foucauldian Discourse analysis (FDA) was the primary tool for this investigation as it examines the way discourse(s) are articulated through language and text; it 'seeks to put forward alternative conceptions of knowledge to encourage a new way of thinking about events' (Watterson et al., 2019, p.2 citing Foucault). Foucault's discourse analysis (FDA) originates within post-structuralist theory, where language is deemed to be constitutive of social life. Ussher and Perz (2019, p.881) suggested:

> FDA analysis is concerned with identifying discourses, the subject positions it opens up (or disallows), and the implications of such positioning for subjectivity and social practice, rather than the form or structure of interaction within talk or text.

Foucault's work positions the present as a transitionary phase that has been constructed through disscourses and knowledge that are all historically situated. Therefore, understanding history becomes a significant tool to help us see how the current discourse had developed. It should be noted that FDA does not seek 'to establish a final truth, but to question the intelligibility of truth/s we have come to take for granted' (Graham, 2011, p.666). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) (Fairclough et al., 2011) offers another way of interpreting discourse; however it tends to focus on the micro-level as opposed to the meso and macro levels of language and text. Foucault's dicsourse analysis can be used to investigate all of these levels of language and it was therefore felt a be more appropriate for this investigation. At the micro level it can be used investigate the discourses produced in the narratives found in the focus groups; at the meso level it can be used to analyse policy texts, for example Student Charters and Codes of Conduct and at the macro level it can be used to review texts acoss many years, for example Government Higher Education policies.

As with all poststructural analysis, the aim is not to generate a final truth but to interrogate the validity of the truth(s) that have been normalised. For Foucault (1994, p.288), the exploration is to 'at least […] change the given terms of the problem'. FDA enables the researcher to explore how power is exercised, and how it can be challenged or resisted. It shares the 'postmodern concern with how language works not only to produce meaning, *but also particular kinds of objects and subjects upon whom and through which particular relations of power are realised'* (Graham, 2011, p.672 original emphasis).

The data were transcribed from all of the 12 focus groups verbatim. This is in line with Kreuger and Casey (2015, p.151) who suggested that 'the person coordinating the analysis should prepare the transcripts [as…] it allows the researcher to get an in-depth experience with the data'. The coding of qualitative data requires a systematic approach; initially this requires making sense of large amounts of data by reducing the size of the raw information, then patterns or themes [discourses] are identified and coded appropriately and finally 'drawing meaning from the data and subsequently building a logical chain of evidence' (Wong, 2008, p.16). Discourse analysis is an iterative process and therefore time-consuming. When coding, MacLure (2013, p.174) suggested that one of the traps the qualitative researcher must be aware of is the urgency to find a definitive interpretation of the data and that:

> it is imperative to slow down the facile machinery of interpretation so that it catches the snags, 'the lucky finds', the marginalia that fascinates the researcher and draws her [sic] into the weave of discourse instead of allowing her to rise above it.

Once all of the data had been transcribed from the focus groups, the data was initially coded to consider anything that appeared interesting or strange and thus worthy of investigation and reflection. See Appendices 20 & 21 for initial coding Two files were created, one for students and one for academics, in the software analysis tool NVivo®. See Appendix 23 for examples of the discourse discourses found in part of a Student Focus Group transcript, Appendix 24 for discourses identified in part of an Academic Focus Group transcript. Dey (1993, p.57) noted that computer software can 'help us to analyse our data, but it cannot analyse our data'. For both files, the transcripts were analysed, and the emerging preliminary discourses were coded throughout the data. Codes can be viewed as the components of themes [discourses], the larger 'patterns of meaning, underpinned by a central organising concept' (Clarke & Braun, 2017, p.297).

Maclure (2013,p.174) noted that:

> coding demands an immersion in, and the entanglement with the minutiae 'of the data'. Even though the ultimate aim conventionally is to move 'away' from the data through abstracting, reducing or generalising, nevertheless, the entire architecture is built upon a long, slow, familiarisation process

The eventual aim was to be able to interpret the ideas, issues and discourses that were being articulated by the participants. Gee (2014, p.viii) argued that the theory of discourse analysis provides a 'set of tools to analyse language-in-use' and 'that no one theory is universally right or universally applicable [and] anyone engaged in their own discourse analysis must adapt the tools they have taken from a given theory to the needs and demands of their own study'. A potential problem for the investigator is demonstrating validity in their findings due to the 'difficulty in 'pointing to externally agreed upon criteria that would serve as the basis for validating knowledge produced by discourse researchers' (Adjei, 2013, p.7).To address these concerns and to provide an understanding of how credibly the themes/discourses were developed, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis model was adapted to guide the identification of the discourses that appeared to be at play. This model provides a systematic way to analyse the qualitative data and is operationalised thus: familiarisation with the data, transcribe, read, re-read, noting down initial ideas, generating initial codes across the whole data set collating accordingly; noting potential discourses, gather all data relevant to each potential discourse; review discourses, check that they work in relation to the coded extracts, phase one and the entire data set, phase two; and defining and naming discourses. This is ongoing analysis which generates clear definitions and names for each theme/discourse. In the case of this researarch the theoretical Foucauldian concepts identified were drawn upon to provide an interpretation of the discourses found. For example, when reviewing student codes of conduct and Student Charters it became evident the texts used could be interpretted using Foucault's concept of responsibilisation This required a final analysis of the texts and how the discourses produced related to the original

research questions and the literature. This process was not linear (ibid) and required moving back and forth between the phases with constant checking to ensure the piece of work demonstrates trustworthiness. This requires constant reflexivity; the need to take care to ensure that 'each [discourse] is actually represented in the transcripts being analysed, and not a product of […the researcher's] over interpretation' (Smith et al cited in Rodham et al., 2015). See Appendices 19, 20 and 21 for examples of how NVivo® was used to for the initial coding in this study. As with much qualitative research, there is no one right way to analyse the data, as there is no single truth. Coding and discourse development are understood to be subjective and an interpretative processes. Terry et al. (2017, p.21) suggested that 'this means the outcomes of these processes can be stronger or weaker, but they cannot be right or wrong in any objective sense.' As MacLure (2003, p.80. original emphasis) noted 'texts are artful, and they succeed when they *persuade us* that some state of affairs, proposition or argument is as it appears to be.'

Some pieces of text were coded with multiple nodes where perceived similarities could be seen, as well as the slight nuanced differences. Additionally, in many instances, the participants would comment on a range of different things as they explored the questions and appeared to reflect upon their peers' comments. Therefore, it was essential to code the same bits of text using a variety of nodes. The final coding was achieved by making multiple readings of the scripts and seeing how they could be constructed to form credible discourses for exploration.

The coding and interpreting of data, though potentially lengthy and sometimes problematic, afforded an iterative and reflexive approach. Srivastava and Hopwood, (2009, p. 77) suggested that 'reflexive iteration is at the heart of visiting and revisiting the data and connecting them with emerging insights, progressively leading to refined focus and understandings.' LeCompte & Schensul (1999, p.5) noted:

> Interpreting, or giving meaning to, data involves figuring out what the crunched data mean, or what they say about people or groups […] This involves attaching meaning and significance to the patterns, themes[discourses] and connections that the researcher identified during analysis, explaining why they have come to exist; and indicating what implications they might have for future actions.

Nonetheless, it is wise to be mindful that the interpretation and presentation of the data produced by the focus groups is 'inevitably a reinterpretation of the participant's position' (Smithson, 2000, p.115), and that the 'constructions and attributions' may go 'beyond the participants' intentions, and they may not share my interpretation. Thus qualitative data cannot be viewed as evidence that proves or disproves a hypothesis; the complexity of qualitative data should be considered as a resource. Therefore, the task of the researcher is to offer a critical and credible interpretation of the resource produced. As Foucault (1988, p. 154) suggested:

> A critique is not a matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices we accept rest upon.

The focus of the research is based on the assumption that the construction of the student-consumer will change the pedagogic relationship in some way. It was important that I recognised this assumption in the design, collection and analysis of the data. I have addressed these concerns above through reflexivity by demonstrating my ontology and epistemological approach to give the reader confidence in the validity of my work. Triangulation could have been used to cross-verify my interpretation; however, I concur with Richardson (1994 cited in Kvale, 2002) who raised concerns about using triangulation as a method of validation. Richardson argued that using a rigid triangle provided a central image for the analysis of postmodern texts and assumed a fixed central point or object that could be triangulated. In Richardson's view 'the central image is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transformation, multidimensionalities and angles of approach' (cited in Kvale, 2002, p.312).

### 3.4.11 Ethical Considerations

The primary concern with any form of social research is to gain informed consent from the participants (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004). This means providing them with information about the purpose of the study, the researcher, 'how the data will be used, and what participation will require of them - the subjects likely to be covered, how much time is required, and confidentiality' (Lewis, 2003, p.62) and their ability to withdraw at any time without recourse. Further to these considerations, I was conscious of my obligation to meet the ethical standards set by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2015). Additionally, full ethical approval was granted by London Metropolitan University to ensure data integrity and anonymity. Introductory letters and consent forms can be found in Appendices 7, 8, 9 ,10. Informed consent allows the participants to 'decide for themselves what is in their best interest and what risks they are prepared to take' (Ali & Kelly, 2018, p.53). It requires the participant to read and sign a consent form; however, Grayson and Myles (2005) suggested that this can be counter-productive as this can make the participants distrustful and potentially reluctant to participate. Fortunately, this did not happen as evidenced in the considerable dialogue in the transcripts. Confidentiality, in its own right, causes areas for reflection; for example, it privileges power to the researcher as the participants are seen in some way as vulnerable, 'and that consequently, they need 'protection'' (Macfarlane, 2010, p.21).

As the work is exploratory, it asks for reflexivity and questions the discourse in which the actors are involved. As a result, I was mindful that I may not be fully prepared for what may be discovered in the focus groups. I made it very clear at the beginning of each focus group that any information the participants gave during the discussion was confidential; it would only be shared within the group and would be anonymised for my thesis. I dissuaded the participants from discussing the material amongst themselves after the meeting to encourage confidentiality. When reflecting upon this I feel that this attempt at 'dissuading' may have been naïve and, to a degree, privileging myself as the expert researcher who could dictate how the participants should act after the focus group(s). After all, participants had volunteered to participate with full knowledge of my research area; therefore, they must have been interested in the topic on which I had constructed an event which ordinarily they would not have attended; I had asked them to discuss their views on the contemporary HE environment using questions which they may have not considered previously. Therefore, I could have planted 'seeds' which they may have wanted to explore either with their peers, or maybe from the student's perspective, with their parents or guardians. Ropers-Huilman and Winters, (2010, p. 45) reminded us that 'we are not certain that we will 'do no harm' as we attempt to understand others' experiences through our own identities'. The research aimed to establish new understandings of the discourse, known unknowns. However, it may reveal unknown unknowns or unknown knowns; 'things that we don't know that we know' (Žižek, 2006, p. 137), or things that we prefer not to admit to ourselves. I needed to listen attentively to the participants, building a rapport and demonstrating interest at all times. Rapport with the participants produces a common dialogue and should afford them greater confidence in me, thus eliciting greater depth and richness of data. A key consideration to acknowledge was the fact that the focus groups could be used as a platform to raise stressful unforeseen issues (unknown unknowns, unknown knowns) which may (in)directly result in emotional complications and cause unintended harm. With this in mind, I adopted a flexible approach with a commitment to a respectful understanding of the participants' perspectives which was non-judgmental and afforded their voice a due hearing. Fortunately, I did not have to moderate or intervene in any of the focus groups.

This chapter has provided an explanation of the research methodology used for this research. In the following chapters, the methodology is applied and used to explore the discourses identified.

# Chapter 4: United Kingdom Higher Education Policy Analysis: The Construction of the Student-consumer through Government and Localised University Policies

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the construction of the HE student-consumer discourse through Government ideologies, implemented national policies and institutional policies. In the first four sub-sections, Foucault's concepts of discourse analysis and genealogy were operataionalised to explore how successive UK governments have incrementally constructed the discourse of the student-consumer and the marketisation of HE from 1979 to 2017 (see CSO, 1979; DES, 1988; NCIHE, 1997; DfEE, 1998; HEFCE, 1999; DfEE, 2000; DfES, 2004; DBIS, 2011; DBIS, 2016.a). See Appendix 16 for a chronology of the main acts and policies that have contributed to the marketisation of HE and the construction of the student-consumer discourse from 1979 -2017. Foucault's concept of genealogy was used to provide an historical perspective of how government policy has constructed the student-consumer. This requires looking for the shifts in the ways that successive governments have changed the construction of the HE student and the functionality of HE. To examine these shifts requires an understanding of the contingencies that governments used to justify changes in policy. From these shifts it is possible to see the discontinuities in government policy that have shaped current policy. Foucault's method of discourse analysis has been used by a range of researchers to investigate education policy; for example, Southgate & Bennet (2014) used the method to investigate Widening Participitation policies in Australian Higher Education; Akdag & Swanson, (2017) used discourse analysis to critically evaluate four strategic documents from two Scottish universities as part of a study into the ethics of the internationalisation of Higher Education; Olmedo & Wilkins, (2017,p,573) operationalised Foucault's genealogy with discourse analysis to provide an understanding of how government policies construct parents 'are compelled to embody certain market norms and practices as they navigate the field of education'; Deuel (2021,p.310) used discourse analysis to investigate how intergovernmental organisations 'have (re)imagined and (re)positioned the purpose of higher education and its role as a technology of government'. This research will add to the literature by using Foucauldian genealogy and discourse analysis to investigate the construction of the discourse of the student-consumer in English Higher Education through government policy. To date this research method does not appear to have been used within this context.

Methodologically, a Foucauldian discourse analysis of policy texts does not seek to understand the implementation of policies, rather it aims to interpret 'which policy problems are brought to

the fore, and which are left aside' (Saarinen, 2008, p.719). Policy makers bring to light perceived problems, arguably coloured by their political persuasions, whilst limiting the space for alternative views, they construct what can and cannot be said within the discourse. Saarinen (2008, p.719 -780 citing Bacchi 2000) argued that 'Any use of language has political implications; any definition of a word makes claims about how it should be used, rather than describes how it should be used'. The objective of Foucauldian discourse analysis is to use 'theory to demonstrate how the use of particular discursive techniques [produce] meaning of a particular view of the world *and* prepare the ground for the 'practices that derive from them' (Graham, 2011, p. 668 citing Foucault, 1972, original emphasis). This research builds on the literature as it seeks to show how, through Foucauldian discourse analysis, the construction of the student-consumer through government policies has been argued as common sense. Foucauldian discourse analysis will be operationalised to provide an interpretation of how Student Codes of Conduct, Student Charters and texts on university websites are used to construct student-consumers. The narratives produced from the focus groups will be explored to provide an understanding of the discourses that appear to be at play.

Section 4.2, problematises how the student-consumer discourse is managed at the local level through university Student Charters, Student Codes of Conduct, and discourses produced on university websites. These technologies are interpreted as forms of Customer Relationship Management (CRM). The study explores how CRM has been extended and is now managed through online surveillance technologies. These technologies are not marketed as CRM, instead they are described as learner management platforms. However, due to the amount of student data they hold, these surveillance technologies appear to be integral to managing/constructing the student-consumer discourse for the purposes of NPM. This offers a different understanding of how CRM, in this context, can be seen to manage the student-consumer discourse. Section 4.3 concludes the chapter.

### 4.1.1 The Thatcher Years 1979-1990

The neoliberal transformation of English HEI's arguably had its foundations in the Thatcher years, 1979-1990 (see Edwards, 1989; Samuel, 1992; Ryan, 1998; Kealey, 2013; Beauvallet, 2015). When Margaret Thatcher, leader of the Conservative party became Prime Minister in 1979, the Conservative party had not formulated a clear HE policy; however 'they did believe that public expenditure, across all areas, needed to be drastically cut' (McClellan, 2016, p.168). Thatcher embraced neoliberalism as a means of lessening the burden of state funding through

the introduction of market principles within the public sphere and the implementation of NPM practice(s) (Deem, 1998). The Thatcher Government viewed HE as having failed the country as these institutions were not producing the leaders required for a prosperous country. Trow (1998, p. 120) argued that the Thatcher Government wanted:

> A less expensive, more efficient, and more relevant system, one more clearly of service to business and industry, to the job market and wealth production, more concerned with training, the transfer of useful skills and knowledge rather than with costly and unmeasurable forms of elite higher education.

Here it is possible to see a considerable shift in the discourse of HE as the focus now is upon outcomes that will benefit industry and the economy as opposed to the development of intellect. HE was to be instrumentalised and repurposed for the utilitarian good of the economy. Historically, HE had always been in a precarious position as its survival was dependent on the contingent view of those tasked with managing the state. Before the Thatcher administration, governments had supported HE with little intervention. However, the interest of the state now focused on training, cost reductions, and the construction of graduates with skills that could contribute to the wealth creation of the country. This can be viewed as a utilitarian economic good; however, it could be argued that as opposed to funding universities *per se* it is possible to discern that the Thatcher Government was intent on funding universities for the benefit of the state and commerce. HE was now constructed differently in the political discourse. As Ryan (1998, p.5) noted, universities were being:

> organisationally reconfigured to take on a politically decreed role in the economy; they […] lost their right to collectively self-manage their own work [and…] losing that self-management has turned [academics] into employees, to be deployed as utility dictates […] From a cultural capital for society [universities] have become political capital for governments.

The governmental shift in direction for universities constructed a discourse that could be viewed as materialistic in outcomes as opposed to the pedagogic development of students. The interests of commerce and the state can be seen as the market driver for the Thatcher administration for HE. This gave legitimacy to the need for universities to change; it was in the public's national and economic interests to be seen to be performing for a utilitarian goal. The Thatcher administration had politicised HE, arguably establishing a master discourse which would be followed by subsequent English governments.

In 1980, the Thatcher Government withdrew the subsidy for overseas students in HE which reduced university income by between 5 and 10 percent (Ryan,1998). International students

were now constructed as a private source of income and English HE entered the global market for student-consumers. This was followed by the 1981 *Public Expenditure White Paper* (HMSO, 1981) announcing an 18 percent cut in funding which would be implemented in the following three years. In the run-up to the 1983 election, the Conservatives indicated there would be no more reductions in funding to HE. However, once in power, additional cuts were implemented, with some as high as 14 percent (McClellan, 2016 citing Soares 1999). Foucault (2004, p.133) suggested that for neoliberalism, the problem is not a case of what you cannot touch and what you are entitled to touch, in this case, education. Rather 'the problem is how you touch them. The problem is the way of doing things, the problem if you like, of governmental style'. In 1985, the Jarratt report (HMSO, 1985) was published. This, to a degree, was a confusing document as it highlighted what it described as 'the undesirable aspect of the situation that Government had not made clear its policy to the role of higher education in the country' (3.10). The document goes on to state that in 'the first time in decades the financial and academic priorities were potentially in conflict' (3.20). This was in part due to the Government cutting funding by 20 percent (Edwards, 1989) and the encouragement of staff to take early retirement or voluntary redundancy.

The other problem faced by universities was the requirement to become more commercial or entrepreneurial, for example, establishing greater links with industry and commerce. The document suggested that these were times of uncertainty for universities and required strategic planning, despite the lack of guidance in regards to Government policy. University management was effectively constructed as inept as the authors suggested that strategic planning 'may be unrecognisable in universities' (HMSO, 1985, 3.29). Though discretely packaged, the report demanded that 'university internal governance should change to reflect the best in the management of British industry and commerce, from which came a good third of the Committees' membership' (Ryan, 1998, p.23). Equally discretely packaged was the recommendation for performance indicators to be developed, 'covering both inputs and outputs and designed for use both within individual universities and for making comparisons between institutions' (HMSO, 1985, p.36). Performance indicators can be viewed as auditable mechanisms of surveillance to ensure universities are productive in meeting state-market requirements. For Thatcher, public institutions that could not be privatised 'were to be restructured into "internal markets" (pseudo-markets) in which an element of market imitating competition is introduced into administrative arrangements' (Thorpe, 2008, p.105).

Effectively, it is possible to observe how the HE market was being discretely constructed; universities would have to be managed , audited and ranked corporations, with the notion of

student-consumer choice subject to market performance. In 1986, the Thatcher Government introduced the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The rationale of the exercise was to rank universities and allocate research funding accordingly for research. Therefore a competitive market was constructed for universities and academics to be seen to perform and be ranked in. The unforeseen problem for the Government was, as Lincoln (2017) noted, 'that if you introduce a measurement of performance, people will simply become very good at being measured'. The Government also committed itself to a comprehensive review of support with the possibility of the introduction of student loans (Wilson, 1997).

In 1987, the University Funding Council (UFC) replaced the University Grants Committee (UGC). The staffing of the UFC demonstrated the neoliberal discourse of the Thatcher Government, and academics were replaced with business people whose remit was to address funding and the allocation of resources. Collini (2018, p.94) suggested this 'was a deliberate attempt to make the funding of universities more directly responsive to Government priorities'. Student numbers continued to grow, however, so that consumption 'outstripped the funding available to HE institutions' (Williams, 2013, p.39). The 1988 *Education Reform Act* (HMSO, 1988) further articulated the Government's dissatisfaction with universities (Letwin, 1993). The Act brought further changes to 'reduce Government expenditure, to make individual institutions more competitive, and to bring them into a closer and more dependent relationship with industry and commerce' (Walford, 1992, p.195). Here it is possible to discern what could be described as the continued incremental shift in the repurposing discourse of HE to that of state, industry and competitive market requirements. Further competition was required. The needs of industry and commerce were to become further entrenched as the drivers of university relevance as opposed to the educational attainment of students. Government policy, to a degree, changed due to the influence of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), whose statistical series *Education at a Glance* (OECD, 1988) which demonstrated that UK HE participation rates were considerably less than most other developed countries (Williams, 2010). This raised concerns within the Government as did the belief that without a well-qualified workforce the UK would lag behind in the rapidly emerging knowledge society. This shifted the Government's policy of 'saving money to the need for expansion to underpin economic growth' (ibid, p. 26). Again, it is possible to observe how the role of HE is being reconstructed to meet the needs of the state and industry as opposed, arguably, to those of students. Public funding discourses were adjusted to 'encourage expansion at marginal costs much lower than average costs' (Williams, 1997, p.275).

HE expansion was relaunched in line with Government policy. Participation rates doubled between 1988 and 1992, effectively converting an elite university education system into one of mass participation. Expansion rates were justified by social justice and economic discourses. Age participation ratios (APR – 18-year-olds participating in HE) doubled from 15 to 30 percent between 1988 and 1992, thereby constructing new problems. McCaig (2015, p.118) noted that 'a mass system would henceforth be funded on the same basis as an elite system, which would inevitably increase social demands for accountability'. The success of this expansion without the reciprocal funding provided the Conservative Government with the opportunity to introduce student loans to cover maintenance, essentially creating the conditions 'to begin the process of transferring costs from the state to the individual' (ibid). This can be seen as part of the discourse for the incremental construction of the student-consumer and the marketisation of HE. To facilitate this, the Conservative Government implemented the *Top-Up Loans for Students* white paper (DES, 1988) along with the *Education (Students) Loans Act 1990* (HMSO, 1990). These loans were a mortgage type system and justified with discourses such as that they were:

> supporting students more equitably between participants, their parents and the taxpayer, the need to increase the financial resources available for students during their studies, the need to reduce the financial contribution made by parents [and] the reduction of public expenditure in line with Government policy.
>
> (Hesketh, 1999, p.387)

Loans as a mortgage-style payment constructed students as consumers and as investors in their future. These loans, theoretically, responsibilised student-consumers as rational actors in the HE market. Arguably, the Governments expected that student-consumers would become more engaged in their educational choices, and perhaps better motivated to ensure they achieve the potential rewards of HE and repay their loan. The potential problem with the introduction of these loans by the Thatcher Government is that they instrumentalise HE into consumerist material outcomes. Equally, loans shift the previous Government's utilitarian objective of a common state good to that of individual attainment. Students, through the loans system, can be seen to be constructed as *entrepreneurial selves.*

### 4.1.2 The John Major Conservative Government

In 1992, The Conservative Party, led by John Major won the general election and the Government then ended the so-called 'binary divide' between universities and polytechnics, resulting in over 40 former polytechnics attaining university status. These were named post '92 Universities. This was legislated through *The Further and Higher Education Act* 1992 (HMSO,

1992), an enactment of the proposals in the White Paper; *Higher Education: A New Framework for the 21st Century* (HMSO, 1991) published in 1991. The UFC was dissolved and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) was put in place to oversee HE. As new market entrants, post '92 universities were not only 'cheaper than their established counterparts' (Parker & Jary, 1995, p.322) but could also offer greater variety within the expanding sector, creating a competitive market environment for more consumers. Of key importance is that, in order to meet the demands of the state-required HE market, post '92 universities could, overnight, suddenly offer their own degrees, validated internally instead of the previously offered Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA). The polytechnics that became post '92 universities, had to meet the requirements of the CNAA such as safeguards for academic planning boards or academic advisory committees (Knight, 2002). *The Further and Higher Education Act* 1992, effectively removed these *quality* mechanisms. Governance in post '92 universities in the future was to be based on commercial business models with income, costs, and outcomes being the metrics of performance. New Public Management was established as the business model. Post '92 universities, as clearly defined businesses, had to expand their market offer. Expansion included the development of courses that historically had not been considered as HE. Reay et al (2005: ix) noted examples such as 'teacher education and para-medical professional education' which were redefined as suitable HE subjects, whereas historically this was not the case. These *new degrees* expanded the HE market as now student-consumers could get a degree in nearly *anything.* Enrolments 'increased by 50% and expenditure per student fell by 30%' (Parker & Jary, 1995, p.322).

The Government's success in expanding HE was abruptly halted due to the 1994 recession when the Treasury tried to stop the expansion of HE. However, As Shattock, (1999, p.9) argued 'the damage had been done [as] higher education had expanded too far and too fast to be remotely confineable within public expenditure limits'. Shattock's viewpoint draws attention to the consequences of the Government's expansion from elite to mass higher education, which had not considered the implications as age participation rate had increased from 18 to over 30 percent (ibid).

The Government's planned response to the situation was to further cut higher education expenditure and 'this prompted the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (CVCP) to threaten that they would charge fees to make up for the funding they were losing from Government sources' (ibid). The potential for student fees to become an election issue made the main political parties agree to the formulation of the Dearing Committee to address the financial

problems of HE. New Labour came into power in 1997, under the leadership of Tony Blair, who promised changes in HE policy. These are explored in the following Section.

### 4.1.3 New Labour and Higher Education

When New Labour came into power, the participation rate in HE was 34 percent (Mayhew et al., 2004). Labour sought to increase this to 50 percent by 2010, in effect increasing the HE market. Lord Dearing's Review of HE in 1997 presented 93 recommendations as to:

> how the purposes, shape, structure, size and funding of higher education, including support for students, should develop to meet the needs of the United Kingdom over the next 20 years, recognising that higher education embraces teaching, learning, scholarship, and research.
>
> (ibid, p. 1)

The Dearing Report (1997, para 1.21) argued that those who benefit from the Government's investment in HE should 'bear a greater share of the cost'. Interestingly, in the next line it is possible to see the early construction of the student-consumer:

> As a result, we expect students of all ages will be discriminating investors in higher education, looking for quality, convenience, and relevance to their needs at a cost they consider to be affordable and justified by the probable return on their investment of time and money.

The discourse of 'investor' is important as this reinforces the construction of students as entrepreneurial selves who are responsibilised for their decision-making. Foucault, (2004, p.236) argued that part of the neoliberal ideology is the construction of *homo œconomicus, '*the entrepreneur of himself [sic], being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for himself the source of own his earnings'. However, it appears ironic that successive British governments who have based their ideologies on market-based values omit to mention that the greater the abundance of a product in the market, in this case, degree educated students, the capital value of their degree declines correspondingly. Arguably, it can be seen that the Government's determination to increase HE consumption would create an oversupply of students with a degree product in the jobs market. Oversupply in any market negates the scarcity value of a product; for students, this could mean either having to accept lower wages due to competition or not getting graduate positions. Bourdieu (1984, p.147) noted that:

> The overproduction of qualifications, and the consequent devaluation, tend to become a structural constant when theoretically equal chances of obtaining qualifications are offered to all the offspring of the bourgeoisie (regardless of birth rank or sex) while the access of other

> classes to these qualifications also increases (in absolute terms). The strategies which one group may employ to try to escape down classing and to return to their class trajectory, and those which another group employs to rebuild the interrupted path of a hoped-for trajectory, are now one of the most important factors in the transformation of social structures.

Dearing's report noted the shift in HE with the focus now being 'a greater emphasis on the recognition of the individual [student] as a customer or consumer' (ibid, para 4.59). The constructed identity of students-consumers is quite different from that of investor. Arguably, investors are speculators who have no guarantee of a return, whereas a consumer purchases a product that is supposed to deliver the marketed expectations. The construction of the student-consumer provides further governmental leverage to ensure universities adopt market-based or service provider principles. There is also an expectation that universities, as service providers, will adapt their product to meet the needs of their consumers. The report indicated that students would no longer accept unquestioningly the HE offer; however, in the same paragraph, the suggestion is that in future students will not see 'themselves simply as customers of higher education but rather as members of a learning community'. Dearing's use of the word customer is important as it shifts the power relationship in the pedagogic discourse. The word customer, it can be argued, suggests an outcome based relationship for the students. The report noted that 'the effectiveness of teaching and learning should be enhanced' (ibid, p.3) and 'learning should be increasingly responsive to employment needs'. Again, it is possible to observe government dissatisfaction with HE and the assumption that learning should be focused on the materialistic needs of national policies and those of employers. The report indicated that as a business, universities must be accountable to students and society, indicating that audit mechanisms will be required.

Dearing's Report identified six key issues requiring additional support (para. 17.30). To meet these requirements the Report stated that: 'All graduates would be expected to make a flat-rate contribution of about 25 percent to tuition costs, at the time of study or by repaying a loan on an income-contingent basis when at work' (ibid: para. 20.44). This represents a continued incremental shift towards the discourse of the marketisation of HE. Also, there is further construction of students as consumers as gradually they are being expected to pay more for their education. Using Foucault's (1977; p.149) method of genealogy it is possible to see what he termed as 'emergence, the entry of forces', in this case, the emergence of flat-rate contribution fees for students.

However, within the report, the economic instrumental discourse of Government policy on HE was also evident as in 'the assertion that the primary purpose of higher education is to prepare students for the world of work' (Harvey, 2000, p.4). For example recommendations such as:

> the UK must now compete in increasingly competitive international markets where the […] labour market demand for those with higher-level education and training is growing.
>
> (Dearing, 1997, p.4).

The discourse that HEIs should produce students with 'skills' for employability interestingly, was also articulated in the *Final Report of the Graduate Standards Programme* (HEQC, 1997) produced by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC). The discourse for universities to produce students with good personal, communication, and transferable skills posed a problem for universities as they had to incorporate 'non-academic qualities' into the educational assessment process' (Brown, 1995, p.45). These modifications were required to meet the needs of industry and commerce and were adopted with a greater willingness by the 'less prestigious universities'(ibid).

In 1998, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) published the Green Paper *The Learning Age: a renaissance for New Britain*. The paper set out the discourse(s) that 'Learning is the key to prosperity – for each of us as individuals as well as the nation as a whole' (DfEE, 1998, p.Introduction). The paper, interestingly, continued the discourse of the individual who must invest in themselves through self-improvement. Foucault's (2004) *entrepreneurial self* can be seen as the dominant discourse. The paper appears to responsibilise 'us' as individuals who should seek learning for greater prosperity; however, it also articulates what could be viewed as a 'we're all in it together' discourse. The continued requirement for universities to change to meet the needs of the economy and, more importantly, students was also emphasised in the claim that 'the most effective way of getting and keeping a job will be to have the skills needed by employers' (DfEE, 1998, p.para.6). Arguably, the Government knows best and students must invest their time for what industry and the economy wants as opposed to perhaps their own pedagogic development. The cost of the expansion of student numbers required a review of the student funding discourse in 1998. The 1998 *Teaching and Higher Education Act* (Part 11) (HMSO, 1998), introduced by Labour, rescinded awards for student support, maintenance and introduced tuition fees. Annual tuition fees or contributions toward tuition fees of £1,000 were introduced in September 1998. Labour rationalised the fees in part with discourses of social injustice as the fees would 'bridge the divide between those who benefit most from higher education and those who benefit the least' (Naidoo, 2000, p.29). 'Students were required to pay

up-front fixed-rate tuition fees (with some means-testing) […] loans were available to cover both fees and living expenses' (Johnes, 2008, p.654).

In 2000, the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) published *The excellence challenge: the Government's proposals for widening the participation of young people in higher education* (DfEE 2000), which was followed by the HEFCE strategy document: HEFCE strategic plan 2003–08 (HEFCE, 2003). Both documents emphasised widening participation (WP) as the dominant discourse in HE. This was further reiterated in the HEFCE (2003) paper, Funding for WP in higher education, which made fair access its primary objective and stated:

> We must make certain that the opportunities that higher education brings are available to all those who have the potential to benefit from them, regardless of their background.
>
> (DfES, 2003.p.670)

The Labour Government additionally made funding available for a joint initiative between HEFCE, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), and the Learning Skills Council to create regional Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs). These were tasked with improving progression rates into HE including those who had chosen vocational routes and gained vocational qualifications. The vocational route into HE had been created through Foundation Degrees (Fd's). These were industry-led to ensure training was fit for industry purpose and provided the top-up opportunity for students to continue into HE. In 2003, the Department for Education and Science published *The Future of Higher Education* white paper (DfES, 2003) with the stated commitment to 'increase participation in HE towards 50 percent of those aged 18-30 by the end of the decade' (ibid, p.57) to alleviate skills shortages. The paper also raised concerns about the decrease in student funding between 1989 and 1997. The White Paper indicated that the Government would increase spending on higher education to £10 billion a year. Despite these promises, variable tuition fees of up to £3,000 were introduced following *The Higher Education Act 2004* (DfES, 2004). Discourses of personal financial gain and the benefits from having completed a university education were used as justifications for students to consume HE and legitimised increased debt. As the DfES White paper clearly stated:

> Graduates earn, on average, around 50 percent more than non-graduates […] and, as a group, they have enjoyed double the number of job promotions over the past five years.
>
> (ibid, p.59).

It should be noted that the above claim fails to acknowledge the gender and ethnicity pay gaps or the unequal remuneration awarded to graduates of elite universities compared to those of post '92 universities. This is discussed in section 4.1.4. Nonetheless, it is feasible to observe what

could be viewed as a discourse of human capital theory, which could be problematic. For example Moghtader (2017, p.36) noted:

> Education based on human capital theory sacrifices the personal, ethical, and political aspects of education in favour of economic returns. As a set of formulations and projections, it also has enabled politicians and economists to speak as experts of educational processes. This implies the economization of moral values of public education for the end of profitability.

*The Higher Education Act* 2004 considered loans as a means by which students could repay their fees post-graduation. Universities could charge the full amount, £3,000, if they could demonstrate an approved Access Agreement (AA) with the Office for Fair Access (OFFA). The reality was that the majority of universities obtained Approved Access Agreements and charged the full fee. The exceptions were Leeds Metropolitan University and the University of Greenwich (Miller, 2010) who gained the status, but opted for a lower pricing market strategy. As well as the new fee arrangements, the Government made extensive changes to how English students would access finance in the future; this was arguably reinforcing HE as a marketplace as access to loans provided greater opportunities to consume HE. To help support these changes The Student Loan Company (SLC) started providing loans available under an income-contingent repayment (ICR) scheme so that variable fees could be paid using a tuition loan. This was made available to all students, irrespective of parental earnings or financial circumstances, to be repaid post-graduation. Effectively, all students were provided with the opportunity to consume HE, albeit at further cost, the debt burden being constructed as post-graduation privilege. Additionally, maintenance grants and loans were reintroduced in 2006, 'and designed to ensure that students from lower-level income households received a basic level of financial support and that all students would make a contribution to their university education' (Miller, 2010, p.86).

Interestingly, before the introduction of 'top-up' fees in 2006:

> the then chief executive of the Higher Education Funding Council England (HEFCE), Sir Howard Newby, warned HEIs that the increase in tuition fees would require them to treat students as *customers* and be more responsive to their needs.
>
> (Jones, 2010, p.44 citing Lipsett, 2005. My emphasis).

The discourse of the student-consumer can be seen as being further normalised as now students were taking out loans at higher levels. However, the student-consumer discourse can be seen to be evolving with the introduction of the National Student Survey (NSS) in 2005. This was effectively an auditable mechanism for the anonymous student voice that would be used as to measure levels of satisfaction with their courses and their academics. From a Foucauldian perspective this would be seen as an additional surveillance technology giving student-

consumers the power to evaluate the performance of their academics without recourse. It can also be seen as a form of governmentality or government at a distance 'which subjects lecturers, departments and universities to intercepting panoptic gazes and perpetual ratings' (Thiel, 2019, p.538). The survey was to be completed by all students graduating from all publicly funded HEIs. It was intended as a method for universities to survey teaching quality to increase student-consumer satisfaction with their courses. However, it was also used as a method of ranking universities to allow future student-consumers to make informed judgments based on the evaluations of previous university student-consumers. In 2010, the coalition Government, dominated by the Conservatives, gained power.

### 4.1.4 The Coalition Government

The Coalition Government was formed between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrats in May 2010. It promised fiscal austerity as a means to rebalance the budget (MacLeavy, 2011). In 2012, the Coalition Government, following its White Paper, *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System* (DBIS, 2011), introduced the policy of making HE students pay full fees for their education. The legitimisation of the policy change was that graduates 'on average earn more than non-graduates and that their higher education is one reason for this' (ibid, p.17). Again, the notion of personal gain legitimises the market requirement that student-consumers should have to pay more than before for their studies, albeit in terms of loans and deferred payments. Though not explicit, this could be viewed as the further entrenchment of the human capital discourse. In the document students are referred to once as consumers to whose needs universities must respond accordingly. For example, 'institutions must deliver a better student experience; improving teaching, assessment, feedback and preparation for the world of work' (ibid, p.4). In an attempt to justify the further adoption of a market-based ideology by the HE sector, the White Paper indicated:

> 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.
>
> (DBIS, 2011, p.8).

> 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.
>
> (DBIS, 2011, p.9)

Arguably, the Government's intent was to create a public university market based on price and on 'meeting much tougher conditions on widening participation and fair access' (DBIS, 2011, p.15). Most universities met the 'tougher conditions' from those ranked highest to lowest charging the full £9,000, Leeds Metropolitan University being the exception, charging £8,500 (Baron, 2011), despite meeting the required conditions. This market-based pricing strategy of undercutting the competition has since been abandoned as the Leeds Metropolitan University website now advertises the same fees as other UK public universities.

Despite the Coalition Government insisting upon an almost fully market-based HE system, certain areas had to be protected. These were highlighted as those with additional costs 'such as Medicine, Science and Engineering, which cannot be covered through graduate contributions alone' (DBIS, 2011, p.11). This Governmental discourse is fascinating as, on one side of the argument neoliberalism is supposed to be a non-interventionist form of government in the economic process, since, as Foucault (2004, p.137) noted, 'the economic process, as the bearer in itself of a regulatory structure in the form of competition, will never go wrong if it is allowed to function fully'. Interestingly, those who are 'likely to benefit' with the highest post-graduation wages are being subsidised by the taxpayer. The need to protect certain sectors is thought-provoking as the students attending the private elite universities can pay fees above £28,000 per annum, for example, Hult International Business School. All of the courses that Hult offers are business orientated, such as Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) or Masters in Business Administration (MBA). These courses would not fall under what the Government deems as expensive and strategically important subjects.

In November 2015, the Government produced both a consultancy and a Green Paper, providing additional reforms to HE. The Green Paper *Higher education: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice* (DBIS, 2015) suggested that universities will be given Ofsted-style rankings on the quality of teaching and that those rated highly will be able to charge higher fees (Garner, 2015). This resonates with the Government White Paper *Students at the heart of the system* (DBIS, 2011) which clearly states that a full fee environment will 'ensure good' universities will be well funded for the long-term (ibid, p.5). Curiously, the Conservative University Minister, Greg Clark suggested, in 2015, that '£9,000-a-year tuition fees are not expensive – because it only costs 'the same as a 'posh coffee' to pay them back every day' and they are 'a phenomenal investment' (McTague, 2015). This is concerning as Clark dismisses student debt by likening it simply to having a 'cup of posh coffee every day' and makes the assumption that all students can afford a 'posh coffee'. Due to inflation, university fees have now risen to £9,250 per annum. The Government consultancy paper, *Fulfilling our Potential:*

*Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice* (DBIS, 2015.a, p.1) proposed that a new metric of performativity be introduced, the Teaching Excellence and Students Outcome Framework (TEF), as this will 'deliver better value for money for students, employers and taxpayers' (ibid, p.7). This was introduced in 2017. To ensure academics meet this new metric, 'reputational and financial incentives' (ibid, p.8) are the means of dressage and calculus.

The graduate premium of £400,000 calculated by the DfES (2002) was used by the Labour Party to justify the increase in tuition fees. One year later the figure was revised to £120,000 (THE, 2003). By 2011, the discourse of the graduate premium as a specific financial was conspicuous by its absence being replaced in the Government White Paper *Students at the heart of the system* (BIS, 2011) with the vague claim that 'graduates do, on average, earn more than nongraduates' (ibid, p.4) or 'the graduate premium has remained substantial' (DBIS, 2016, p.8). The discourse of the graduate premium is troublesome as not all people in certain sectors of society have the same opportunities once they have completed their degrees. The Press Association report (2016), citing research completed by The Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS), the Institute of Education (IoE) and the Universities of Cambridge and Harvard, appears to support this social injustice. This research analysed 'the tax data and student loan records for 260,000 students in England up to a decade after they had graduated' and noted:

> Students from richer homes earn thousands more after graduating than their poorer peers – even if they attended the same universities […] where and what students choose to study affected their future earnings [...] [with] those who attended the most selective institutions taking home the most in their pay packets […] [There is] evidence of a gender gap, with men much more likely to take home higher salaries than women, even if they went to the same institution.

Furthermore, the degree of uncertainty is further increased by the range of outcomes by the subject studied. Statistics show a very wide range of possible graduate premiums from £400,000 for men studying Medicine and Dentistry to a negative £10,000 for men studying Creative Arts and Design. Ainsworth (2014, p.16) noted: 'If medical careers were excluded, the graduate premium would be significantly lower, with many subjects yielding paltry returns'. The fact for student-consumers is that not all HE will produce the same earnings outcomes and that some may be burdened with student loan debt for their working lives. In financial terms, return on investment (ROI) is not the same for all student-consumers.

## 4.2 Managing the consumer discourse: Student Charters and Customer Relationship Management

This Section explores how student-consumers can be seen to be constructed to perform accordingly for universities through New Public Management technologies such as Student Charters, Student Codes of Conduct, university policies, and texts on university websites. These technologies for Foucault (1991) could be viewed as techniques of dressage that are used to discipline students and academics in a particular way. This is a contradiction with government discourse. As articulated before, student-consumers have been constructed as enterprising *entrepreneurial selves* who have consumer choice. Therefore, students are supposed to be active choosing consumers, who purchase a product for their own means and gratification. However, university Student Charters, Codes of Conduct and policies articulate, quite specifically, the required student docile performance. Naidoo and Williams (2014, p.1) noted:

> By studying the production of institutional information related to charters, a particular image of the 'good' student is promoted to prospective students, which simultaneously regulates current student expectations.

One of the key tenets for dressage is the requirement of a docile body. 'A body [that] is docile may be subjected, used, transformed and improved' (Foucault, 1991, p.136). These technologies of dressage apparently construct certain student identities and bodies that must act in specified ways. They dictate ways of being, responsibilities, attitudes, and behaviours that must be adopted by the consuming students and enacted by academics. The ideal student-consumer is constructed as obedient and willing to modify behaviour to what NPM specifies as normalised. This appears to be confusing as on the one hand students are supposed to exhibit behaviours of independent learning, and on the other, these texts require a degree of passivity from students.

Student Charters have been a requirement in every HEI (DBIS, 2011.a) in England since 2012. These are institution-specific and must detail 'the minimum level of service a student can expect from their university and, in return, what will be expected from them' (Williams, 2016, p.69). To gain an understanding of how Student Charters were constructed, four university websites were chosen. These were chosen systematically, the criteria being that they did not come from any of the HEIs where the focus groups had been conducted and secondly, they were representative of the sector. The texts were evaluated using Foucauldian discourse analysis to gain an understanding of how the discourse produced positioned academics and students. The analysis revealed that the texts had been constructed as stipulated by the Government (DBIS, 2011.a). A DBIS requirement is that students, the University Student Union, and staff, must all

have contributed to the charter and the agreed version signed off by the VC. These charters can be viewed in two ways. In one context, they reinforce the student-consumer discourse as they signify a 'contractual' obligation despite the document stating that 'it is not a detailed personal agreement or contract' (DBIS, 2011.a, p.8). 'Contractual' stipulations for the students, within the texts reviewed, include attendance policies, 'independent learner stipulations', 'the responsibility for shaping their learning experience', 'active participation in the student-focused HE experience', 'reviewing of feedback to improve performance' and 'ensuring they are informed as to their rights as a student'. In another context, they can be viewed as discourses within the dispositif (Foucault,1980) that construct and therefore manage the HE discourses, in part, through prescriptive policies or dressage. The dispositif for Foucault (ibid, p.194) is the:

> heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical and moral propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid.

Previous scholarly analyses of the function of Student Charters include Aldridge and Rowley (1998), who investigated how charters are used to manage student expectations. Pitman (2000) explored how charters define the expectations of universities and Williams (2011) found that charters similarily indicated a level of service that students can expect from universities and what they are expected to do in return. Naidoo and Williams, (2014) have commented upon the role of charters as a part of managing the university experience. This research offers a different interpretation of Student Charters and Codes of Conduct by viewing these as parts of the customer relationship management (CRM) dispositif that construct docile academics and students through technologies of dressage and responsibilsation.

The charters reviewed constructed a visibility requirement of performance by the students. For example, 'Review the feedback provided on your work and use it to improve your performance' or 'Participating in the development of a student-focused HE experience that exceeds expectations' or 'Value our collective identity'. Students are encouraged to be 'active participants in shaping their learning experience' or 'participate actively'. However, these texts can be seen to require docile bodies as they can limit how students engage in their learning. The interpretation of the discourse produced through these texts suggests the requirement for a productive consuming 'visibility'. These texts can be viewed as a form of dressage as consuming students are required to perform in a specific way; these performance(s) can then be surveyed through the panoptic audit. This 'visibility' requirement or 'lack of' determines the economic space in which students are placed. These 'visibilities' can be used to construct new forms of knowledge that produce commodified data that is input into software programmes such

as Civitas™. (See literature review for an overview of learner management technologies). Civitas™ could be viewed as part of the dispositif to manage the HE student-consumer discourse. The technology appears now to be integral to the panoptic management and the construction of the student-consumer discourse/academic relationship. This offers a new understanding of how students can be constantly surveyed and universities can intervene as deemed necessary. These software programmes are not marketed as CRM solutions. However, when examining the amount of data that they can gather or have input, it could be argued that this is what they are. CRM software, through data mining provides;

> hidden predictive information […] [that] organisations can use to identify valuable customers, predict future behaviours, and enable firms to make proactive, knowledge-driven decisions.

The integration of CRM is a form of business re-engineering which universities appear to have adopted to compete in the commercialised HE environment. CRM software can analyse a student's previous and current behaviour and offer/predict future patterns of behaviour. Interestingly, one student charter reviewed was very honest about using technology to monitor students stating, 'We will use technology to monitor your engagement and success and to help you to avoid falling behind.' This could be viewed as suggesting that interventions will be used should a student become a liability. These data inputs, from a Foucauldian perspective, inform the non-discursive dispositifs or practices which are used to intervene when required. Hagerty and Ericson (2000, p.607), have noted that Foucault failed:

> to directly engage contemporary developments in surveillance technology, focusing instead on transformations to eighteenth and nineteenth-century total institutions. This is a curious silence, as it is these technologies which give his analysis particular currency among contemporary commentators on surveillance.

Foucault could not have seen how this software would become an essential tool in the management of the (student) body in HE. This software now dominates the operation of the panoptic audit of the student body. It appears that CRM software is being used to manage student-consumers through the use of assignifying algorithms. These assignifying algorithms are 'likely to persist' as with Civitas™ ratings for each student, red being unlikely to persist, green being highly likely to persist. Foucault (1991, p.200) remarked that through the Panopticon 'he is seen, but he does not see; he is the object of information, never a subject in communication.'

CRM is ‘a combination of people, processes, and technology which seeks to understand a company’s customer’ (Chen & Popovich, 2003, p.672) with a remit of managing the emotional relationship. CRM, within the university context, is no different from that of the corporate world in that it focuses on student-consumer retention through interventions, when required, based on predicted behaviours. To be effective, CRM needs data inputs so that customer profiles can be created, managed, and updated accordingly. The updating provides a constant examination of the student body. This, from a Foucauldian perspective, is the ‘examination’. Foucault, (1991, p.187) argued the examination is:

> exercised through its invisibility […] and the examination is the technique by which power, instead of emitting the signs of its potency, instead of imposing its mark on its subjects, holds them in a mechanism of objectification […] The examination is, as it were, the ceremony of this objectification.

For CRM to operate effectively in corporations the software must communicate between the front office operations such as sales, marketing, and customer service, and the back office which is responsible for financials, operations, logistics, and human talent management. The customer engagement with the service provider is monitored through touchpoints or places of brand engagement. These provide new forms of knowledge that create new economic spaces. Student-consumer brand engagements that provide new knowledge could include one-to-one tutorials, draft-feedback sessions, online interactions with university software, institutional swipe-ins, classroom swipe ins and module evaluation surveys. New knowledges are also constructed as students engage with mitigation, complaints, financial support, wellbeing and engagement, employer engagement, and work placement teams. Each of these touchpoint interactions (or lack of) can be monitored, creating student-consumer data profiles that are allocated economic space accordingly. ‘It is the fact of constantly being seen, being always able to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjectification’ (Foucault, 1991, p.187). Students, therefore, become objects of surveillance with hypothesised futures that require risk management strategies. Thus, areas of concern or deviance can be addressed following the university’s CRM policies, and arguably a good student-consumerist discourse is managed effectively, the outcome being the student-consumer as a satisfied customer.

Students also have to submit to the discourses of policy/charter/codes of conduct dressage once they join an HEI. Learner engagement policies are used to shape ‘student dispositions and attitudes’ (MacFarlane, 2017, p. xiii) although the students ‘have freely chosen to be at university to learn’. From a university’s perspective, once the students have signed up they are viewed as financial assets that must be fully realised and this requires CRM. Students, despite paying for a product, become a calculable asset that must perform predictably. Failure or withdrawal are pathologised within the vernacular of the HEIs. The student, arguably without

knowing, has in effect signed a contractual obligation stating that they will complete their chosen degree and the University will be paid accordingly. Additionally, should the students not meet these obligations they are signified/objectified as liabilities with CRM monitoring software.

Student retention is now a calculable commodity. Civitas™ Learning claims that 'the core addressable market for student retention is $1 billion globally' (Schieber, 2015). The student/consumers' right to define/construct their 'own' educational discourse is rendered calculable, and everything must be predictable or managed accordingly. Non-academic performance achievements such as 'attending classes, showing an 'enthusiasm' for learning or demonstrating emotions such as empathy through self-reflective exercise' (MacFarlane, 2017: xiv) have become acts of dressage with which the students must visibly 'engage'. This is interesting as despite being constructed as consumers, it appears that students have to consume their university product in a specific localised way. To a degree, it can be argued that student-consumers are expected to be docile bodies who must submit to constant training, measurement and surveillance.

## 4.3 Conclusion

The first part of this chapter has critically evaluated how the discourse of the student-consumer has been developed through a range of policies enacted by successive British governments from 1979 to 2017. These policies are state and commerce-driven, and effectively instrumentalise HE. Foucault's concepts of genealogy and discourse analysis have been used to explore the inconsistencies in policy as successive governments have adopted a neoliberal ideology to justify the construction of the student-consumer and the marketisation of HE. The study has sought to show that despite neoliberal policies claiming to be market-driven, the ideology in effect constructs markets where they did not exist. Equally, the research has provided an interpretation of how neoliberal market policies are far from *laissez-faire* and how metrics such as the RAE and the NSS can be seen as 'government at a distance' and forms of surveillance. The investigation has explored how successive governments have tried to stratify/manipulate the public HE into a market that is focused upon the needs of industry and the state. However, despite these market interventions, all public universities have resisted to some extent the construct of the market and are charging the same fees. The study has added to the existing body of literature by providing an interpretation of how the marketisation of HE has been justified using discourses of competition, social equality, and the graduate premium. The study has shown how the graduate premium discourse has declined from £400,000 calculated by the DfES

(2002) to the vague claim that graduates on average earn more than non-graduates. These policy changes can be seen to have disentangled the state's support for HE and constructed students as consumers of HE. Using genealogy and discourse analysis the research adds to the literature as it has sought to demonstrate how student-consumers can be seen to have been constructed by government policy since the early 1980s as *homo œconomicus* or *entrepreneurial selves* who have been responsibilised to seek learning for personal prosperity. Government HE policy has effectively constructed a 'new' person. Students have been constructed as instrumental investors in the receipt of a service who should seek value for money and a good return on their investment. Moghtader (2017) described this as education based on human capital theory where economic returns are prioritised and educational values sacrificed. Government policies, it is argued, have constructed student-consumers to be instrumental in their approach to HE, arguably, at the cost of the pedagogic discourse. The research has explored how the most recent Government policies, at the time of this research, can be seen to have been shifting the discourse of the student-consumer through technologies of empowerment and surveillance.

The final Section has provided an interpretation of how some universities are managing the student-consumer discourse at the local level through the use of technologies such as policies, Codes of Conduct, and Student Charters for example. These technologies can be seen as methods of disciplining student-consumers and academics to perform in specific ways and adopt a localised identity. This perspective argues that these technologies are constructs of Customer Relationship Management that can be used as techniques of dressage to discipline academics and students in required ways. However, these texts appear confusing as on the one hand universities promote the ideal of the independent learner whilst at the same time suggesting students should be passive in their learning. This adds to the literature as previous research has focused on Codes of Conduct and Student Charters as integral to university marketing (Tapp et al, 2004); Seeman & O'Hara (2006) investigated them as a method of encouraging student loyalty, retention and satisfaction; Fred and Tiu (2016) used them as a method to understand customer [student] expectations and service quality delivery for international students. These CRM technologies have been interpreted as examples of Foucault's concept of dressage that constructs the student-consumer discourse where docility is required as opposed to a consumerist-led business relationship. This interpretation has sought to show how learner management technologies are being used as a form of CRM to ensure student-consumers are managed through algorithms that objectify them into quantifiable assets or liabilities, through the prediction of student-consumer outcomes. These technologies provide constant surveillance producing new forms of knowledge that can be used to intervene when students are not performing as required. This perspective builds upon the literature as it offers a different

interpretation of how CRM technologies can be seen to be used to manage the discourse of the student-consumer.

In the next Chapters, the data from the focus groups are explored to provide an analysis of how students and academics are negotiating their identities within the discourse of the student-consumer.

# Chapter 5: Consumer Subjectivity: Negotiating the Student-consumerist Discourse and Value for Money

## 5.1 Introduction

This is the first chapter that investigates the student voice or the narratives found in the focus groups using Foucaldian Discourse Analysis. See appendix 3 for an explanation of how the discourses have been interpreted for this investigation. Researchers have used the student voice to gain an understanding of how they negotiate the marketised Higher Education environment. For example, Carey (2013) investigated students as co-producers in the marketised higher education within the context of curriculum development, Raaper (2021) examined how the construction of the student consumer may impact on students pollical engagement; Nixon et al (2018) used a psychoanalytically informed approach to investigate 'students' experiences of choice within their university experience'; Wilkinson & Wilkinson(2020) in their study compared student perceptions of vlaue for money to those of academics. This study builds on the work of these scholars however it takes a different perspective as it investigates the student voice within the context of the consumerist expectations.

The discourse of student debt appears to have been normalised, it is common sense and regarded a future problem. Section 5.2 investigates discourses of student debt, the graduate premium, consumerism, value for money and *homo œconomicus*. In Section 5.2.1 discourses of academic capital, competitive advantage, the entrepreneurial -self, cultural elitism, careers are explored. Section 5.2.2 investigates how students have become accustomed to an instrumental pedagogical discourse in their previous learning, the transition to the discourse of the independent learner appears to be fearful for some students causing emotions of anxiety and fear. The section then explores how some academics are employing an instrumental discourse approach to their teaching with arguably predictable outcomes, therefore requiring students to be passive learners. Using a Foucauldian perspective this can be seen as a form of dressage as student-consumers are expected to perform in a specific way. However, this appears to be constructing a divide as these student-consumers do not feel they are getting value for money. In section 5.2.3 the expectation of a service discourse from some student-consumers is discussed. This discourse appears to require academics to provide what can be seen as a highly nurtured and personalised service to help students get the best possible results, arguably because this is what they have paid for. This can be viewed as a form of resistance to the discourse of the independent learner as these student-consumers can be seen to be responsibilising academics to ensure they are

successful. There is also evidence of students adopting the subjectivity of the consumer and expecting a passive learning experience, possibly because they have paid for their education.

The Government discourse of the student-consumer can be evidenced in the data and appears normalised; nevertheless some students did note that not all got the same value for money. However, a new discourse appears to be emerging where students are content to pay the fees but expect more academic support and care in their studies. Arguably, the student-consumer value for money discourse can be seen to be shifting to include an almost personalised service. This is something that does not appear to have been identified in by other researchers. For example, Tomlinson (2017, p.466) found that 'the equation of teaching time to monetary value […] is framing many student's expectations of how their institutuions are performing in a context of increased personal stakes'. Jones et al., (2020,p.376) found that many students report high levels of satisfaction, while simultaneously expressing VfM [Value for Money] negatively because they feel tuition fees are too high'. The data in this research suggests that a new discourse can be seen to be emerging. This can be viewed as a discourse of service where some student-consumers want academics to be interested in them and their development, both academically and as an individual. This could be seen as some students expecting academics to have a vested/individual personal interest in the students as they progress through their studies, and, in one case, after their studies. Arguably, the discourse of what it is to be educated in HE is changing, whereby students view themselves as purchasing more than the 'sage on the stage', some want what could be viewed as a consumer service. Academics, the students narratives suggest, should be offering an almost personalised student-consumer experience that is more than simply pedagogically supportive.

The government's construction of the student-consumer is based on the notion that students will act as rational economic actors with empowered customer choice (Baldwin & James, 2000; Williams, 2011). Historically, some scholars have found that, generally, working-class students were debt-averse (see, for example, Leathwood & O'Connel, 2003; Callender & Jackson, 2005; Pennel & West, 2005; Wilkins et al, 2012). This research suggests that this may no longer be the case anymore for the majority of the students as many appeared to consider debt as a future problem that they would be able to solve with their graduate premium. For others the debt would be something that might be paid or, if not, this did not appear to be a major concern. The discourse of student debt appears to be normalised for many of the students. However, this research appears to show that discourses of value for money and the expectations of a service from the paying students can be seen.

Section 5.2.1 investigates how the students in this study can be seen to have what can be viewed as a consumerist subjectivity as they are expecting a form of competitive advantage from their degree investment and arguably a career.

Section 5.2.2 explores the difficulties faced by the students as they negotiate the transition from the identity of the passive learner into the independent learner discourse. The research investigates how some academics in this study consider student ill-preparedness to be problematic as students transition into HE. The section also investigates what can be seen as forms of resistance from some of the students in this study to the discourse of the independent learner and how perhaps the student-consumer voice is not being heard by all of academia. This is problematised as these forms of resistance seem to be constructing an awkward pedagogic relationship which appears to be positioning academics and students against each other as the expectations of both parties appear misaligned. Arguably, this is due to students' perceptions of value for money.

Section 5.2.3 investigates how some students appear to be adopting a a consumerist subjectivity as they appear to be wanting more from academics as they are now paying for their education. This subjectivity can be seen in the expectation of a service discourse where academics are expected to have a vested interest in them as a marker of value for money. This can be seen as student-consumers using a form of dressage on academics where a certain value for money performance is required. In this study it can be seen that student-consumers now believe that they have a right to more from their academics to negotiate the discourse of the independent learner as they are paying, therefore they require an appropriate service.

Section 5.3 concludes the chapter.

## 5.2 The Student-consumer Debt Discourse: the Graduate Premium and Value for Money

This Section investigates how student-consumers have been constructed as rational economic actors through government discourses of market choice. Government discourse posits that the debt incurred for a degree is a valid investment for students' futures as they will have the capital of the *graduate premium.* A successful graduate becomes a consumable product that the university has, to a degree, produced. Scott (1999, p.126) suggested rational choice theory (RCT) 'denies the existence of any kinds of action other than the purely rational and calculative […] however much it may appear to be irrational or non-rational'. RCT posits that individuals calculate the outcomes of various actions and select the one that will give them the best return.

Therefore, emotions are supposed to be banished from the decision-making process, with the void being filled with 'rational calculation and strategic choice' (Reay, David and Ball 2005, p.100 paraphrasing Breen and Goldthorpe 1997; Goldlthorpe 1998). This research, like that of Reay, David, and Ball (2005), suggests that, despite the students being constructed as economic actors, some of their economic choices are replete with emotions. Hechter and Kanazawa (1997, p.192) argued that it is impossible for people to be solely rational actors as decisions often 'take on an emotional toll.' The quotes in the analysis of data from participants that follows are identified by their pseudonym and the type of university/provider the participants were from.

Charlotte (3rd year Student, Elite) made the point: 'I would feel physically worse if I had to physically hand over nine grand of my own hard-earned money instead of taking a loan'

This suggests there would be an emotional conflict if she had to spend her 'own hard-earned money' on her education. This is interesting as Charlotte appears to prefer debt rather than pay for her education upfront, with arguably the emotional toll being too great. Taking on student debt appears to be what Foucault (1991.a) coined as 'common sense' or the setting of the new hegemonic order, and it is what all the students do. Charlotte seems to be indicating that student debt is normalised for herself and her peers:

> I think a lot of it is to do with our generation […] we are the millennials, [...] all of our peers are paying the same as us, all of our peers are getting a loan, all of our friends are going to have to pay it back so we don't feel as hard done by in a way so we think well everyone here has got a loan […] we're all paying so you feel ok with it.
>
> Charlotte (3rd year Student, Elite)

For some students, there appeared to be a somewhat blasé attitude to their debt burden. For example, Chloe's statement implies an almost ambivalent attitude:

> When I was deciding to come to uni the fact that fees changed didn't bother me […] that's the new fees so either you're going to pay or you're not […] you can't argue the cost so it was like well […] yeah and to be honest I haven't really looked into or stressed too much about the repayments […] because […] that's a future problem.
>
> Chloe's (3rd year Student, Elite)

Similarly for Tariq:

> The fees don't bother me because you don't start paying it back until you earn over 21k and it's only a small percentage of your monthly wage so I don't see the problem in that.
>
> Tariq (3rd year Student, Private)

In addition, Hermione made a complementary point:

> Everyone is in the same boat, so it's just like a bit more tax or something so no point in getting stressed.
>
> Hermione (1st year Student, Elite)

Leathwood (2010) argued that the increase in tuition fees would put off the working-class, women, and some minority ethnic groups going to university as research indicated they were debt-averse. This research shows that the prediction of debt-averse students has not been fulfilled since the time of Leathwood's article. Wilkins et al.'s (2012, p.135) research also supported that of Leathwood, claiming that 'students from all social classes have gradually become more risk and debt-averse […] consequently, differences between the social groups have begun to disappear'. This research finds something different to Leathwood (2010) and Wilkins et al (2012) who predicted a student reluctance to take on debt. Though this research is not focusing on class, ethnicity or gender as specific areas of investigation, nevertheless both genders and a range of ethnicities are represented in the focus groups, see Appendix 15. Many of the students appeared resigned to the normalisation of debt. Sandy sums up what she perceives to be the current situation of student debt which she believes removes social injustice, as everyone can have the same debt.

> I think a lot more people aren't afraid of it [debt] 'cos […] a few years ago a lot more of the higher-class pupils, people with money tended to go to uni whereas now you see more of a variety of types of life. I know it shouldn't be classes but it is open to poorer classes which I think is nice. I think people aren't as afraid of the loans as maybe previously.
>
> Sandy (3rd year Student, Redbrick)

For Foucault, the narratives of these students would indicate that the discourse of student-consumer and debt are now normalised, accepted beyond question by docile bodies. These student-consumers did not appear prepared to challenge the dominant HE discourse. However, alongside the discourse produced by these students, it is possible to see concerns regarding indebted futures. There are elements of anxiety as the debts are a future problem. Anxieties about the future could also be seen when students were discussing their perceptions of whether universities were delivering the discourse of value for money.

Sandy stated:

> I don't think we will ever feel that its value for money because we have never had to pay before so you can never say […] I think that maybe later on in life if you have a really good job that you really enjoy and it's directly due to your degree. In a way then you will be able to say 'yeah I'm glad I did this degree and I feel it was value for money'.
>
> Sandy (3rd year Student, Redbrick)

Carole echoed similar sentiments, whilst questioning the reality of future payment:

> It won't be until you get a good job and it's from your degree […] But the thing is will we ever pay it back?
>
> Carole (3rd year Student, Redbrick)

A third, Harry, appears to have similar thoughts:

> The year I started was the year it went up to 9k and I thought that at the end of the day I'm not going to be paying it back straight away, I might never pay it all back.
>
> Harry (3rd year Student, Elite)

The above quotes could be read as elements of concern as the students are uncertain of the guarantee of the graduate premium discourse or their investment. Sandy states '*if* you get a good job' while Carole and Harry appear to be questioning whether they will earn enough to repay back their loans. Admittedly, these are their future concerns; however, there appears to be unease regarding the possibility of not earning enough to warrant paying back their loans. Thus, the promised graduate premium discourse may not produce the expected return(s) and the students may not be able to deliver their fiscal responsibility of repaying the loan in full. From these students' views debt can be seen as a form of power as it imposes responsibility. Lazzarato (2007, p.46) helped to understand how debt becomes a form of government:

> By training the governed to "promise" (to honour their debt), capitalism exercises "control over the future," since debt obligations allow one to foresee, calculate, measure, and establish equivalences between current and future behaviour. The effects of the power of debt on subjectivity (guilt and responsibility) allow capitalism to bridge the gap between present and future.

These students appear concerned about the financial responsibilities of their debt repayment. The ability to repay the debt, therefore, may be viewed as having three distinct social markers. Primarily the ability to gain a job that pays more than £21,000, the capital of having had a good enough job to pay off the loan, and finally, meeting one's responsibility.

For some students, there appeared to be a reluctance to enter the working environment, perhaps due to feeling ill-prepared, rushed or, maybe, pressurised. It could be argued that these students, and perhaps their parents, have almost blind faith in the prospect that a degree, no matter what degree, will provide a good return when they go into the workplace. The data indicates that some of the students appear reluctant consumers of HE; however, they believe that the capital of a degree will provide an economic return.

For example, some students viewed university as a stopgap as they still did not know which career path they wanted.

> This is something else to do 'cos I don't know what I want to do yet, so I don't want to get a job, I don't wanna have to work full-time so I go to uni to narrow my choices and help me figure out what I want to do in the end.
>
> Lauren (1st year Student, Elite)

A second student says:

> [To] have a pause before I enter adult life […] it's nice not to have to be an adult while you're 18, it's a buffer and I didn't know what I was going to be until now.
>
> Florence (3rd year Student, post '92)

Thirdly:

> I wanted to come to this university anyway, but I was never sure what to do.
>
> Harry (3rd year Student, Elite)

And:

> Certain parents do expect their children to go to university.
>
> Karla (3rd year Student, post '92)

These statements provide an understanding of the complexities faced by some students when tasked with their own active consumerist, decision-making. These comments suggest that for some of the students, the discourse of consumerist rational actors can take a variety of forms. This appears at odds with the Government's discourse of the student-consumer who is constructed to be purely driven by the graduate premium. The interesting aspect with these students is that as rational actors they appear to be using their university experience as providing them with extra time to decide upon the direction of their lives. This could be viewed as an irrational delaying tactic as opposed to a deliberative means to a rationally pre-determined end. The need for a break/pause or time to reflect could indicate that these students nonetheless appear to have faith in the degree product delivering the desired lifestyle/career promoted through university marketing discourses (Gibbs 2011).

However, this was not the case for all students as some seemed to be consumer-driven, expecting an academic service for their investment, and hence taking on a student-consumer subjectivity. It is possible to discern, in the following student articulations, a consumerist discourse:

Harry articulated:

> It is a service I would say at the end of the day and it's kind of bad to say that but as we have paid so much money.
>
> Harry (3rd year Student, Elite)

A second student, Angela talks about wanting her 'money's worth':

> Don't just assume that we're pathetic students, I'm here to get my money's worth now and I will take every opportunity to do that.
>
> Angela (3rd year Student, Private)

Alison mentions the cost of the classes:

> I don't understand anybody who doesn't go to their classes when I think, one of my friends pointed out that your classes are £50 a lesson so I'm like 'that's £50 and I'm going to that'.
>
> Alison (3rd year Student, post '92)

Agnes (3rd year Student, post '92), following Alison, stated 'and they had better make it worth it.'

Consumerist subjectivity and discourses of value for money can be seen in these students' statements, suggesting active customer expectations; however, Harry does appear to demonstrate a little circumspection concerning the situation. The quotes from Angela, Alison and Agnes appear to imply an expectation of some form of value for money, and academics must demonstrate value for money, stating 'it better be worth it.' This can be interpreted as the student-consumer expectation of a service as they have paid for it. Here it is also possible to observe potential areas of conflict or resistance as the values and expectations of academics and student-consumers may be at odds with each other. This is explored in Chapter 7 where academic resistance(s) to the student-consumer discourse are examined.

This section has shown how the discourse of student debt appears to be normalised. With this some students appear to be adopting a consumerist discourse where they expect value for money, a form of service whilst taking on the individualistic discourse of *homo œconomicus*.

### 5.2.1 Discourses of Competitive Advantage, Academic Capital, the Entrepreneurial-Self and Cultural Elitism

'There's no competitive advantage in being just like everyone else'

(Burrus,2015)

As expected, the students had a variety of reasons for attending university. For some, it was a break before deciding what to do, for others, it was an opportunity to develop sufficient skills and knowledge to have a chance of entering the job market and for some, a degree was the entry point for a career. Despite the variety of reasons, the dominating discourse was that of academic capital with individualistic competitive advantage.

Scott, (2016, p.17) noted 'The UK has become, in powerful but intangible ways, a graduate society'. The following comments suggest that the normalisation of the graduate society appears to be based on individualistic self-interest.

> It does give you that extra edge […] that's why degrees to me are really important because it's no longer, 'oh I don't have a degree I'm going to work my way up'. Working your way up takes too long […] sometimes you can't do that and that's where the degree comes in because you don't need to.
>
> Sinead (3rd year Student, post '92)

> [I am doing a degree] to get a better position in the future and a better job essentially. I think that if you have a degree you are seen as better and are favoured in a way over other people.
>
> Sandy (3rd year Student, Redbrick)

> I've got a degree and [it] creates a barrier between those who didn't want to further their education and those who did.
>
> Joanna (3rd year Student, post '92)

The discourse of academic capital implies that students approach their degree product with the identity of an individualistic consumer, a means to an end and competitive advantage as opposed to 'a learning experience' (Williams, 2013, p.86). Arguably, this discourse constructs the individualistic student-consumer where the discourse of self-fulfillment can be a key determinant in decision making.

This 'competitive advantage' (Porter, 2004), it can be argued, reflects the normalisation of Foucault's (2004, p.226) discourse of *homo œconomicus – the entrepreneurial-self.* The *entrepreneurial-self* is a neo-liberal discourse of the competitive individual who has been remade to fit into 'an enterprise society' (Lazzarato, 2009, p.110), seeking both social and material advantage. 'The entrepreneurial-self is propagated by the means of the promise of

success and the threat of failure' (Bröckling, 2016, p.XIV). This discourse of the *entrepreneurial-self* appears to have become normalised for most of the student participants, irrespective of the HE provider. Harry's view could be caricatured as typical of *homo œconomicus*:

> Well yes, we do have high expectations and we are ambitious, we have been brought up this way, our unis have told us that we should be ambitious, we can achieve anything that we want to.
>
> Harry (3rd year Student, Elite)

Similar sentiments of the competitive *entrepreneurial-self* were expressed by other students within the focus groups. For example, Carole (3rd year Student, Red Brick University) stated: 'the degree gives you a certain set of skills which will differentiate you from the person who doesn't have one'; Lauren (1st year Student, Elite University) similarly noted, 'I was told that that would make me stand out and that I would be above anyone else who did not have a degree'.

This research has sought to show that the comptetive discourse of the *entrepreneurial-self* who seeks competive advantage over others in the workplace appears normalised for many of the student-consumers. This could be due to the Government's policy of constructing students as consumers whose expected return on investment is the graduate premium. It could show a self-orientated approach to the high-stakes employment market where graduates have to position themselves as a better-differentiated product to the competition. These students' comments can be viewed as the normalising of Foucault's (2004) concept of the *entrepreneurial self* through accrued credential capital for competitive advantage. Harry's comment suggests that he may be from a highly managed and structured upbringing, 'we have been brought up this way', indicating parental expectations, and he believes he can achieve anything he wants to. The stakes are high for people like Harry, Carole or Lauren. Their expectations of economic advantage through their degree credentials appear, for them, to be a given. Brown (2003, p. 142) argued the paradox of the situation: 'if all adopt the same tactics, nobody gets ahead', yet 'if one does not play the game, there is little chance of winning'. Williams (2013, p.59) noted similarly that more students having degrees does not improve employment opportunities, 'it merely raises the bar for everyone looking […] the people who suffer the most are the non-graduates.' The capital value of scarcity, as in those who have a degree, is forever diminishing now due to mass participation. However, the elitist notion that a degree gives a competitive advantage still appears to dominate some student narratives. The discourse of cultural elitism achieved through the degree product are explored next.

It would appear that, for many of the participating students, having a degree was a form of elitism or differentiation; thus not having a degree was viewed as deficit or failure. Maton (2005, p. 692) argued that new students are 'products of state interventions' and correspondingly were 'pragmatic, utilitarian and careerist' with their educational choice. Maton goes on to quote Halsey (1961) who argued, 'they seek a degree course to earn a living rather than college residence to complete their introduction into a style of life'. These researchers' observations suggest students adopt a *homo œconomicus discourse* towards their studies; the rational, self-interested construct that pursues their own subjectively defined interests. Learning must deliver a return; it must be specific and target orientated. Such thoughts can be seen in the following statements regarding the students' views about the positive aspects of having a degree for gaining a job:

> Being more attractive to potential employers.
>
> Claire (3rd year Student, Private)

> Having an advantage over other people.
>
> Charlotte (3rd year Student, Elite)

> The job market is getting increasingly competitive so having a degree does feel like you have that extra edge to take you further.
>
> Karla (3rd year Student, post '92)

These comments suggest that gaining a degree appears to be in part a cultural elitist discourse based on competive advantage and the graduate premium. Helen's statement could be viewed as a rational economic assessment of the best way to make money for her future:

> I shouldn't really say it but money. I mean you do have to weigh the costs of going to uni but then how much more you can potentially earn by having a degree […] money is a big factor.
>
> Helen (1st year Student, Private)

It was interesting to note that one set of students from one post '92 University felt that gaining a degree gave them simply a 'better chance of getting a job' (Sheila, 3rd year Student, post '92) or it would '[improve] your chances of getting a job' (Fay, 1st year Student). This could be an important nuance between some student-consumer perceptions concerning their degree investment; these student-consumers appear to be simply wanting a better chance to get a 'get a job' as opposed to wanting a career. The word *chance* seems to indicate that these students see an element of risk in their investment and perhaps uncertainty. The imagined futures of these students appear to be different from many of their peers who partook in this research. Sheila

goes on to say that 'in college, everyone pushed for us to go to uni and stuff. Everyone had to make an application'. Tariq (3rd year Student, Private) indicated that he was put under similar pressure: 'You feel like it's sort of imposed that you have to go to uni and this is basically what comes with it, a lot of debt'. The pressures placed upon Sheila and Tariq could be viewed as creating another form of anxiety as they appear to be concerned about their future debt burden.

Arguably, this perhaps indicates the social inequality faced by some students; they feel they have to go to university simply to have a chance of being employable or 'get into the entry-level', as noted by Chloe (3rd year Student, Elite). By contrast, Harry (3rd year Student, Elite), interestingly, did not use the discourse of career when discussing the jobs market; 'now many jobs that you didn't need a degree for you now need a degree to get the job'. The narrative of a job as a short-term aim could be seen in many of the student focus groups; however, for some, there was also the discourse of a career as opposed to simply a job. Bryony (3rd year Student, Redbrick) articulated: 'to have any sort of career in a way you now have to have a degree'. Karla (3rd year Student, post '92) suggested that failure to attain a degree was not an option as 'you can't even get an internship in journalism without a degree'. Karla's fear of not getting an internship alludes to an understanding of the cultural capital required in the middle-class employment 'game'. Bourdieu often used the metaphor of 'the game' as a way of interpreting fields of contestation (see Bourdieu, 1990, 1998; Wacquant, 1992;). The metaphor 'game' proposes that there are rules to abide by and that people are contestants seeking to maintain or accumulate additional capital. 'Game is also used to indicate strategy (how to play the game in order to win) and to indicate 'unofficial' rules' (Bathmaker, 2015, p.66). Internships, through Foucault (1991), can be viewed as a form of technique of the self where, in this case, students enhance their employability. Lareau (cited in Bathmaker, Ingram, and Waller 2013, p.727) argued that working on the self, in this case, internships, 'may be taken for granted practice amongst middle-class students.' Internships afford students social capital and advantage through 'connections with the boss […] as well as cultural know-how' (Stuber, 2009, p.881). Charlotte's (3rd year Student, Elite) expectation of a successful career was articulated in that she felt that her university should want to 'know how I am getting on within my career and I think they should really care about that'. Charlotte, it appears, cannot see herself as being anything but a successful product of her university who will be highly consumable in her future career. Interestingly, Charlotte's utterance is about her as the individual – *homo œconomicus*. In contrast, some student-consumers appear not to view a degree as giving them some form of entitlement to a better lifestyle; for them it can be viewed as a means of gaining access to a 'better chance'. This is explored next.

Karla (3rd year Student, post '92) noted the social inequality of the system, suggesting that 'sometimes, because the university hasn't got that status and reputation when you go into the job market you might not be seen as high up as Oxford or Cambridge or King's College'. Alison (3rd year Student, post '92) demonstrated similar sentiments: 'at the end of the day it's a post '92 university, we're not at Oxford so what we're paying for doesn't guarantee us any social height'. The perception of Karla that they 'might not have been seen as high up' indicates that she is aware that social stratification or deficit is still in evidence in the jobs market. It appears, in the technological world of today, that this is made visible through online job applications. Alison (3rd year Student, post '92) noted that 'sometimes it's [her university] not even on the drop-down menu. I can't remember which job I applied for but it's like not even on there and I'm like 'well what do I put then?' Alison's university not being on the drop-down menu could be viewed as an example of Cook et al's (2012, p.1744) research, as discussed in the literature review, where individuals are excluded from certain jobs due to their lack of cultural capital and 'elite cultures and social groups are maintained […] through assessing the objectified and institutionalised […] cultural capital of applicants'. The lack of online presence of Alison's university suggests that Bourdieu's (1986, 1996) observations on the influence of social and cultural capital on recruitment may still apply.

This section, has explored how the discourse of competitive advantage appears to be of considerable significance to some student-consumers. This discourse is supported with discourses of academic capital, the entre-preneurial self, cultural elitism and career expectations. The discourse of competitive advantage appears to be normalised for many of the student-consumers striving for what could be viewed as the individualistic orientated goal of the graduate premium; this appears to be the result of the Government's construction of the student-consumer.

### 5.2.2 The Student-Consumer: Transitioning from Learner Passivity to an Unfamiliar Environment

This Section explores the difficulties faced by student-consumers as they negotiate the expectations of HE. During the focus groups, many students discussed their previous A level education contrasting it with their experience of university. The students had not been asked to identify their previous schooling within their profiles, see Appendix 15; however the narratives suggest that some would have completed their A levels at school or Further Education Colleges. The primary discourse found in this section is one of instrumentalization where some academics appear to be providing very prescriptive guidance for students to ensure that they pass their

modules. For some students this appears to be creating a divide as they are not being challenged and not getting value for money.

Before the 1990s, further education (FE), sixth form and tertiary colleges were allocated funding through block grants in advance from local authorities; these were based on predicted student enrolments and were not concerned with outcomes or performance. This changed with the implementation of the *1988 Education Reform Act* (HMSO, 1988) and the *1992 Further and Higher Education Act.* (HMSO, 1992). These policy changes sought to introduce competition and construct FE as a market. The policies constructed changes with 'strong pressures to enhance student learning and outcomes and to reduce costs' (Simkins & Lumby, 2002, p.9). Such competition policies are based on accountability metrics of teacher performance, outputs as in exam results, constructing what Foucault may term as functions of dressage. It would be fair to assume that teachers are educationally driven; however, they have to do the best they can within this environment. Ball (2003, p.221) noted:

> A kind of values schizophrenia is experienced by individual teachers where commitment, judgement, and authenticity within practice are sacrificed for impression and performance.

Instrumentalisation, it appears, contributes, in part, to the pedagogic FE discourse. This can be seen through the narratives of some students. Carole (3rd year Student, Red Brick) noted that: 'the teachers will help you a lot'.

Bryony made a similar statement regarding the instrumental discourse adopted in her schooling:

> It's very difficult to get bad grades because teachers will do everything in their power to get you where you need to get to.
>
> Bryony (3rd year Student, Redbrick)

The problem this appears to create is perhaps summed up by Bryony who stated (above) that 'this is all [she] needs to learn and […] needs to know for the exam'. However, for Bryony the instrumental approach also produced what could be interpreted as a degree of lament in stating 'that's how the education system is and so you become very disinterested'. Bryony's 'disinterest' in her own (pre-university) education can be interpreted as her criticism of an education system where instrumentalization becomes 'all you need to learn' and the focus on exams requires docile, passive learners. Arguably, to meet these metrics of performativity, FE or schools could be viewed as teaching students to instrumentally pass exams as opposed to educating them through pedagogic practices. This approach could be seen to disadvantage some students as they appear ill-prepared to consume the HE product. Instrumentalisation creates passive learners as they are expected to do the work required and not stray from a highly

prescribed curriculum. This instrumental discourse can be understood through Foucault's (1991) concept of dressage. Foucault noted (ibid, p.136) that at the centre of dressage 'reigns the notion of 'docility' which joins the analysable body to the manipulative body. A body [that] is docile […] may be subjected, used and transformed.'

This Section builds on the work of colleagues (see Leathwood (2006) Maringe (2011) and Macfarlane (2017), on why the transition to HE can be difficult for some students in exploring the emotional context. Students entering HE have become accustomed to a pedagogic psychology that produces legitimate expectations of how their next pedagogic discourse should be. Some student-consumers seem to have adapted to an environment where the pedagogic approach was instrumentalised, and, arguably, the emotional context of failure minimised. Bryony appears to allude to what she views as a narrow, instrumental pedagogic discourse.

> I think yeah, cos the education system in a way, like when you're in year 1 right up to year 13 is very focused towards the exam, […] this is all I need to learn […] what I need to know for the exam […] it's very different, […] At school, it is very difficult to mess up.
>
> Bryony (3rd year Student, Redbrick)

Carole echoed similar sentiments of how university differs from her previous educational discourse:

> I think there's also the realisation that you don't always do well at uni, you don't always get good marks, it's learning to accept that because at school and college you always do sort of OK. At school I always did quite well so I never dealt with doing badly in a way and I think at uni that's where you really learn how to deal with that.
>
> Carole (3rd year Student, Redbrick)

Bryony's statement implies that schools are strategic/instrumental in their approach to students, pedagogy, and curriculum, while universities have traditionally operated as expecting active, autonomous, independent learners. The statements could also be interpreted as indicating a fear of the unknown, possibly the responsibilisation of being active learners. Bryony's statement could also be viewed as a lack of preparedness for having to deal with not always getting good marks. As she says, 'it's very different to everything you have done before, so it's basically relearning an entire process and you think do I really want to do this?'. The statement articulates forms of ambivalence, emotional insecurity, and emotional uncertainty in the situation Bryony now finds herself. She infers a fear of 'messing up' in a high-stakes environment where she appears reluctant to accept her consuming responsibilities.

Another student has similar fears:

> The problem […] when you come to uni is you don't know what to expect, you haven't been to uni, you haven't met lecturers before, you don't know what a lecture is or a seminar.
>
> Charlotte (3rd year Student, Elite)

Similarly, another student says:

> So when you're sitting there and have no help from a lecturer and you're doing an assignment and then you get this horrible feeling in your chest and that you can't breathe.
>
> Sandy (3rd year Student, Redbrick)

Carole (3rd Student, Redbrick) alluded to her concerns indicating that 'there's a lot of self-doubt; in the first year you're thinking 'is this really worth it?'

Interestingly, these types of concerns were predominantly articulated by some female student-consumers attending the elite and Red Brick universities, implying that success, therefore, cannot be regarded as 'a given'; emotions of anxiety and fear may be seen here. These concerns could indicate that some students, despite having the presumed cultural capital required for university education, are ill-prepared to be independent learners. Bryony explains the emotional context of her transition into HE:

> There are a lot of things that you don't expect to go through or just a lot of things that you weren't prepared for at school or college that no one ever told you would happen.
>
> Bryony (3rd year Student, Redbrick University)

Arguably, this discourse is another transition to be negotiated. However, it appears that some academics are seen as equally instrumental in their approach to teaching. This can be seen to be causing frustration amongst students. For example, Angela (3rd year Student, Private) appears frustrated by her HE experience(s) where she wants to take the identity of an active learner:

> I think there are times when we are supposed to be in this idea of academia where we are supposed to be exposing new ideas […] but then I think that's not always possible; in the business subject we are doing on my course the lecturer has pretty much told us which companies to look at […] I want to engage in the course, not just get the easiest mark but do something.
>
> Angela (3rd year Student, Private)

Additionally, another student voices similar frustrations:

> I do think for some assignments we should have more choice […] but the lecturers guide us to what is easiest, I think they are really saying this is what you will do.
>
> Cynthia (3rd year Student, post '92)

These statements imply that these student-consumers do want to engage in their studies; however they are limited by acts of dressage by their academics. Dressage within this context can be seen to affect students, it requires a performance, productivity and docility. For some student-consumers, it appears that they do not feel that they are getting value for money as active-learners because academics are implementing an instrumentalist pedagogical approach that requires the passive learner who can produce predictable outcomes. Arguably academics, in this instance, are effectively limiting the students' choices and pedagogic development; it may be dangerous for student-consumers to go against such guidance. Peter, an academic, articulates what could be seen as an instrumental discourse approach:

> We know what we are looking for, you [students] know what we are looking for as you are given the criteria and you know what we are looking for because we have told you
>
> Peter (Academic, Private)

We [the academics] can interpret Peter's narrative as an act of dressage, we have given you the criteria, 'we know what we are looking for', you as students have been told how to perform, so be passive/docile. Accept our construction of the student-consumer – we know best! Predictable outcomes, for Peter, appear to be the dominant discourse as opposed to the nurturing of the independent active learner. Here it is possible to see how in some instances educational expectations can put some academics and students against one other. It appears that not all student-consumers want an instrumental pedagogy and elements of resistance can be seen. Arguably, they are not getting value for money. They want the freedom to learn and are possibly prepared to make mistakes.

The instrumental discourse could be viewed as treating student-consumers like pawns where they are expected to be passive as opposed to active/responsible in their learning. One of the potential problems facing student-consumers is that university demands are different from those of secondary education, in particular the identity of the independent active learner. Despite this, both students and academics can be seen to be adopting, at times, an instrumental approach to construct their desired outcomes. The following Section discusses how student-consumers are negotiating the discourse of the independent learner.

### 5.2.3 Student-consumerism and the Service Discourse

The development of the independent learner, Macfarlane (2017, p.105) argues, enables students to develop 'autonomy and maturity and helps them adjust to university life from the more-directive and highly controlled state and college environments.' Student-consumers have to

reconstruct their identities to meet the demands of an unfamiliar pedagogic discourse. One of the first unwritten encounters student-consumers must negotiate is the doxa of their chosen university. Bourdieu, (1977, p.167, original emphasis) described doxa: *'what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying*' or the taken for granted way in which, in this case universities, operate. For some student-consumers, this creates challenges that have to be overcome. This could be, in part, due to a lack of cultural capital. These challenges will be investigated next.

Bourdieu (1977) argued that the possession of cultural capital differs from social class; however, the education system is presupposed on the possession of cultural capital. This creates a difficult environment for lower-class pupils in the education system to be successful.

> By doing away with giving explicitly to everyone what it implicitly demands of everyone, the educational system demands of everyone alike that they have what it does not give. This consists mainly of linguistic and cultural competence and that relationship of familiarity with the culture which can only be produced by family upbringing when it transmits the dominant culture.
>
> (Bourdieu 1977, p.494)

For some student-consumers, it appears that the need to transition from a controlled pedagogic environment to one of independence is not so straightforward. Leathwood (2006, p.617) problematised this discourse of the independent learner and argued that this construct is gendered, dominated by white male individualistic ideals, and 'inappropriate for the majority of students'. This research found similarities to Leathwood's work (2006) in the way that some students and academics in the focus groups contributed to their narratives. For example, the narratives of 'spoon-feeding' and 'infantalising', identified in Leathwood's research, were articulated by some academics. For example, Mark (Academic, Elite), stated that 'there is […] an expectation that we spoon feed them everything along the way'. Similarly, Sylvia (Academic, post '92) noted that 'the problem is our students expect us to spoon-feed them'. Philip (Academic, post '92) suggested that this was not just a problem in English universities, arguing that 'when [he] was in the Middle East, the environment was exactly the same, the students are waiting to be spoon-fed'. Arguably, these academics appear to be implying that these are the instrumental expectations of student-consumers, however the statements could also suggest that this is the type of service the student-consumers expect. The student-consumers, from the academic's perspectives, appear to want to be given exactly what is required to gain their credentials, asserting that maybe anything else is a waste of time. This research builds upon Leathwood's work as her work did not investigate independent learning in relation to consumerism. This could be viewed as a consumerist discourse where students may be pushing

the onus upon the academics to ensure they attain value for money, high grades and are provided with a service discourse. This is explored next.

Some student-consumers appeared to expect a highly nurtured and personalised environment where they can be protected and supported to gain the best possible results. One indicated that:

> I think I expect them to *really* understand me as a person and to help me so I expect them all to understand and make it more of a personal thing.
>
> Hermione (1st year Student, Elite)

Similarly, Carole appears to be expecting this nurturing environment.

> I do think there should be a lot more guidance, not necessarily what's in the exam but what to focus on.
>
> Carole (3rd year Student, Redbrick)

These statements indicate these students are, to a degree, resisting the discourse of the independent learner and trying to offset their 'responsibilities' onto the academics. This can also be viewed as a fear of failure. Academics are, it appears, expected to perform similarly at a personal level for the students being caring, supportive, and available whenever required, an almost personalised service. This could be interpreted as students using Foucault's dressage on the academics, a reversal of power with students expecting a personalised service for their money. Charlotte offered an interesting comment in which she indicated:

> They have to keep you interested in what you're interested in and passionate […] it's a bit more of their responsibility to look after us.
>
> Charlotte (3rd year Student, Elite)

Charlotte's statement implies the expectation on academics to provide a required performance, a dressage that responsibilises academics with her success or failure. She appears to be deflecting her consumerist responsibilisation. This could be perhaps due to her anxieties about the fear of failure; this form of resistance may be linked with consumerist expectations of a successful customer/service provider interaction. Seemingly, the problem here is that Charlotte's consumerist expectations require academics to be all things for all students and deliver customer-satisfaction and a personalised service. She can be seen to be deflecting her anxieties and fears; she, as the student-consumer, could be seen to be dictating a required performance, dressage, as her academics should be looking after her 'a bit more'. The dilemma for academics is 'whether guaranteeing and delivering customer satisfaction should be the primary goal unto itself in HE' (Maringe, 2011, p.148). Claudia (Academic, Redbrick) touches upon the anxieties of her students: 'the demand is that you explain to them very clearly the assessment criteria, what it is

exactly that they need to answer in the exam question'. However, Claudia appears to demonstrate a form of lamentation for the situation as she later states: 'I think it's a very awkward relationship because if you treat them as customers you cannot be tough, the customer is always right.'

Arguably, it is possible to suggest that the student-consumer voice is not being heard by the academics in the narratives by the students above. They want help and support; it is reasonable for them to expect guidance with something they are unfamiliar with and they want to be kept interested in things that they are passionate about. It is also possible to infer from the students' statements that they are struggling to adapt to the unfamiliar expectations of academia and perhaps academia is not listening. One of the major transitions for students is the need to make sense of the academic language required to produce a good piece of work. Read et al. (2001,p.388) noted this problem faced by students as 'the 'conventions' of the academic writing style, [which] can therefore be seen metaphorically as a type of 'code' to be 'cracked', a form of knowledge that students must uncover for themselves'. When viewed from this perspective, it could said that the student-consumers have purchased a product without the full instructions, and are thus disadvantaged; therefore it is not unreasonable for them to feel anxious, fear failure and thus expect additional support and a consumerist personalised service. This study builds on the work of Read et al. (2001) as the focus is on student consumerism. As consumers these students appear to be adopting a consumerist subjectivity and believe that they have a right to more from academics to ensure they get what they perceive as value for money. They require a service to negotiate the discourse of the independent learner as they are paying for their education now.

The anxieties or ill-preparedness around becoming an independent learner are viewed by some academics as an unfortunate result of some parents being in the privileged position to afford additional support for their children. One commented:

> They have been spoon-fed and had a huge amount of support from parents with additional tutoring […], not all, but the majority of them and then, they don't get that here, they have to be self-determining […] they don't have that ability.
>
> Mark (Academic, Elite)

Mark's articulation, that students lack the ability to be self-determining when viewed through a Foucauldian (1991) lens, suggests a history of pedagogic dressage. Deci et al. (1991,p.327) noted, 'When a behavior is self-determined, the regulatory process is choice, but when it is controlled, the regulatory process is compliance.' Self-determination requires responsibilisation. In an HE environment, responsibilisation can be seen through the discourse of the independent learner. Responsibilisation as a form of governmentality is discussed in chapter 6.

## 5.3 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the complexities and motivations faced by students who consume HE. Debt does not appear to be a concern for most. The research has shown how the majority of the students in the study intend to seek competitive advantage over their peers, irrespective of institution attended; therefore, Foucault's concept of the *homo œconomicus* or the *entrepreneurial self*, appears normalised. For some of the students in this study, their narratives suggest, they have no qualms about seeking their forms of distinction as a consumable product in the job market.

The research has sought to show that students are put into a high-stakes environment that is very different from their previous pedagogical discourse. The school environment appears instrumental and exam-focused, requiring passive learners, and does not emotionally prepare them for HE. This research offers a different understanding of the expectations of some student-consumers as they are expecting an almost personalised service from academics because they are paying for it. Elements of resistance to this can be seen in various academics as they have articulated that students are ill-prepared for the transition to the independent learner discourse. Some student-consumers, arguably, due to this ill-preparedness, expect academics not only to teach them, but to have an interest in them and provide an almost personalised service discourse. The research also suggests that some students have adopted the subjectivity of the consumer for their own instrumental terms, which can be viewed as some students expecting a passive learning experience, arguably because they have paid for. This appears to be common discourse in this research, suggesting that there appear to be similar problems in all of the HEIs where the focus groups were conducted.

The research suggests that student-consumers are effectively using Foucault's concept of dressage upon academics to ensure their vision of the HE consumption discourse produces their required outcomes. In response, academics appear to be steering their pedagogic strategies by adopting an instrumental approach to teaching. This can be seen to be impacting upon the pedagogic relationship in some cases, as the students' consumable product is being refashioned to meet consumerist requirements. Through the students' narratives, there can be seen elements of student resistance as not all of them want this instrumental product. Elements of lamentation have been found in some of the academic utterance's; however, the power of the student-consumer seems to dominate the discourse.

The next chapter explores how Foucault's concept of responsibilisation can be used to interpret the practices of NPM and how these construct the student/academic pedagogic relationship.

# Chapter 6: Dynamics of Responsibilisation in the Student/Academic Pedagogic Relationship

## 6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the discourse(s) of responsibilisation within the context of the student-customer/academic relationship using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. This offers a new interpretation of how the student-consumerist discourse can be seen to be constructed. Responsibilisation here is viewed as a form of power that can produce discourses of liberation whilst manipulating subjects and events. Responsibilisation, therefore, using a Foucauldian interpretation, can be viewed as a construct of self-government or power technology. Foucault (1978, 2004) maintained that power is integral to modern practices of governmentality. New Public Management can be seen as the holder of most of the power in universities. Therefore, arguably, NPM constructs the technologies that are an extension of the powers of the state and enact governmentality in universities at the local level.

Section 6.1 explores how responsibilisation can be seen as a form of Foucauldian governmentality and provides the rationale for why this concept can be used to understand specific NPM practices in HE. Section 6.2 investigates how responsibilisation is used to road map the student-consumer discourse whilst articulating the expected student performance. Section 6.3 problematises how academics are responsibilised through NPM practices and how this appears to cause confusion of roles and responsibilities. Section 6.4 explores how Module Study Guides (MSGs) and marking are used as technologies that can be seen to instrumentalise student-consumer pedagogic engagement. The study problematises how instrumental NPM marking criteria appears to deprofessionalise academics as professional judgement is displaced with metrics of audit. Section 6.5 investigates how Student Module Evaluations, a form of the student voice, can be seen to empower students and influence the way academics approach their work.

The data povide an understanding of how academics and student-consumers are negotiating their identities in what can be viewed as an unstable consumerist discourse, in which actual responsibilities can be seen as contradictory, and inadvertently pitting students and academics against each other. This is interpreted as a ‘schizophrenic environment’, described previously. It is argued that this is another unforeseen product of student-consumerism that destabilises the student/academic pedagogic relationship and undermines the parrhesiastic contract. The data indicate that some of these technologies construct an environment which appears emotionally

corrosive, making academics function in ways that undermine their professional judgement. The research findings offer a new understanding of the difficulties faced by student-consumers and academics as they are responsibilised within the consumer discourse through university and NPM technologies. Section 6.6 concludes the chapter.

## 6.2 Responsibilisation: Another Form of Power to Manage Academics and Student-consumers

In this chapter responsibilisation is explored as a form of power used to construct the student-consumer/academic relationship.. O'Malley (2009, p.277) suggested:

> Responsibilisation is a term developed in the governmentality literature to refer to the process whereby subjects are rendered individually responsible for a task which previously would have been the duty of another – usually a state agency – or would not have been recognized as a responsibility at all.

Juhila et al (2017, p.12, citing Hodgson 2001; van der Land 2014) argue that 'subject responsibilisation in an advanced liberal form of governing is inherently dynamic, including both empowering and manipulating elements'. Responsibilisation, as a form of governmentality, assumes that free individuals voluntarily conduct their lives responsibly. Miller and Rose (2008, p.205) help in understanding the context of responsibilisation for the individual:

> At the same time subjects themselves will have to make their decisions about their self-conduct surrounded by a web of vocabularies, injunctions, promises, dire warnings and threats of intervention, organized increasingly around a proliferation of norms and normativities.

Therefore, responsibilisation is not concerned with freedom of choice but directs choice(s) within specified frameworks.

Responsibilisation, Foucault, (2004) argued, is part of the neoliberal bio-political process that manages the body, the processes of which are 'premised upon the government of free populations; populations willing and able to take responsibility for their own lives' (Crawshaw, 2012, p.201). Responsibilisation, as a form of governmentality, will produce opposing and/or contradictory discourses to be navigated by students and academics. This research suggests that these discourses construct an environment in which, it appears, the identities of academics and students are subjectively fluid. The concept of *Subjectively fluid* is taken from Bransen (cited in Geijsel and Meijers, 2005, p.423) who suggested that identity is 'an ongoing activity of trying to make sense of oneself and what one is doing and experiencing of one's past, present and future'. These fluid identities are constructed through a plethora of responsibilisation technologies. These include university constructions of how students and academics should conduct

themselves, what a graduate product should be and New Public Management requirements. Many of these technologies are designed to be highly supportive to students. However, these technologies shift the power balance subtly in favour of the student-consumer, the cost being the pedagogic relationship and the parrhesiastic contract. The next section explores how student and academic responsibilisation(s) are constructed through NPM practice(s).

### 6.2.1 Roadmapping the Anxious Consuming Student

> The higher education system, and its culture of metrics and key performance indicators, has constructed a student who is a consumer with anxieties which must be allayed by the provision of roadmaps to success.
>
> (Morrish, 2017)

Universities provide a range of technologies to help students navigate/roadmap the constructed university environment. Whilst commendable, many of these technologies can be seen as counterproductive as they appear to produce confusion over the roles and responsibilities of academics and student-consumers.

These roadmaps to allay student-consumer anxieties can be seen in many forms within the NPM practices that are used to construct the student-consumer discourse. Which roadmap the students primarily encounter is beyond the scope of this investigation; however, it is safe to assume that this would be the university website. This markets the consumable degree products available, the *wonderful* student discourse, *probably* the percentage of students who have gone on to employment and *probably* their National Student Survey (NSS) ranking. Additionally, many university websites clearly define the help and support available to students as they consume their degree product. This can include student well-being, pastoral care, counselling services, academic support and proofreading for dyslexic students. Within most university websites there is a page describing the graduate attributes students will be able to demonstrate following completion of their course. Graduate attributes are part of the assemblage of marketing tools used to attract the student-consumer; they provide a construction of how graduates will be a consumable product for future employers. However, this fieldwork indicates that these proposed attributes appear slightly ambiguous whilst suggesting discourses of responsibilisation for students. For example, Cardiff Metropolitan University (2020, *my emphasis*) states:

> These are a set of personal skills that *you develop* throughout your time at university that every graduate of Cardiff Metropolitan University *should possess* […] When you graduate from your degree programme, you will be entering the work environment with thousands of other graduates. *You will need to highlight what makes you unique!*

Equally ambiguous, The University of Edinburgh (2020, *my emphasis*) when referring to student attributes in part states:

> They are unique to every student – yes we might identify some common areas that we want our students to develop, *but students will have their own starting points, progress, and experiences in these areas* while at the University which will shape them as individuals.

In each of the statements, it is possible to see discourses of responsibilisation as student-consumers are expected to develop these attributes to be a successful university product. Interestingly the statement 'you will be entering the work environment with thousands of other graduates. *You will need to highlight what makes you unique!'* suggests that the graduate premium is something that will have to be fought for and that it is not a given. Harvey (2002, p.5) posited 'that the premium is uneven, white, upper-middle-class, [and] young males get a far higher premium on average than black, working-class, first-generation, [and] mature women returners.' Some of the reasons for this have been explored in Chapter 5. This problem was discussed by the participant academics in this study although class disparities seemed to be their main concern. Sylvia articulated:

> You graduate from a low socio-economic background with a 2-1, I graduate from a higher socio-economic background, I will do better than you with the same degree. So there is still a lot of class even afterward […] someone with a lower socio-economic background will progress differently and possibly more slowly than someone with a higher socio-economic background.
>
> Sylvia (Academic, post '92)

Colin (Academic, post '92) observed similar class disparities when discussing opportunities: 'that's a network, that's contacts, that's just the way social life is.' This research indicates that the social inequalities afforded through cultural capital explored in the literature review still persist and appear to be a concern in the minds of some academics.

The students are thus, in part, responsibilised as entrepreneurs of themselves to ensure they are a consumable product, despite, as their teachers claim, not knowing they are entering an uneven playing field. This has been considered in Chapter 2. However, this discourse of student responsibilisation appears to get muddied through the plethora of support mechanisms universities offer. These are explored next.

### 6.2.3 The Responsibilisation of Academics

University policies, Charters and Student Codes of Conduct, described previously, are used as mechanisms to help and support students as they consume their university education. However,

these can be confusing, inconsistent and are used as technologies of dressage to responsibilise academics. For example, personal tutoring in the code of practice at a Plate glass University (2020, *my emphasis*) states:

> The core purpose of personal tutoring is to *support taught* students' academic, personal and professional development through an *on-going personalised* point of contact with the University.

Similarly a post '92 university (2020, *my emphasis*) indicates:

> Once you have been allocated a Personal Tutor, it's *their responsibility* to support you through your time here.

These statements can be viewed as responsibilising academics to perform in a prescribed way. Academics are constructed in these statements as service providers. They are responsibilised with ensuring a good student experience as part of NPM customer relationship management (CRM). Responsibilisation can be seen to cause problems in the student/academic relationship from the academic accounts in the focus groups. The statements above position academics as having to take on additional responsibilities to ensure student-consumer satisfaction. The requirements of their responsibilisation appear muddled as they stretch academics in what could be seen as polar opposite directions through the CRM discourse. It appears that for some academics the responsibilisation of having to negotiate a range of identities can be problematic as the shifting pedagogic discourse requires to be constantly re-navigated. Kirsten identified a range of conflicting areas in the responsibilisation that she sees she has been given.

> I've been thinking about this quite recently actually because you have all this stuff about having a positive student experience and the NSS and god knows what. So you are supposed to be everything for them, you know you're supposed to give them academic guidance, […] pastoral care and careers advice, you do all that kind of stuff and I don't mind doing all that but then it makes it very difficult to say that 'you have failed this module' you know, so the boundaries are quite hard […] it must be really weird for them, you know, we say 'call me Kirsten' and you can get in touch with me about X,Y, and Z and then I say your paper's late, you get a zero. That must be kind of odd for them.
>
> Kirsten (Academic, post '92)

Claudia appears to see similar conflicts in her relationship with her students:

> I think it's a very awkward relationship because if you treat them as customers you cannot be tough, the customer is always right, but then the situation is that we are the professionals, we are the ones who know what they need to learn and how they need to learn it, so you should be telling them how to do it […] Now you are dictated to by the evaluations of the students and you, in the end, lower the level of complexity, in order to please the customers.
>
> Claudia (Academic, Redbrick)

Ingrid (Academic, Elite) noted confusion about her role with her students:

> Another thing that they expect which I found very odd and did not do until I reached these shores was pastoral service as like when I started working at […] university

Ingrid also articulated that she sought clarification concerning the depth of pastoral service required and was told:

> Well, it's like you have to look after them both emotionally as well as a student.

The statements suggest a frustration for Ingrid as she struggles with comprehending her responsibilisation towards her students and the specifics of what this exactly entails.

> But I'm not trained for that, I'm an academic, I'm supposed to try and teach them things about a subject. I cannot be their social worker or psychologist or therapist. There are professionals who do that, but here it's expected.
>
> Ingrid (Academic, Elite)

The statements above indicate the possibility of conflict in a range of areas within the academic/student relationship as roles and responsibilities appear to be at odds with how some academics see their role. Ball (2003, p.221 *original emphasis*), when discussing the problems of changing managerial style in education noted:

> There are costs […] personal and psychological. […] there is a potential 'splitting' between the teachers' own judgements about 'good practice' and student 'needs' and the rigours of performance.

Ball's observations appear to be still valid when interpreting the above academic statements, in which there can be seen concerns as some academics appear to questioning their changing identities.

> So you are like supposed to be everything for them.
>
> Kirsten (Academic, post '92)

To paraphrase Ball (ibid), the discursive resources or knowledge which made these academics effective teachers have been made redundant, in this case, to ensure the student-customer is satisfied. Foucault (1996) indicated that knowledge/discourse is always contingent and subject to discontinuity. It can be seen in the above statements how the historical knowledge possessed by these academics could be viewed as conflicting with the shifting student-consumer discourse articulated through universities and NPM.

It can be reasoned that the sampled universities are responsibilising academics to have an emotional involvement with students as part of the students' pedagogic journey. The requirement for this emotional support appears to be a further intensification of work for academics. Ogbonna and Harris (2004, p.1186) suggested that:

> Lecturers undertake a wide range of disparate tasks (for example, teaching, research, administration, management, and student counselling) with each requiring varying degrees of emotional display over an extended period.

Exactly what student counselling consists of is not clearly defined or referenced; however it can be argued that it would have a variety of contexts, such as feedback, feedforward, proofreading, and pastoral matters. There appears to be limited literature on the role of academics as counsellors as this work is predominantly in the realm of universities with professional counselling services (see, for example, Rickinson, 1997; Rickinson, 1998; Connel et al, 2008; Broglia et al, 2018). Leathwood and Hey (2009) investigated the discourse of emotion in HE, using the frameworks of feminist post-structuralism and psycho-social theory. They noted 'the imperatives to offer enhanced student support to build self-esteem, and neo-liberal requirements to remake the educated/educable subject evident in the latest personal skills and employability agendas' (ibid, p. 430). The argument here is that, although the university was 'traditionally constructed as the paradigmatic site of pure rationality devoted to the dispassionate and objective search for truth – an emotion-free zone', (ibid, p.429) this is now being contested.

Elements of frustration are evident in the above statements as some of the academics view themselves as professionals employed for their subject expertise, not as counsellors. Again it is possible to perceive a blurring of pedagogic boundaries. The discourse of the student-consumer and the requirements of university management to ensure student satisfaction could be viewed as disrupting the traditionally perceived pedagogic relationship. For example, module evaluations could be seen as a further disruptive technology for some academics as they appear to drive the consumerist pedagogic discourse. Module evaluations are a form of surveillance which allows students to articulate their opinions of their academics, interestingly, without recourse. The responsibilisation orchestrated by the need to get good module evaluations poses an evident fear, particularly for academics who are newcomers to HE. These newcomers, in many instances, are in a precarious situation. Many will be on either variable, hourly paid, or zero-hour contracts (Lopes & Dewan, 2015), casualised labour *per se*. A further problem for casualised staff is what Kimber (2003 cited in Lopes and Dewan, 2015,p.29) described as a 'two-tiered workforce' where academics on casualised contracts suffer 'a lack of integration into departments and institutions.' For more senior members of staff this may be less concerning, although some were aware of how this impacts upon those embarking on their academic career:

> When I have tried to do an induction with new members of staff and immediately the first question is what do I need to do about my module evaluations and already you can see that it's eating away into them.
>
> Graham (Academic, Elite)

When discussing with students their expectations of academics, it is possible to gain an insight into why the need for guidance is sometimes an expectation. Some students appear reluctant to 'go it alone' and arguably expect constant support. For example:

> I would like to have guidance throughout my years here […] I wouldn't expect to come here and then really realise what I want to do, which I haven't but you sort of [think] that it's the norm to not know what you want to do. So when I came here I was thinking yeah I'm going to go in and know exactly what I want to do and that in a few years I will be great.
>
> Charlotte (3rd year Student, Elite)

Similarly, a second student articulated:

> I didn't have many expectations either really, I kind of thought […] maybe this will help me decide what I want to do as a job 'cos even picking a course when I was doing my A levels, I was like I really don't know what I want to do and maybe if I go and do this and it's so broad it might help me make a decision on what I want to do afterward.
>
> Jessica (1st year Student, Elite)

And a further student iterated:

> I didn't have much expectation, I was kind of like well this is the next step, this is something else to do 'cos I don't know what I want to do yet, so I don't want to get a job, I don't wanna have to work full-time so I go to uni to narrow my choices and help me figure out what I want to do in the end.
>
> Lauren (1st year Student, Elite)

These statements provide an idea as to why some students may expect support during what could be viewed as a stop-gap until they have decided what they want to do with the rest of their lives. These student-consumers could be responsibilising their academics to guide them in their future life trajectory. Here again it is possible to observe how some student-consumers want considerably more for their money; academics also are expected to be what could be termed as life coaches or mentors as part of their purchased product. Arguably, it is conceivable to see what could be viewed as an implicit faith in the HE system in that it will deliver, one way or another for these students. It is interesting that the above statements come from students who are studying at an elite university. Class background was not a criterion asked for in the student profiles, see appendix 15; however it is possible to discern the signs of a middle-class attitude to HE. It can be suggested that these students are reproducing a middle-class discourse, indicating that it is what we do, it is their biography and beyond discussion (Douglas, 1973).

### 6.2.4 Module Study Guides and Marking Criteria: The Pedagogic Compass For the Anxious Student-Consumer

Module Study Guides (MSGs) offer a further technology to allay anxieties that students may have. MSGs are instrumental in their instructions for the consuming student regarding what they must do to complete each assessment. Learning outcomes define what the student-consumer should know or be able to do once they have completed the module. Watson, (2002, p.208. *my emphasis*) argued:

> The learning outcomes methodology is seen to provide the instrument for placing the *customer* at the centre of organizational activities and for enabling an identification of specific *customer* requirements. This approach is viewed as empowering the host organization with the means *to gauge its service provision* through the monitoring of learning outcomes attainment.

Marking criteria are now clearly defined with the specific requirements for each possible grade. In part, marking criteria provide technology for public accountability; they were brought in during the 1980s, due to national concerns about marking reliability and standards (Laming, 1990). Assessment judgements can no longer be:

> based on the tacit professional expertise of teachers, an elite guild of professional assessors, whose professional judgement was mysterious in nature, and inaccessible to the layman.
>
> (O'Donovan et al., 2004, p.328)

Marking criteria afford transparency and are requirements of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2018, p.4). The Quality Code stipulates:

> Assessment policies, regulations, and processes are explicit, transparent, and accessible […] Students are clearly informed of the purpose and requirements of each assessment task and the standards expected.

Royce Sadler (2005, p.178) suggested that one argument for criteria-based grading is that:

> Students deserve to be graded on the basis of the quality of their work alone, uncontaminated by reference to how other students in the course perform on the same or equivalent tasks, and without regard to each student's previous level of performance.

Bourdieu's work can help further in understanding the problematisation of academic judgement. Bourdieu (1988) problematised this notion of academic judgements when marking students' work. His research demonstrated a strong correlation between the professors' professional judgements or feel for the game and how academic marking reproduced social classification. In effect, professorial professional judgements, he argued, could be seen as a socially constituted classification system. Bourdieu (ibid, p.204) remarked:

> Working as ideology in a state of practice, producing logical effects which are inseparable from political effects, the academic taxonomy entails an implicit definition of excellence […] possessed by those who are socially dominant.

Bourdieu's observations were based on the taxonomy used by academics to mark students' work. His work suggested that the taxonomy was hierarchical; the feedback students were given could be seen as personal judgements of their social class, and as a means of reproducing class distinction. He found that the greater the student's with a higher social position or cultural capital were often given the higher marks and a greater frequency of complimentary comments. Using Bourdieu's observations it can be seen why marking criteria have been brought in to idealistically level the playing field for the massification of HE. His critique of academic judgement as a social construction can help in understanding one of the reasons why New Public Management has imposed marking criteria upon academics. This shifts the discourse as judgement is eliminated through NPM technologies of accountability and control. The professional skill of marking, developed throughout an academic's life, is marginalised to meet the audit criteria. Royce Sadler (2009, p.159) proposed that:

> Breaking down holistic judgements into more manageable parts is seen as a way to increase openness for students and achieve more objectivity in grading. However, such approaches do not adequately represent the full complexity of multi-criterion qualitative judgements.

The technology of marking criteria has been problematised by a range of scholars who have voiced their concerns. For example, Royce Sadler (2005, p.178) raised concerns on the 'basic interpretation of what constitutes marking criteria'. O'Donovan et al (2004, p.327) questioned the problems of ensuring that assessors' 'perceptions and expectations of assessment requirements standards, and in particular, assessment criteria [could] be known by all participants, especially students'. Eisner (1991) argued that as learning becomes more complex, academics need to draw on their 'connoisseurship' of the subject area. For Eisner, connoisseurship is the ability to make judgements regarding the subtle qualities and differences when examining a piece of work. Eisner , (ibid, p.68-69) stressed the difference between 'appreciation' and simply 'liking it' as disimilar:

> There is no necessary relationship between appreciating something and liking it. To appreciate the qualities of wine, a book, or a school means to experience the qualities that constitute each and to understand something about them. It also includes making judgements about their value. One can appreciate the weaknesses of an argument, a teacher or a poem as well as their strengths. Nothing in connoisseurship as a form of appreciation requires that our judgements be positive. What is required (or desired) is that our experience be subtle, complex, and informed.

The marking criteria used in many Module Study Guides can be viewed, to some extent, as de-professionalising academics as they provide the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to be

measured. Marking criteria can be viewed as technologies that de-responsibilise and constrain academics with specific boxes to tick/circle, or statements to cut and paste for online marking. In effect, standardised marking criteria and feedback can be viewed as technologies that, in theory, ensure academic accountability; they remove the possible uncertainties and the mysteries involved in academic judgement. Equally, they can be seen to provide a pretence or façade of objectivity to satisfy the demands of audit, rationality, order and control. With such prescriptive marking criteria, academics, it can be argued, are deprived of professional responsibility and autonomy. Academic judgements, it appears, are being pathologised, and replaced with standardised rubrics. It could be argued that some academics are being held to account for the decisions they make within prescriptions that are alien to them. Equally, it could be viewed as the imposed breaking of the parrhesiatic contract through New Public Management practices.

The potential conflict for academics is that NPM sets the marking criteria with standardised marking templates. Academic responsibility is displaced to that of a quasi-mathematical algorithm. Peter's statement alludes to the possibilities of conflict in this environment when discussing students questioning their marks:

> But they say you gave me this grade and they want satisfaction, they do not want to accept the grade if they don't like it. I tell them that if that's the grade you earned we give you it. You did the work and earned the grade, it's nothing to do with us, we're just marking it against a set of criteria.
>
> Peter (Academic, Private Provider)

Conflict can be seen here as, in part, Peter is indicating that the student earned their mark through their work. However, Peter could be viewed as abdicating his professional responsibilities in the pedagogic relationship due to NPM marking criteria, '*it's nothing to do with us'*. He implies that his professionalism or perhaps connoisseurship and that of his colleagues has been undermined by the requirements of NPM; *'we're just marking it against a set of criteria'*.

'Accountability requires assessment decisions to be justified' (Bloxham et al 2011, p.655 citing Grainger, Purnell, and Zipf 2008). However, as described above, accountability could be construed as fluid, subject to interpretation. This sea change can be seen in some student-consumerist demands for academic accountability when they are awarded their marks. Accountability, therefore becomes another discourse for academics to negotiate. Student demands appear to be changing the pedagogic relationship for some academics as accountability to students seems to be another area in which there is the potential for conflict. Historically, academic accountability was a matter of judgement, as discussed above, and where a piece of work is difficult to tabulate the academics would be held accountable to their discipline. This to

a degree still exists through double marking and the use of external examiners. However, the data indicate that accountability is now more focused on the student-consumer. When discussing student marks, Ivan articulated his concerns over how he was having to meet the responsibilisation demands of NPM to ensure satisfied student-consumers:

> The amount of pressure that we're under as we're assessed to make sure that students get a first or a 2.1, this has become the emperor's cloak.
>
> Ivan (Academic Elite)

Additionally, it is posssible to observe Ivan's concerns over his professional integrity being undermined. Similarly David opines as to the demands and what could be viewed as his disheartenment with the requirements of NPM:

> I just don't get things like compensation, you know we're telling a lie to some degree as we are saying that you have qualified in this area, you passed 7 out of 8 modules oh but that 8th one that you failed you can be compensated, you can be passed on that 'cos you did well in other modules. Well, that's just nonsense, that's got nothing to do with learning or obtaining a standard, that's to do with the university supporting their processes and making sure their rankings stay in place.
>
> David (Academic, Elite)

Arguably, these concerns suggest the notion that the truth is best left untold. The parrhesiastic contract could be viewed as problematic for NPM when managing the student-consumer discourse.

Ivan's comments indicate the irony of the situation he sees himself in:

> In business, are you progressing when you can get 60 percent wrong of your daily decisions, 'cos you pass when you have 40 percent right? So you actually pass when you are 60 percent stupid […] can you pass your driving test with 6 mistakes out of 10?
>
> Ivan (Academic, Elite)

Molesworth et al (2009, p.283 *my emphasis*) have noted how:

> Course regulations may allow for lower pass marks, more compensation for *failed* work, more assessment resubmissions, and greater discretion in marginal cases […] The ideology of the market justifies the practices by focusing on financial success […] if an institution does not meet student expectations, then students will simply find another that will.

Rosemary noted similar problems as to the NPM pressures where she worked:

> You know I think the pressure upwardly for grades is ever so great and is getting greater and greater and also you know like any other university we are performance measured on how many more 2.1 and 1sts we're getting each year […] We have targets to meet and if we do not take a few we do not exist.
>
> Rosemary (Academic, Private)

Pierre describes how badly things can go wrong for the academic who does not perform according to NPM requirements:

> We have had colleagues penalised though for not seeing the students as clients, we've got an example very recently, haven't we? Where they didn't hear the students, didn't give the students the right marks, students were unhappy. It costs them their job if we are being really honest aren't we?
>
> Pierre (Academic, post '92)

These statements provide an understanding of some of the pressures imposed upon academics through NPM practices. These appear at odds with academic values as student-consumers are getting the marks they want, despite the appearance in some cases of them being unjustified. It also appears that the parrhesiastic contract may be problematic for academics as *truth telling* may not be in their best interest. The following Section problematises how the module evaluations completed by consuming-students appear to be shifting the pedagogic relationship in their favour.

### 6.2.5 Module Evaluations: Student Power without Recourse

> A student's assessment [evaluation] of a teacher is always subjective, at times unfair, and, possibly, stressful, but it is one of the few instruments to indicate if we are about to sail off the edge of the world or discover a new continent.
>
> (Ravelli, 2000)

This Section explores how module evaluations seem to be influencing the pedagogic relationship. The research reveals that module evaluations construct a power struggle between academics/students. For some academics, this appears to create an internalised battle where emotional performance could be seen as having considerable influence. This Section additionally problematises how the subjectivity of the teaching performance, when evaluated by students, is concerning as academics are responsibilised to perform in required ways, to meet, it is argued, student-consumer requirements and the audits of New Public Management.

In the following statements, there is evidence as to how module evaluations can be perceived to have an element of power and influence in the pedagogic relationship.

> Now you are dictated to by the evaluations of the students and you, in the end, lower the level of complexity, in order to please the customers […] you have […] basically made their learning, the knowledge required less and this is sad but that is how it is and I think this is probably what is happening everywhere.
>
> Claudia (Academic, Redbrick)

> If your module evaluations are bad you can lose your job based on what, on a group of young people who see themselves as customers and you know and depending on whether you satisfy them.This makes you change your teaching strategy.
>
> Ingrid (Academic, Elite)

These statements provide an indication of forms of resentment from the academics who state they are changing their pedagogic strategies to meet the needs of the empowered student-consumers. Additionally, it is possible to observe how the power that is bestowed to student-consumers causes concern for these academics, they know they will be subject to the New Public Management audit should the evaluations be less than positive. Again, this can be seen as constructing a fractious environment for academics to navigate. Ingrid alluded to her frustration with module evaluations and how these can question her professionalism:

> That's another thing I don't understand […] these evaluations that we have where they are the customer, they evaluate us and say, 'you don't know your subject' and I say well you don't know that as you're a student and I'm trained in this subject so how can you [the students] evaluate whether I'm good at what I'm doing because you know, it's ridiculous.
>
> Ingrid (Academic, Elite)

Similar frustrations are echoed by Kirsten:

> It's also this kind of idea that they kind of know, so it goes back to this customer thing right. Students don't know necessarily what is good teaching or what's good quality or whats good for them.
>
> Kirsten (Academic, post '92)

In these statements, it is possible to perceive elements of the power battle in which these academics find themselves, where it appears that their authority, and hence their academic identity, is being challenged by students.

Module evaluations place students in an awkward position as they are expected to critique their academics. This appears to be subject to how they view their relationship with their academics or how they have been constructed as customers. One student noted the dilemma this posed for her:

> I think that the good thing is that we are close to our teachers but I also think I get close to bias – sometimes it's too much. Yeah, because sometimes if you have to criticise your tutors, sometimes you feel you have this personal approach and academic approach which is difficult to criticise.
>
> Sophia (1st Year Student, Dual)

Angela noted her frustrations with being constructed as a customer.

> I don't want to view myself as a customer in the uni, do you know what I mean? Like I just think that's the wrong way of approaching it, 'cos customers pay for something and they get

> the service, you know what I mean? Whereas I'm paying for something and putting in a shit load of energy into my studies and my pursuit for learning and achievement and stuff so I feel like, I'm not a customer.
>
> Angela (3rd year Student, Private)

Student-consumers, as rational economic actors, have chosen their university course and, it is reasonable to assume, trust that the academics have the expertise to deliver the required content. Thus, student-consumers, it would be presumed, will trust their academics' judgements when marking scripts, for example, to be fair and accurate. However, the students are put in a position, through the universities, that could be interpreted as policing the academics. The discourse of the student-consumer as academic monitors appears to be problematic for some academics as it creates power struggles. One academic sums up the strangeness of this continuous power struggle:

> There's a sort of perverse logic to it especially here, well not only here but elsewhere where they want to recruit people who are A,B,C,D,E or whatever qualifications, experience that's always up there and then you get into the system and then suddenly there's a whole series of administrative hoops you have to jump through and module evaluations you have to deal with to suggest that you might not be the person who they've employed basically and then you have to continually prove yourself.
>
> Graham (Academic, Elite)

It is also possible to sense that the fear of a poor module evaluation is constructing for some academics a new power battle in which they have to negotiate their identities. Ivan articulated:

> So you have the experience where there is a very clear link between your module evaluation scores and how you mark your students. So, if you mark them before the module evaluation you will drop at least one point, so you mark them after they have completed the module evaluation to get a fairer evaluation.
>
> Ivan (Academic, Elite)

Graham and Ivan's statements suggest teaching and marking are aligned to what could be described as an emotional performance. Pineau (2005, p.16) argued that the metaphor of teaching as performance is problematic as performance can be associated with 'pretence, artifice, deception, affectation, and entertainment', and therefore disingenuous. An obvious irony here is that most universities use some form of teaching performance assessment to measure the perceived effectiveness of pedagogic practice.

Many scholars (see, for example, Ball 2003, 2012a; Osgood, 2006; Todd et al., 2015) have researched the questionable effectiveness of the measurement of teaching performativity and how such technologies can be coercive in the production of 'bodies that are docile and capable'

(Ball, 2003, p.219 citing Foucault, 1979). The requirement for some students appears to be that academics should perform in a certain way. This can be seen as academics being responsibilised for meeting the student-consumer demands. This performative requirement contributes to the construction of an anxious relationship in which academics must negotiate with the student-consumers. Apparently, the problem here is that academics should have the integrity to provide a 'pedagogy of discomfort' (Ball, 2019, p.139) as opposed to meeting a performance requirement.

Arguably, the academics who meet these performative requirements of students can lessen the intensity of the panoptic gaze of the ritualised audits of module evaluations or the NSS. As Trout, (1997, p.6) noted:

> Few professors can afford to ignore what students say about them on evaluation forms– especially when these forms are factored into administrative decisions about hiring, retention, tenure, promotion, and merit-pay.

In this context, the problem faced by academics is that 'the performance's success is unfortunately dependent upon the spectator and not the performer' (Falter, 2016, p.30). One of a range of problems academics could face is that a successful performance requires a receptive audience. A receptive audience, in this context HE students, is responsibilised to perform or participate. Macfarlane, (2017, p.1) noted:

> Students are now subject to participative, behavioural, and emotional expectations that inhibit the development and expression of their academic freedom […] these expectations treat students as children as opposed to adults.

A further complication of the academics' situation is the fact that the students have to remember a satisfactory performance. For academics, 'this equates to students having all the power to determine [their] teaching success' (ibid). Unfortunately for academics, as Angela suggested:

> If you have a lecturer that you don't like you're just not going to wanna be there and you're just not going to turn up or be engaged.
>
> Angela (3rd Student, Private)

Similarly, Carole in her statement appears to be resisting her responsibilisation and placing it upon the academics who are teaching her:

> What I am quite surprised by is the sort of lectures, I thought I would be […] more engaged with the lectures because I find it personally very hard just to listen to somebody, so I didn't realise that lectures would be very much like that where they would be purely talking at you and I thought I would be more engaged with the lectures than I actually am in a way.
>
> Carole (3rd Year Student, Redbrick)

Therefore, there may be times when student customer satisfaction is simply impossible to attain. Montalvo et al (2007, p.145) noted that 'when students like the teacher their effort and quality of work improves. In contrast, when they dislike the teacher their effort and quality of work lessens.' These observations appear to be evident in some student responses.

> But it's only fair that we all understand that, but the problem is when some of them go above and beyond and they do extra, it's like you want to do extra for them.
>
> (Karla, 3rd year Student, post '92)

> They sort of start you off and point you in the right direction but then you have to further look at, say they kind of like guide you and then it's up to you to study and look in-depth more.
>
> (Claire, Student Elite provider)

The reasons for not liking academics can take many forms. For example, Bagilhole (1993, p.431) discussed the problems female academics face such as the 'challenges to their authority from male students'. Meyer (1999) has investigated how homophobia can impact upon the student/academic relationship. Pilkington (2015) researched the problems of race inequality and Gerwitz et al (1995) and Reay et al (2002.a) explored class and equity in HE. Finally, Sheeran et al (2007) examined academic elitism. Obviously, there will also always be the problem of personality clashes. From some students' narratives, it is possible to observe that these problems persist. Claire (Student, Private Provider) opined:

> To be honest, I really didn't like his teaching style whatsoever; he seems like a brilliant manager but not a great teacher (final year students agreeing) and I think that was a major thing.
>
> Claire (3rd year Student, Private)

Leah, when commenting on what could be seen as her frustrating engagement with the pedagogic discourse, said:

> My lecturer John, like I said the one with the least amount of qualifications, […] was like really enthusiastic and would say well maybe you could do this or that. That's exactly how it should be. But these new lecturers, there's a couple of them who say […] they don't like it and that's it.
>
> Leah (1st year Student, post '92)

In some cases, the power attributed to students through the technologies of the module evaluations appears to be driving the relationship in favour of the student-consumer. However, it could be viewed to be at the cost of the students' intellectual development and arguably the newly developing discourse replaces the older one where academics were less accountable. This, it can be argued, is re-constructing the pedagogic relationship. Interestingly the

student/academic relationship could be seen as potentially draining due to the emotional performances required of academics. This is an important part of the research, as the academic narratives indicate academic emotional reflections on how they negotiate the student policing of module evaluations and how they must continually prove themselves, despite having been recruited for their expertise.

Hochschild (1983) was one of the first scholars to investigate the concept of emotional labour in her study of American Airlines concerning flight attendant training and customer management. Therefore it can be viewed as a form of responsibilisation to ensure customer, or in this case, student satisfaction. For Hochschild, emotional labour is not something that one is paid for, it is a way of modifying one's emotions to manage customer interaction. Therefore emotional labour can be viewed as a performance which may 'involve enhancing, faking, and/ or suppressing emotions to modify one's emotional expressions' (Isenbarger and Zembylas, 2006, p.121 citing Hochschild). For example, Christine (Academic, Redbrick) thought that the relationship had to be managed 'very carefully', Carlos (Academic, Redbrick) suggested with 'tact and diplomacy', whilst Marjory (Academic, Dual) indicated 'it has to be very professional'.

## 6.3 Conclusion

This chapter has explored how discourses of responsibilisation for both academics and student-consumers appear to be creating a fractious and confusing environment where roles and responsibilities can be seen as fluid and subjective. This appears to be across all the sectors of HE where this research has been conducted. The interpretation of responsibilisation as a technology of New Public Management to manage academics and student-consumers in HE offers something new to the field of study and develops the literature. This study has shown how academics and students are having to negotiate a shifting discourse that causes, for some, frustration and lament, and can be seen to be problematic. For some academics, there appears resentment as they have to meet the demands of NPM and student-consumer expectations whilst trying to maintain their own credibility and that of their discipline. The research has provided an interpretation of how NPM performance requirements can be seen to de-professionalise academics as the cost of dissatisfied student-consumers appears to be the overriding business model for the universities in this study. This can be seen through the academics' confusion over their exact roles, as they have to account for themselves to both NPM and the student-consumer. The research has sought to show this can create stressors within the student/academic pedagogic relationship and how the parrhesiastic contract appears problematic in managing the student-consumer discourse.

The investigation has explored how student-consumers can be seen to be struggling with their own responsiblisation, through university expectations. This can be evidenced through the students' expectations about the amount of support and help expected. This is not just academic support as some students are expecting their academics to be life coaches or mentors and to provie a service. It can be argued that this is no fault of the students as the universities articulate that student-consumers will be given help and support to ensure they graduate, arguably a service for their money. The notion of students resisting their own responsibilisation as consumers of HE does not appear to have been researched to any degree. Therefore, the use of the concept of responsibilisation provides a new understanding in this field of study. The final section has shown how academics in this study feel that their work or responsibilisation is under constant surveillance and how this appears to be driving academics to act or perform in what could be termed as the required way.

This chapter has provided an understanding as to how the student-consumerist discourse is influencing the academic/student pedagogic relationship. The chapter has also given insight into how both academics and students are having to negotiate identities in what appears to be a confusing pedagogic environment where the consumerist discourses shift subject to the requirements of New Public Management.

# Chapter 7: Resistance, Compliance and Complicity within the Student-consumerist Discourse

## 7.1 Introduction

> Power is exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free. By this, we mean individual or collective subjects who are faced with a field of possibilities in which several ways of behaving, several reactions, and diverse comportments may be realised.
>
> (Foucault, 1982, p.790)

This chapter explores the forms of resistance, compliance, and complicity that have been interpreted in the narratives of students and academics regarding the student-consumer discourse using Foucauldian Discourse Analysis. For Foucault, resistance will always create new forms of power. A Foucauldian understanding of resistance is that discourses have power over individuals, however, individuals can also draw from specific discourses for their own ends. Discourses can be seen to construct specific subjectivities for the agents involved. Nevertheless, these agents can 'employ specific discourses and resist others precisely to protect or enhance their social agency or identity' (Laine & Vaara, 2007, p.30). The evidence of this in the data is explored in Sections 7.2, 7.3 and 7.4. Foucault, as indicated in Chapter 2, is elusive over what actual forms of resistance are. Foucault (1978, p.96) drew our attention to the unpredictability of resistances:

> There is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case, resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial by definition.

These pluralities are problematised further in Section 7.1 and test the limits of Foucault's concept of resistance. The reader is provided with a rationale of how these concepts can offer an understanding of resistance to the student-consumerist discourse and New Public Management practices. Section 7.2 explores academic resistance as simply saying *no*; Section 7.2.1 examines acts of resistance through academic *nostalgia* and dressage. Section 7.2.2 investigates themes of academic complicity, docility and inadvertent compliance as they negotiate the student-consumer discourse. Elements of complicity from the data can also be seen when academics are required to break the parrhesiastic contract. Section 7.3 concludes the chapter.

## 7.2 Theorising Foucault's Power and Resistance

Foucault regarded resistance as central to his concept of power.

> If there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience […] so resistance comes first […] Power relations are obliged to change with resistance.
>
> (Foucault, 1997, p.167)

Interestingly, this does not appear to be the case in most of the Foucauldian influenced literature cited previously as most of the authors appear to start with power creating resistance. For example, Worthington and Hodgson (2005) discussed academic forms of resistance to the auditing of teaching quality. Thus, if there was no audit (the power change) there would be no need for resistance. Seale et al. (2015), in their study of collaborative partnerships between academics and staff, found resistance engagements from both parties. Seale et al. (2015) suggested that one form of resistance from both parties was that of wasting time. Again, the powerplay of required collaboration produces resistance and not vice versa.

Forms of resistance can be seen to arise predominantly after a power change is enforced. Foucault (1978, p.95) suggested 'where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power'. Foucault is not saying that resistance is subservient or a product of a power relationship; he goes on to explain that every power relationship involves resistance. Foucault (ibid) noted power relationships exist through:

> a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are everywhere in the power network.

Power and resistance can be viewed as independent concepts, however, they are mutually implicative and, therefore, inseparable tendencies that are part of a unified whole. Thus, they ebb and flow together continually and are mutually dependent upon each other. Mayo (1997, p.116) is helpful in understanding this relationship, suggesting that 'resistance accompanies power, not as an outsider but as part of the dynamics of the power relations'. Foucault (1978, p.96) further muddled the issue. On the one hand, he suggested forms of resistance could be savage, concerted, and employ violence. On the other, he indicates that resistance can include forms compliance, such as compromise, interested, or sacrificial. Therefore, Foucault's concept of resistance confusingly uses what could be termed as diametrically opposed values. Foucault (ibid) further complicated his concept of resistance by stating that it rarely happens; he posits: 'Are there no great radical ruptures, massive binary definitions, then? Occasionally, yes'.

Consequently, the researcher is unlikely to find forms of blatant resistance and will have to look for forms of reluctant compromise, sacrifice or complicity. Leathwood and Read (2013) in their research provided examples of this type of resistance. This research seeks to build upon their work.

Foucault (1978, p.96) goes on to say that resistance(s) is mobile and transient which produces 'cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remoulding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds'. Therefore, resistances that 'are effective on one level may also fail at another level' (Mayo, 1997, p.117). To simply say '*no*' for Foucault (1997, p.168) 'is the minimum form of resistance.'

This again adds confusion as to Foucault's concept of resistance. Whichever way it is decided to view Foucault's forms of resistance, it is necessary to consider the strategies academics may use. Any form of resistance, it can be argued, must involve some form of cognitive thought and therefore strategic decision making, conscious or sub-conscious. By using the work of Foucault, it is always important to consider the panoptic gaze. Therefore, forms of visibility are part of the academic decision-making process and must be recognised. This research adopts the position that compromise and sacrifice are low visibility or perhaps internal forms of resistance, whereas simply saying *no* is far from the minimum form of resistance. It constructs a visibility. This may be a desired visibility, however, it can be dangerous for academics as it demonstrates deviance from New Public Management requirements.

Foucault even found difficulty in describing his concept of resistance, although, the term 'counter-conduct' does occur in *Security, Territory and Population* (Foucault, 2009.a, p.268). This appears after he has justified why words such as dissidence, revolt, insubordination, misconduct and disobedience do not quite fit his thinking. Foucault noted the word 'counter-conduct' is badly constructed (ibid); however, it eliminates concepts of 'sanctification or hero-worship'. Counter-conduct, it could be argued, would be an obvious choice of words for Foucault as he claimed that what he studied were:

> disciplinary techniques, modalities of dressage, forms of surveillance; actually, what I study is what I have called governmentality […] the practices which are put to work to govern men […] government as the conduct of conduct, how to conduct the conduct of men.
>
> (Foucault, 1978 cited in Elden, 2007, p.67)

The problem Foucault leaves researchers with is that he never specifically states what forms of resistance are actually available to use. This, apparently, could be due to his approach to post-structuralism which 'assumes that the regularities identified are not the same in all historical

periods and in all cultures, but rather are specific to particular times and places' (Olssen, 2003, p.192). Whilst these regularities may not always be the same, Foucault's concept of power/resistance is a twofold component that is always present and thus a permanent feature. Olssen (2003, p.194) goes on:

> Foucault's post-structuralism is a more materialistic conception, rejecting the priority of the signifier and its over-emphasis in relation to the signified, and the failure to contextualize both signifier and signified in the context of the pre-discursive. Meaning is not produced through the free play of signifiers alone, but signification is effected by power.

Therefore everything is of its time, place and power relationship; thus outcomes cannot be determined. Foucault does not give us examples of resistance as these in themselves would become *regimes of truth* and therefore open to scrutiny. The resultant problem is that Foucault cannot give us a tool to set any judgements against. Butin (2001, p.170) argued that critics of Foucault complain that if:

> Foucault cannot offer a better tomorrow, then Foucault only taunts us by saying we can or should resist. For to claim that resistance is inherent within relations of power and then withhold any criteria upon which to resist, is seen […] as an intellectual hocus-pocus and a political sham.

Critiques of Foucault question why resistance is so important to him. For example, Fraser (1989, p. 29) provided her concerns as to Foucault's work on resistance:

> Foucault calls in no uncertain terms for resistance to domination. But why? Why is struggle preferable to submission [compliance]? Why ought domination to be resisted?

Fraser, perhaps, is interpreting Foucault in her own way here as she implies that Foucault is issuing normative principles and telling us that we must resist. As discussed above, Foucault would suggest that struggle is not always required and that somehow compliance, compromise and sacrifice can be seen as forms of internal resistance.

Foucault provides the tool of power/resistance as a means of analysis; however, he never states that resistance is obligatory. After all, it might be said that compliance, compromise and sacrifice could be simply obligations to ensure academics remain employed and perhaps an academic department viable.

Foucault (1980, p.98) argued: 'The individual is an effect of power, and, at the same time, or precisely to the extent to which it is that effect, it is the element of its articulation'. Therefore, Foucault suggested we fashion ourselves through resistance. Again, Foucault intentionally does not give us much to work with. Foucault (1974 cited in Motion, Leitch 2007, p.263 ) noted 'I would like my books to be a kind of tool-box which others can rummage through to find a tool which they can use however they wish in their own area … I write for users, not readers.'

Within the spirit of this, the data were systematically analysed to establish which forms of resistance appeared most in the narratives. The dominant discourses of resistance were interpreted as: resistance as in saying *no; nostalgic resistance;* and *complicity, docility and inadvertent compliance* that can be seen as *acts of dressage.* These are used in the following Sections to give an understanding of how different forms of resistance, compliance, and complicity can be seen to have been used by academics and students. *No* resistances could be seen from academics as the refusal to answer emails at the weekend or the demonstration of autonomy, within the limited options which they have been given. *No* resistances from a student perspective will be explored where it appears that some students feel they have to make a visual stand against the demands of academia or universities. *Nostalgic* resistance refers to some academics trying to cling onto a notional *Humboltdian* pedagogical model which, arguably, they can identify with as opposed to the consumer-driven HE model now in place. Perhaps, this is from the time when many of them completed their own degrees and some of them, their postgraduate degrees.

*Nostalgic* resistance, for this research, is a form of critical resistance to the changes implemented through New Public Management and the discourse of the student-consumer. *Nostalgia* affords some academics the opportunity to critically compare previous contemporary discourses. This research suggests that, to counteract these nostalgic resistances NPM constructs new forms of dressage to manage academics. *Complicity, docility and inadvertent compliance which can be viewed as acts of* dressage, as forms of resistance, will be problematised within the context of academics who can be seen to be meeting the demands of NPM and student-consumers. Dressage for Foucault can take on two forms, one of managing academics in this case or simply academics performing in the required way. Compliance/dressage runs throughout all of the Sections as the data indicates that wherever there is resistance there are some academics who will comply or be seen to be complying. Here, the baton laid down by Fraser is taken up to explore the narratives where complicity, docility or inadvertant compliance [or dressage] may be preferable or simply pragmatic, as opposed to resistance.

This Section has explored Foucault's notion of resistance and has sought to show how it can be interpreted as contradictory and provides ill-defined boundaries to work within. Foucault's differing suggestions of forms of resistance appear to be diametrically opposed, for example, simply saying *no* or *compliance*. His contradictory concept of resistance does not appear to have been a great concern to scholars in research. This has been problematised. To provide some boundaries three methods of interpreting the discourses of resistance were selected to analyse the narratives in the focus groups. These are the acts of saying *no* as *resistance,*

*nostalgic resistance* and *complicity, docility and inadvertent compliance* which can be seen as *dressage.* These concepts will be used in the following Sections.

### 7.2.1 Resistance as *no* is not that simple

This Section has explored how simply saying *no* is not that simple for some academics in this study. The academics years of experience have been included as the research sought to explore if there are any differences between how academic length of service may impact upon how they are prepared to resist or comply with the discourse of the student-consumer. (See Appendix 14 for Academic Profiles). However, once faced with the requirements of New Public Management, even the senior academics in the focus groups appear willing to compromise or be seen to be doing what is required.

Some of the academics' narratives demonstrate a clear use of Foucault's *no* as a form of resistance to the student-consumer discourse. For example, Ivan (Academic, Elite), with 25 years of service, appeared quite happy to say *no* to some of his students when they question his marks. Ivan articulated that when a student says 'I am not happy with my mark' I usually respond 'I am not happy with your work.'

Similarly, Peter (my emphasis), with eight years' experience appears to be saying *no;* however, it is possible to glimpse what he believes to be a collective *no* as he uses the word *we.*

> I tell them that if that's the grade you earned, *we* give you it.
>
> Peter (Academic, Private)

However, later, he goes on to say when discussing a challenge from one of his students regarding their marks.

> I didn't give you anything, thank you, that's what you earned and to be honest, I was being a little bit kind but let's have a look at it.
>
> Peter (Academic, Private)

This is interesting as Peter has gone from the collective *no* to perhaps acknowledging the power of the student-consumer discourse. By being a 'little bit kind' it is possible to discern that he has not been totally honest with his marking, arguably due to the auditable pressures to perform. Again, it is possible to discern what can be interpreted as the breakdown of the parrhesiastic contract. However, in Peter's next statement (my emphasis) when discussing marking students' work, he can be seen to be veering towards the collective identity whilst appearing to

demonstrate a form of resistance, as he refers to himself and colleagues as *we are professional people*. *'Professional people'* suggests a normalised power relationship which should not be interrogated by students. A straightforward *no* appears to be not so straightforward. Acquiescence to student-consumerist demands can be seen from Peter, although he indicates that he is unlikely to change his position.

> If you want to dissect it [the student's work] let's go through it paragraph by paragraph because I am happy to because I think we have to stand by our marks, it's what *we* do and *we* are professionals and *we are professional people*.
>
> Peter (Academic, Private)

It is possible to suggest that he is prepared to offer a performance should student-consumers question his marks. However, it is reasonable to argue that is all it is, as he indicates, 'we have to stand by our marks'.

Peter's reference to *we are professional people* could also be seen as a symbolic resistance which has 'given way to managerialism' (Dearlove, 1997, p.56). Equally, Peter's use of the word *we* suggests that he is not individually responsible for the students' marks as his colleagues should back him up. To reinforce this he continued:

> They [the students] have got every right to challenge us and we follow that process and you know if somebody challenges any of our marks then we can always get it re-marked by a colleague.
>
> Peter (Academic, Private)

It is possible to observe what could be viewed as the power battle between student-consumers and academics. Despite acknowledging that students have every right to challenge his marks, he alludes to the expectation that colleagues will support his decision. However, this expectation may not always be the same. Sometimes, academics will intervene to ensure that the NPM panoptic eye moves on. David, when discussing his marking and the feedback from colleagues, noted:

> When I arrived in September […] there were a stack of dissertations waiting for me on my desk and I started marking them and I got 'those marks are way too low, you have to somehow recalibrate'.
>
> David (Academic, Elite)

However, saying *no* and not meeting the student-consumer's satisfaction can have its dangers. Philip, with 13 years' experience, noted the problems that can be faced when saying *no* to students:

> Well, it is difficult to argue against [the students] if we didn't deliver them to a first [class degree], maybe they should say, well I want some money back because you have failed me. There have been instances like that in the press.

Rosemary, with 10 years' experience, articulates the problems academics may face when trying to say *no* to students' expectations:

> You know I had a student who came and sat with me yesterday and […] I'm expecting a 2.1 for this piece of coursework and it's almost like now that there is no other choice to them, it's a 2.1 or a 1st. Those are the only grades really that they want.
>
> Rosemary (Academic, Private)

She continued, explaining the dilemma that academics were being put in:

> You know, I think the pressure upwardly for grades is ever so great and is getting greater and greater and also you know like any other university we are performance measured on how many more 2.1 and 1sts we're getting each year.
>
> Rosemary (Academic, Private)

In this context it is possible to observe that academics may be having to say *no* to two different stakeholders. Students know that they will be entering a highly competitive jobs market, arguably they can see the scarcity value of a degree is declining, hence the demands for a 2.1 or above. NPM performance audits, Rosemary suggests, require 2.1s and 1st's, otherwise the panoptic eye will fall upon academics. In the worst-case scenario, if Philip is correct, as above, then saying *no* will invite the scrutiny of the press.

Another academic articulated his view of himself and his peers about the problems of saying *no:*

> What's a degree about, I think we have touched upon but it's a masquerade at times, it's not about what we academics want it to be about.
>
> David (Academic Elite)

Student module evaluations, it is reasonable to argue, further complicate the schizophrenic environment for the academics and student-consumers. Academia is founded on in-depth research which seeks to offer reliable evidence to support its findings and is peer-reviewed for credibility. However, it appears that New Public Management overlooks this and prefers to use the simplistic student module evaluations as a technology to challenge academics who say *no*. Student module evaluations are questionable in their objectivity, for example, Shelvin et al. (2000, p.397) found 'that evaluations can be influenced by factors other than teaching ability such as student characteristics and the physical environment'. It is possible to suggest that these technologies produce friction and, arguably, question the academic integrity for those who say *no*. Ivan, narrated the power of the student-consumers voice, even in limited numbers:

> So you have the experience where there is a very clear link between your module evaluation scores and how you mark your students […] Last time out of 120 students I had 12 people give me feedback, right, and they were the ones who failed so then all of a sudden you get called in and are told that you need to change your module.
>
> Ivan (Academic, Elite)

Graham gives further insight about how he sees some academics are compromised when saying *no* and are not meeting student-consumerist expectations and those of NPM:

> A good example is I was an external at a uni where the students continuously complained about, you know, lower grades and the university then said that all modules had to have 60 percent of the cohort getting more than 60 percent, no matter what. And if you didn't get that you were open to investigation, so guess what happened?
>
> Graham (Academic, Elite)

Here, again, it is possible to observe that academics saying *no* to the student-consumerist voice and arguably grade inflation, are asked to look the other way or face the consequences of NPM.

Peter sums up his view as to the power of NPM within the context of the student-consumer and the difficulties in saying *no*:

> I think we have to treat them like clients, I mean if they are paying for it then we are a service provider, that's the bottom line, they are buying a service.
>
> Peter (Academic, Private)

The first part of this Section has explored how academics, in part, are trying to say *no* to the demands of student-consumers and NPM. In some instances, the more senior academics' narratives appear quite confident in saying *no* to student-consumers. However, it appears that when the NPM panoptic gaze shines a light on student module evaluations and exam boards, academic professionalism and integrity are questioned and *no* is in some cases not acceptable. The research sought to ascertain if there are any differences between how academics resist the student-consumer discourse subject to years of experience. This does not appear to be evidenced in the data. The study has also explored how technologies of NPM can be seen to coerce academic compliance to meet the required demands. These can be seen to operate through module evaluation scores where even a minority of students' views can fuel NPM to ask academics to change. Additionally, where students complain sufficiently, it appears that academics are forced to adjust their marking criteria and should students fail a module they are, in some cases, compensated for what could be viewed as doing nothing.

### 7.2.2 Nostalgic Resistance and Dressage: Academics Making the Best of the Student-consumer Discourse

This Section explores how the research evidence highlights the academics use of what is termed as *nostalgic* resistance. This, it is argued, is a way that academics compare the previous discourse to the one driven by the student-consumer. The study also investigates how, for some academics, dressage appears to be a pragmatic option as they navigate the discourse [of the student-consumer] and the requirements of New Public Management.

A first area in which academic forms of *nostalgic* resistance can be perceived is the student-consumer demands for high marks. This student-focused instrumental approach has been discussed in Chapter 5. Section, 7.3 explored how some academics are trying to resist this instrumental approach by referring to how things have changed since they completed their university education. Many of the academics who participated in the focus groups are likely to have graduated in times quite different from now. Prior to the expansion of HE, a degree would almost guarantee the graduate a job due to its scarcity value; however, the modern graduate is faced with intense competition for graduate forms of employment in a 'congested graduate market' (Tomlinson, 2008, p.58). For example, Phillip articulated the high stakes environment of the present as opposed to the nostalgic past:

> Things have changed and to give this some perspective 30 years ago a university degree would give you a job; this is not the case anymore.
>
> Phillip (Academic, post '92)

Similarly, Colin further notes the pressure that students are under:

> 30 years ago, less people took a degree, now it's expected that you do a degree.
>
> Colin (Academic, post '92)

Sylvia adds extra weight as to the high stakes' environment faced by the consuming students:

> Yeah but now anyone has a degree, 30 years ago it was a very small percentage of the population.
>
> Sylvia (Academic, post '92)

These academic reminiscences suggest they know that the capital of a degree has changed considerably through the pressures of time and the expansion of HE. Historically, the capital of a degree would get you a job; this no longer appears to be the case. Students, it would appear,

know this only too well; therefore, the only tool they have to gain a competitive edge is a top-class degree with a 1st providing the optimal credential capital. This was explored in Chapter 5.

The need for this capital again reinforces the difficulties now faced in academic/student pedagogic relationship. This not through the students' fault but by the reality of the uncertainty of the graduate jobs market in which they are going to compete. Rosemary noted how priorities have changed for students and her employer:

> The expectation from the student point of view and the uni point of view is that a 2.1 and 1st are now almost the only grades and the rest of it doesn't really factor in and you know […] I went to uni in the mid '90s and you know a 1st was a holy grail.
>
> Rosemary (Academic, Private)

In this instance it is possible to interpret a *nostalgic* resistance as she compares her own university experience to that of the contemporary environment.

Similarly, Ingrid articulates her memories of her university experience and demonstrates a *nostalgic* resistance to the help given to her students now.

> I can remember when I did my degree I never ever went and had a conversation with the module leader and asked 'am I doing this right', it was like I got the instructions and it was nowhere near the kind of instructions we give, that simply didn't exist.
>
> Ingrid (Academic, Elite)

Simon can be seen to demonstrate similar *nostalgic* resistance to the way the student-consumers approach their pedagogic experience:

> They are more focused now on hunting the marks, high marks instead of learning.
>
> Simon (Academic, Redbrick)

However, *nostalgia* can be problematic. Kirsten commented on how she perceived that her colleagues were clinging on to the past, arguably at the cost of the students. Her frustrations are made evident as she indicates that *nostalgia* appears to be entrenched for some of her colleagues:

> So, there's still this idea of 'what is this degree, what job will it give you' when that's just not how the world works anymore and we are still thinking of degrees in an old-fashioned way and that mentality certainly does not seem to be changing here.
>
> Kirsten (Academic, post '92)

Interestingly, Graham articulates a resistance to how the *nostalgic* university may not have been such a good place whilst also demonstrating resistance to the NPM requirements.

> I don't think we should be going back to the days of the past when academics would sit in their offices and try and intentionally trick students and belittle them with 'ha you didn't get that' and openly expose their frailties, but I think we have gone maybe too far in the other direction where we are literally, because of the systems like module evaluations, staff evaluations and having to go through these very prescribed processes.
>
> Graham (Academic, Elite)

Graham's observations also convey an element of resistance to the requirements of NPM and the student-consumer discourse. However, it is possible to discern concerns of NPM dressage. 'Prescribed processes' could be interpreted as an alien environment for academics, a form of dressage, where New Public Management auditable performances must be met. Jackson and Carter (1998, p.59) remind us: 'The point [is] that it is not sufficient that something is done, it must be done in a particular way'. Prescribed processes could also be viewed as NPM technologies used to disrupt any notions of academic *nostalgia* as they are technologies of the dominant discourse. It is reasonable to suggest that these *nostalgic* forms of resistance are used by some academics as a benchmark for comparison against the student-consumer discourse. However, it is also possible to argue that NPM has constructed auditable technologies that can be seen as acts of dressage to embed the prevailing discourse, thus positioning *nostalgia* where it should be, that is, in the past.

David articulates how, possibly, academic *nostalgic* resistance to the demands of NPM requirements of passing students has been overcome by the technology of compensation. Compensation is a form of leniency to students where should a student have failed a module, academics are encouraged to give them the module. Compensation can be seen effectively as an NPM tool of dressage that undermines the *nostalgia* that some academics allude to.

> I just don't get things like compensation, you know we're telling a lie to some degree as we are saying that you have qualified in this area, you passed 7 out of 8 modules oh but that 8th one that you failed you can be compensated, you can be passed on that 'cos you did well in other modules. That's just nonsense, that's got nothing to do with learning or obtaining a standard, that's to do with the university supporting their processes and making sure their rankings stay in place.
>
> David (Academic, Elite)

Compensation can be interpreted here as a form of dressage, encouraging academics to perform in a certain way. Foucault (1991, p.136) noted that dressage, as a disciplinary technology, requires a docile body 'that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved'. Failure to comply appears not an option as university rankings, in David's view, legitimise disregarding

the parrhesiastic contract in favour of the reality required by NPM. Learning standards, in his view, are less of a concern for his employer. The NPM requirement of university rankings appear to be prioritised over his professional standards. Here, it is possible to interpret dressage also as a form of compliance. David appears to be alluding to the notion that it is best to hold his own counsel as opposed to attracting the panoptic gaze of NPM.

Mark sums up best the situation faced by some academics when discussing the obligations faced by himself and colleagues.

> It's highly questionable what we are doing [but] I think you do what you can with the system you have got, don't you? You do your best.
>
> Mark (Academic, Elite)

Ivan, in response, said:

> You do your best within the parameters. Nobody stops us from doing the very best we can in terms of teaching.
>
> Ivan (Academic, Elite)

Mark's comment can be viewed as problematising how his academic honesty is being undermined by the requirements of his employer. This can be interpreted as Mark questioning the veracity of his parrhesiastic contract which, if his going to sustain his academic integrity, appears strained. Both Mark and Ivan's comments allude to what could be viewed as dressage within the system. However, both articulate what can be seen as a resistance or *nostalgic* pride to the dominant NPM discourse. Despite their academic misgivings, Mark and Ivan are doing their best within the confines of the discourse in which they find themselves arguably through acts of dressage.

This Section has shown how some academics are trying to maintain or reproduce the educational experience they had themselves through the frame of *nostalgic* resistance. This appears to cause friction as some academics are keen to sever these nostalgic ties and move on. The study has sought to show that this *nostalgic* resistance appears to create further power struggles as it seems to encourage NPM to bring in new technologies or forms of dressage to manage academics. These technologies, or forms of power, appear to be used to reinforce the discourse of the student-consumer and, arguably, undermine any attempts by academics to cling on to the previous discourse. These technologies, such as student evaluations and compensation, are used by NPM to produce instruments of dressage as the student-consumers must be satisfied at seemingly almost any cost. Foucault's concept of dressage has been used to help interpret the situation. The research has sought to show how dressage can be used to construct academic

subjectivities; however, the study has also explored how dressage can be used as a form of resistance to avoid the panoptic gaze. For some academics, compliance apparently poses what can be seen as a dilemma; it can be seen as complicit in breaking the parrhesiastic contract to students and their future employers. For other academics, it appears that compliance may simply be a pragmatic way to play the game. This is explored in the following Section.

### 7.2.3 Academic Complicity, Docility/Dressage and Inadvertent Compliance

This section explores how academic complicity, docility and inadvertent compliance can produce a confusing environment for student-consumers to navigate. Leathwood and Read (2013) suggested that Foucault's understanding of power as a disciplinary technology to give rise to self-governance can help us to see how the discourses of NPM can be producing 'new academic subjectivities [which] goes some way to explaining the relative lack of overt resistance' (ibid, p.1166). Leathwood and Read's (2013) work investigated academic compliance within the context of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and found that most of the academics felt they had no choice 'but to play the game', but were also 'choosing' to do so because of the pleasures it offers' (ibid, p.1172). This research suggests that complicity can take two forms, either that of the docile body, performing as required or dressage, or inadvertent compliance. Resistance can also be difficult for academics as they know they are under constant NPM surveillance. Foucault (1991, p.176) suggested:

> A relation of surveillance, defined and regulated, is inscribed at the heart of the practice of teaching, not as an additional or adjacent part, but as a mechanism that is inherent to it and which increases its efficiency.

As soon as one of the focus groups started, Pierre (Academic, post '92) immediately voiced his resistance over what he believed to be the Panoptic gaze of the management. He said: 'Have we got permission to do this? Check for bugs. Get the sniffer dogs in'.

The interpretation of inadevertant compliance for this study is when academics appear to consider some practices as normalised parts of the student-consumerist discourse. Inadvertent compliance, where practices appear normalised, offers a different interpretation to Leathwood and Read (2013) and builds on their work to offer an alternative understanding of how academics are negotiating the student-consumerist environment and the demands of NPM. Naturally, wherever there is compliance with an evolving discourse there will also be resistance(s). These will be explored next.

Evidence of academic inadvertent compliance with the student-consumerist discourse appears in the students' narratives as well. For example, Alison praised one of her lecturers:

> I think all of us can agree that one of our lecturers, Christine, has been absolutely amazing […] On a personal level we have got her personal email and she will have some of us on Twitter so that is the kind of relationship where we have got the opportunity to knock on her door. I had one time where I emailed her really late one evening, it was on a Sunday and I didn't expect a response because I know that sometimes when I get emails over the weekend I will leave it until Monday, but she emailed back to me straight away on a Sunday.
>
> Alison (3rd year Student, post '92)

Here it is possible to perceive what could be seen as a personal cost as Alison's lecturer replied to her email on a Sunday. It is fair to speculate that her lecturer may feel she is under the pressure of NPM audit on student pass rates and student satisfaction. Inadvertently, she could be seen to be fashioning the required body who responds to the requirements of NPM and the student-consumer, reproducing, for some researchers, the conditions of her oppression. However, an alternative interpretation of this lecturer's behaviour would be that she may simply love her job and perhaps feels obligated to help her students when required. The problem Alison's lecturer creates is that she is, to an extent, complying with both the demands of student-consumers and New Public Management to provide an almost 24-hour service. This, therefore, could be seen as being complicit or inadvertently compliant in creating a student-consumer expectation that all academics should provide a similar service. The following narratives suggest that this appears to be an expectation of this type of academic service performance for some of the students:

> This sounds kind of awful but you kind of expect a service, I know it sounds awful to say that but yes it's because of the money we have to spend to develop us – not just teach us but have an interest in you and your opinions and beliefs and thoughts as an individual, not just as a source of income I would say.
>
> Harry (3rd year Student, Elite)

One academic commented on how she is coerced into complying through the power of the student-consumer voice:

> I really do and I really care about what I am doing and everything but I really do feel that one word from a student and 'my god' you know I will be reported somewhere and accused of doing a bad job or something, you shouldn't have to feel like that especially when you are very conscientious and you're doing the job to the best of your ability.
>
> Danielle (Academic, post '92)

Another academic voiced similar concerns of how the student-voice creates compliance:

> Some things have to be done quite legally in some ways as you feel you are under that kind of pressure, I think they have a big voice, the students have a big voice and that's clear and we are very concerned about it of course. We have to be really careful about how we talk to them and how we deal particularly with complaints.
>
> Christine (Academic, Redbrick)

The above quotes show how student-consumer power operates within HE for some academics. It is evident that some academics are committed to the students and their jobs; however this does appear to open them up to exploitation by the student-consumers and the requirements of NPM.

This complicity did not apply to all of the academics as resistance to such student demands can also be seen from some of their narratives. Some will not be exploited. One academic articulated her frustration over what she perceives as an illogical approach adopted by NPM management concerning consuming students. She said when referring to the organisation:

> You want more of my time then you pay for it. You know if you want to see me for an hour as opposed to the half-hour I have then stump up the readies. If you want me to reply to an email on a Saturday morning, overtime, please. But none of that happens […] so it's like we're bearing all of the risks on behalf of the university and putting all of the resources in and the student doesn't have to do that […] I won't answer emails in the evenings or at the weekends but there are places that expect that.
>
> Kirsten (Academic, post '92)

It is possible also to sense from Kirsten's words an NPM expectation of the academics to be docile bodies, who will not resist, who will be exploited and therefore become complicit in constructing the required service environment. For student-consumers the different approaches, resistance or complicity, adopted by academics can be equally frustrating. One student, when discussing the support she was being given, stated:

> I'm really close with Kerri and she has been helping me with jobs and ideas and stuff and that's got nothing to do with the lectures, she doesn't have to do that and I know that some teachers [academics] aren't happy, not that they wouldn't be happy to do it its just that they say 'well I'm busy and I don't have any spare time'.
>
> Agnes (3rd year Student, post '92)

Agnes's perception of the situation could be viewed as a strategic manoeuvre to ensure she gets the help she requires. Interestingly, Agnes notes fissures within the academic community. She articulates that some academics are not happy with their colleagues who appear to be more complicit or inadvertently compliant to the needs of the student-consumers. The 'well I'm busy and I don't have any spare time' could be seen as academic resistance to the situation or an admission of the personal costs which some academics are prepared to accept. Equally, a more productive performance for academics may be the auditable publishing of research papers.

Arguably, the personal cost can be justified to themselves. However, this is not the case for all. One academic gives her example as to the personal cost of her compliance with the demands of her employer:

> Earlier this year I didn't even know if I was going to get my marking done in time for the exam boards […] I have never been in that situation before, it wasn't that I wasn't working at the weekends or in the evenings when we do the marking, it wasn't that, it was just that there was so much other stuff going on that I haven't had before, it was a case of trying to find the space to fit it in and I did it.
>
> Samantha (Academic, post '92)

However, it appears that some academics are not quite so willing to accept any personal cost to themselves unless it is for personal advancement, and they will leave the 'housekeeping' for colleagues. One noted:

> You have those people who are completely playing that game and they don't do anything that they don't have to do, they know they're not going to get into trouble, they do the bare minimum of teaching […] they spend all of their time doing research and everybody thinks they're amazing. Meanwhile, everyone else who is invested in their colleagues and their department and in the programme generally has to pick up the slack.
>
> Kirsten (Academic, post '92)

Here, it is possible to observe how selective compliance/resistance can work to the advantage of, what New Public Management might consider, those academics who are entrepreneurial with their time, albeit to the cost of their colleagues. They are doing research, and more importantly, they can be audited. There is also what could be viewed as a social injustice, as those academics doing the 'housework' (see for example Heijstra et al 2017; Macfarlane and Burg 2019; Leathwood and Read 2020) can appear resentful of colleagues who are 'completely playing the game'. Equally, those who are 'playing the game' could be seen as acts of dressage, doing what NPM requires.

This Section has explored how it appears that the different approaches adopted by academic resistance, complicity or inadvertent compliance, could be seen to confuse students as not all academics are delivering the same consumer experience. This appears to create fissures in the academic community as some will simply comply with the consumerist requirements of students, whilst others can be seen to be using a pragmatic approach of resisting these demands, despite the personal cost involved. Conversely, some academics could be viewed as playing the academic game and using selective compliance/resistance or dressage for their own ends, creating fissures within their academic community.

## 7.3 Conclusion

This chapter has problematised Foucault's concept of resistance as he gives researchers very little to work with. Using a systematic analysis, three dominant discourses of resistance were found in the data, and these have been used to explore the narratives in the focus groups. The interpretation suggests that academic resistance to or compliance with the requirements of New Public Management and the student-consumer discourse can be seen as a continuing struggle. This struggle, between resistance and compliance, constructs a difficult environment in which academics must negotiate their personal and professional values. The study has provided an interpretation of how academics saying *no* is often not acceptable for NPM. For example, when students complained about their marks, the academics were told to think again. The study has argued that these technologies are used to undermine academic professionalism and require internalised compromises. These compromises can be seen to be frustrating for some academics as they appear to be questioning their professional values to meet the demands of NPM and the student-consumer discourse. However, they do offer resistance as they are making the best of the situation they see themselves in. The analysis has sought to show how these compromises can be seen to undermine the parrhesiastic contract and posits that this does not serve any party well. The research suggests that some academics can be seen to be 'playing the game' or performing dressage; in effect they are being seen to do something which ticks the correct audit boxes. This appears to cause elements of resentment and possible feelings of social injustice within the academic community. However, as the academics articulated, people have to make the best out of the situation they are in.

# Chapter 8: Conclusions

## 8.1 Introduction

This study has explored how the construction of the student-consumer has impacted upon the student/academic pedagogic relationship in six universities. The research primarily used Foucault's concepts of genealogy and discourse analysis to investigate English Government policy regarding this construction. The study has also explored some of the textual data produced by universities to manage the discourse of the student-consumer at the local level. At the micro level the data produced in the focus groups has been explored to provide an understanding of the discourses produced by the academics. Foucault's concepts of the panoptic gaze, dressage, responsibilisation, resistance and the parrhesiastic contract were used to interpret the discourses identified in the narratives. The research questions for this study were:

- To what extent and in what ways are consumerist discourses evident in national and institutional HE policies?
- How do consumerist discourses influence the academic/student pedagogic relationship and experience?
- How are students and academics negotiating and constructing identities within a pedagogic environment influenced by consumerist discourses?
- To what extent are students and academics articulating and/or resisting a consumerist discourse?

The next section reviews the extent to which this thesis has addressed the research questions. This is followed with a discussion about how this investigation contributes to the literature as well as the limitations of the study. Finally, I offer my thoughts on how future research can build upon my work.

## 8.2 Addressing the questions.

### 8.2.1 To what extent and in what ways are consumerist discourses evident in national and institutional HE policies?

The research shows how the discourse of the student-consumer and the marketisation of HE has been incrementally constructed through a range of government neoliberal policies since 1979. Initially the policy initiatives were driven by the Thatcher's Government's dissatisfaction with HE. However, the study has shown how the discourse of the student-consumer has shifted to meet the needs of the state and commerce as opposed to the pedagogic development of student-consumers. The investigation has shown how these shifts in governmental policy can be seen to have instrumentalised HE. This instrumentalization has constructed students, in Foucauldian terms, as *homo œconomicus* or *entrepreneurial selves*, encouraged to act as consumers of HE instead of engaging in wide ranging pedagogic development. Students, through government discourse, have been encouraged to view themselves as instrumental investors in their education, the outcome being more important than the pedagogic journey. This instrumentalization, in part, this research finds, is reinforced through the way New Public Management has constructed student-consumers. As consumers, through government discourses of empowerment, value for money and the expected return on investment students are encouraged to survey and critique their academics. NPM practices have reinforced the construction of students as consumers, and arguably, empowered critics of the service provided by HE. The implications of this consumerist empowerment are further reflected upon in Sections 8.2.2, 8.2.3 and 8.2.4.

In response to various governments' incremental marketisation of HE, the study has sought to show how universities have adopted neoliberal practices of NPM through auditable technologies such as policies, codes of conduct and charters. These technologies, it is argued, can be seen as Customer Relationship Management and augment the discourse of the student-consumer. However, they also dictate the specific ways in which the students will engage in the product offered and the type of service academics can be expected to provide. The investigation has shown how students can be objectivised as auditable subjects, considered as either assets or liabilities. Student-consumers can be seen to be designated as assets or liabilities and this appears to be shifting the internal discourse of NPM administrators to that of the student-asset/liability management. The analysis of the data can be seen to indicate that some academics are instrumentalising their courses to meet the demands of NPM and ensure a good student-consumer experience. This, arguably, could lead to the further instrumentalisation of HE as the

discourse could change to that of risk management where many students will be viewed as liabilities until they have successfully graduated. This could have implications for academics as they may be further responsibilised to ensure successful graduate outcomes. The data indicate that some academics are adopting an instrumental approach to their teaching. This, it is argued, can be seen as demonstrating an element of complicity to meet the requirements of NPM's construction of the student-consumer. For other academics, this appears to be a form of Foucault's dressage where they are docile bodies performing as required by NPM.

### 8.2.2 How do consumerist discourses influence the academic/student pedagogic relationship and experience?

In the data, students articulated what can regarded as consumerist expectations. For many students, the whole point of gaining a degree was to get some form of competitive advantage. Many of them alluded to the positive consumerist return of competitive advantage in the jobs market, arguably embracing the normalisation of Foucault's *homo œconomicus.* Such narratives indicate that the graduate premium can be seen to influence the way students approach their academics and their constructions of the student-consumer discourse. Therefore, the measurable outcome of their education, a 1st or 2.1 being examples, were more important than their cognitive development. Scott (2016, p. 17) noted the UK had become a graduate society and Halsey (cited in Maton 2005) argued similarly that the reason students sought a degree was to earn a living. This research demonstrates that Scott's and Halsey's observations are still valid. The study has shown that one of the problems faced by some students was that they were ill-prepared consumers. Students, not unreasonably, can be seen to be expecting support as they navigate an unfamiliar terrain replete with emotions of anxiety and the fear of failure. It appears that students accept that they have to pay for their Higher Education, and this has become normalised. However, some want more than just an education. Some students expected their academics to care about their welfare and almost act as life coaches or mentors. Students can be seen to be expecting a service as they are now paying for their education.

From the student focus group data, it appears that student demands may result in academics adopting a more instrumental approach to their teaching. This can be viewed as academics adapting their pedagogic strategies and it may be concluded that academics are trying to meet consumerist demands and ensuring that the students remain NPM assets and not liabilities. However, this seems to be at the cost of a genuine pedagogic relationship that is built upon the mutual exploration of new ideas in academic work. The reality of the student-consumer

experience appears, for some academics and students, to be possibly far from Nordenbo's (2002) understanding of *Bildung.*

This research indicates that, to a large extent, the student-consumer discourse is constructed through NPM technologies such as policies, codes of conduct and charters, as argued in Section 8.2.1. These pit students and academics against each other and produce a schizophrenic environment where the participants' roles and responsibilities are blurred. The focus of these NPM technologies can be viewed as treating academics and students as assets or liabilities that must be managed to ensure perceived student-consumerist outcomes are met. The discourses and practices of NPM can be seen to be constructing what the pedagogic experience will be for student-consumers and how this will be delivered by academics. Academic professionalism is considered through NPM to be a risk; this is mitigated through student-consumerist audits. These include, for example, module evaluation surveys, the National Student Survey and the adjustment of student marks in response to either student complaints or NPM dissatisfaction. These audits, the data suggest, impact upon the pedagogic relationship as the student experience can become less than truthful as academics have to meet the demands of NPM and student-consumers. When student-consumers are viewed as 'clients' it is argued that the NPM model re-orientates the purpose of academics to that of service providers and risk managers.

### 8.2.3 How are students and academics negotiating and constructing identities within a pedagogic environment influenced by consumerist discourses?

This research indicates that New Public Management technologies principally construct the identities that students and academics must negotiate in the consumerist pedagogic environment. These NPM identities appear to be pedagogically instrumentally focused, thus disrupting/challenging the traditional doxa of universities, and the professional identities of academics and their disciplines. The doxa of the independent learner, though not a consumerist construction, becomes difficult to negotiate for many students. Leathwood (2006) described what could be interpreted as the university construction of the student identity, the independent learner. Some students in this study are struggling with this identity as, for many, it is evidently problematic as they are expected to transition from the passive school learner to that of the independent learner which, from a traditional academic perspective, is the ideal preferred graduate product. However, for NPM this is dangerous as this requires risk-taking by students and may be harder to audit as professional academic judgments may be required. This transition, for some students, requires support as they are in unfamiliar surroundings. This support can be seen as students expecting an academic service to ensure they obtain a positive outcome and

value for money. Some students appeared reluctant to negotiate the identity of the independent learner, whereas others felt they were being held back from gaining this identity, by academics who were seen to be instrumentalising their courses. This research has sought to show that such strategies lead to the construction of a schizophrenic environment where, arguably, academics are shifting their pedagogic identities to meet the demands of NPM, minimising the risk of student dissatisfaction and ensuring personal job security.

### 8.2.4 To what extent are students and academics articulating and/or resisting a consumerist discourse?

The research indicates that the student-consumer discourse is encouraged through NPM practices. Some students were implicitly expecting a consumer service whereas others were more articulate regarding their consumerist expectations. There was some evidence of academics resisting the consumer discourse when students challenged their marks, with the greatest resistance appearing when academics felt their expertise was being challenged. Further examples of academics demonstrating forms of resistance appeared to be through one of Foucault's interpretations of dressage, where they could be seen to be 'playing the game', doing the right thing or complicit in meeting the requirements of NPM. 'Playing the game' was justified through colleagues suggesting they were too busy, for example writing research papers.

Some academics, the data suggest, did try and make a point by marking students' work with their professional judgment, which could be viewed as a form of resistance against the student-consumer discourse. However, this is not meeting the needs of NPM that requires student-customer satisfaction which in turn contributes to university rankings. Despite this academic resistance, in some cases student marks were changed; therefore academics can be seen to be doing the right NPM thing, docile and complicit. This research argues that this complicity is a construct of NPM which undermines academic resistance in favour of student-customer satisfaction. This complicity can also be seen through the power of student module evaluations with the data suggesting this can be seen as normalised.

## 8.3 Strengths and Limitations

This research sought to explore how academics and students were negotiating the discourse of the student-consumer. It is not possible to claim that this research can be generalisable as it is a qualitative study as opposed to statistical, therefore caution should

be expected, however similar discourses could be evidenced in all of the narratives of the student-consumers and academics. It should be noted that as a qualitative study there will always be elements of subjectivity in the interpretation of the data and therefore other researchers may come to different findings. Equally, the interpretation of the data produced in the focus groups may not be the same as that of the participants.

The HEIs used in this study were reflective of the English HE sector and similar themes of a schizophrenic environment where academics and students appear to be at odds with each other can be evidenced. The data suggests that both academic and student forms of resistance can be seen to comparable as many of the focus group narratives appeared to describe similar experiences.

Despite some of the difficulties faced in organising the focus groups, I believe this was the best way to gain a sense of how the student-consumer discourse was being navigated by students and academics. On reflection, I could have managed access to participants little better as I panicked due to the negative responses from the VCs. Out of desperation I emailed too many VCs and ended up with additional focus groups. Though these focus groups took some additional time to manage and conduct, I would argue that the additional data strengthens my thesis. The open-ended questions used in the focus groups appear to have worked well as the academics and students did get into some very extensive discussions. The data from the focus groups proved to be rich and varied and allowed me to explore some unexpected themes. These have provided a different understanding of how academics and students are negotiating the discourse of the student consumer.

I have offered a range of theoretical interpretations that appear to be transferable across the HE sector. The HEIs used in this study were reflective of the English HE sector and similar themes of a schizophrenic environment where academics and students appear to be at odds with each other can be evidenced. The data suggests that both academic and student forms of resistance can be seen to comparable as many of the focus group narratives appeared to describe similar experiences.

A possible limitation of the research is that many of the students and academics are from hospitality backgrounds. The VC's had given me the contact details of the academics I could contact for my research and therefore this was beyond my control. This could impact on the generalisability of the findings however it is difficult to say whether this limitation would have made any difference to the conclusions made.

## 8.4 Contribution to Knowledge

This research offers another way of understanding the discourse of the student-consumer, how this is managed and provides an interpretation of some of the challenges this has created for academics and students. The investigation has sought to show how the discourse of full-fees has become normalised; however some students expect more value for their money. This appears to be through an expectation that academics should care about them, demonstrate a vested interest and almost act as life coaches. It has been argued that this could be seen as a service expectation, with students expecting more for their investment. The study has provided an interpretation of how NPM texts are used to embed the discourse of the student-consumer and how this appears to pit students and academics against each other due to the inconsistencies in the narratives provided by universities in the texts they produce. For example, the texts produced emphasise the discourse of the independent learner whilst indicating that academics will be available to help students at almost any time, they will provide an almost personalised student-consumer service. These texts can be found on university websites and in either Codes of Conduct or Student Charters. The research has sought to show how student-consumers can be viewed as assets or liabilities as they are under constant surveillance through software applications used by universities. These applications can be used to identify students as either assets or liabilities. Students can be viewed as liabilities if they are either falling behind or failing in their studies, the software can be used to collect these data and can be used to ensure timely supportive interventions. The study has used Foucault's concept of responsibilisation to give a new understanding of how academics and students are managed through the new discourses that have been produced by the texts constructed by universities and the requirements of New Public Management. These texts, such as Student Codes of Conduct or Student Charters on the one hand construct students as independent learners whilst on the other hand can be seen to require students to be passive learners. The study has sought to show how these texts can be seen to responsibilise academics, in part, to provide what could be viewed as a service for student-consumers, being all things such as life coach or pastoral service. This can be seen to cause problems as academics are responsiblised with providing a service which requires more than just the discipline expertise. Foucault's concept of the parrhesiastic contract has been used to explore how NPM practices can be seen to disrupt the pedagogic relationship as academics can be seen to be wary of what they can and cannot say to students. The typology constructed to explore Foucault's concept of resistance has been used investigate how discourse of the student-consumer and NPM practices can be challenged. The data suggest that academics and students are prepared to resist elements of the student-consumer discourse, albeit in limited ways.

Resistance to some of the requirements of NPM from academics can also be perceived through them playing the game, being seen to be doing the right thing or providing a required performance – dressage.

## 8.5 Implications for HE

This research suggests that the discourse of the student-consumer has been normalised principally through the technologies of New Public Management. Students appear happy to pay for their Higher education, however some expect more than just an education. They expect academics to care about their welfare and act as life coaches or mentors as well, students appear to expect a service from the academics as they are now having to pay for their courses. Should this be the case, it is debatable as to whether universities will allocate hours for this or whether it will be an additional workload for academia. There is evidence of academics trying to resist the student-consumer discourse within the narratives. However, this appears to be symbolic as, generally, academics comply with the demands of NPM and student-consumers. NPM can be seen to construct new technologies that responsiblise academics with expected performances to ensure a positive student experience. This could raise concerns for the future of pedagogy as the importance of quantifiable outcomes may become more important than student qualitative intellectual development. Additionally, it raises worries about how academics may view their work in the future and how student-consumers may approach their studies. For example, academics may become averse to encouraging student-consumers to be creative in their thinking or to take academic risks due to unpredictable outcomes. From this perspective one of the problems for HE may be that the value of education, knowledge and learning as something of importance in itself becomes compromised. This may be due to the cost of student-consumerist demands for the capital of the degree credential and NPM requirements for a positive student-consumer experience.

## 8.6 Postscript and Future Research

This research was conducted before the Covid 19 pandemic of 2020-21. In my own experience, the pandemic has certainly made universities change the way they manage students and deliver content. Though inevitable and admirable, due to the unprecedented situation for students, this has caused problems. For example, many colleagues in all sectors of HE have commented upon how NPM has changed administration practices to allow students to gain extensions, mitigations and postponements for assignment submissions with very little evidence. Bringing back stricter

conditions may be difficult for administrators in the future as arguably student-consumers may refer to these practices should they want extensions in the future. I have also seen how student requirements have changed with some expecting academic support through Microsoft Teams, or via email at almost any time and seven days a week post pandemic. It is not possible to discern whether these are consumerist requirements or simply new forms of anxiety created post Covid 19 or simply the expectation of a greater service identified in this research. Colleagues have noted similar expectations. Many of the students in this research were not concerned about the debt they were having to take on however this may change if universities continue to offer part of their provision online after the pandemic. For example, Huang's (2021) research on the student university experience during the pandemic found complaints about value for money with on-line learning and the lack of the university experience. Additionally, some of the students in this study may have to reflect on their attitude to debt due to the increases in interest rates that are forecast at the time of writing.

Gender was not a focus of this research; however some interesting data emerged from the student focus groups. Therefore a future piece of research that does explore gender issues from a student-consumer perspective could be of value.

For my own future research I would like to investigate whether students feel they are encouraged to be creative and take risks; do they want to be allowed to be creative and take risks in their studies or do they expect a consumerist experience which is purely outcomes based? This I would explore using Deleuze's (1994) concepts of creativity and thinking. However, first of all I would like to use this work to write three of four journal articles in the near future.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 Acronyms

| | |
|---|---|
| AA | Access Agreement |
| AAA | Approved Access Agreements |
| AHRC | Arts and Humanities Research Council |
| APR | Age Participation Rates |
| BBA | Bachelor in Business Administration |
| CNAA | Council for National Academic Awards |
| CRM | Customer Relationship Management |
| CVCP | Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals |
| DES | Department of Education and Skills |
| DfEE | Department for Education and Employment |
| DfES | Department for Education and Skills |
| Fds | Foundation Degrees |
| FE | Further Education College |
| HE | Higher Education |
| HEF | Higher Education Framework |
| HEFCE | Higher Education Funding Council for England |
| HEIs | Higher Education Institutes |
| HEQC | Higher Education Quality Committee |
| ICR | Income Contingent Repayment |
| ICT | Information Communication Technologies |
| IoE | Institute of Education |
| IFS | The Institute of Fiscal Studies |
| KPIs | Key Performance Indicators |
| LLNs | Lifelong Learning Networks |
| LSC | Learning Skills Council |
| MBA | Master in Business Administration |
| MSG | Module Study Guide |
| NPM | New Public Management |
| NSS | National Student Survey |
| OFFA | Office for Fair Access |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| RAE | Research Assessment Exercise |
| RCT | Rational Choice Theory |
| ROI | Return on Investment |
| SLC | Student Loan Company |
| TEF | Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework |
| QAA | Quality Assurance Agency |
| UFC | University Funding Council |
| UGC | University Grants Committee |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UKRI | United Kingdom Research and Innovation |

| | |
|---|---|
| University Grants Committee | UGC |
| VC | Vice-Chancellor |
| VLEs | Virtual Learning Environments |
| WP | Widening Participation |

## Appendix 2 Glossary

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| Customer Relationship Management (CRM) | CRM is a strategy that involves identifying different types of customers [students] and then developing specific strategies for interacting with them or managing the business relationship. Student Charters and Codes of Conduct are viewed as forms of CRM as they construct university expectation of students and identify what they can expect from their academics. From a Foucauldian perspective these can be viewed as disciplinary technologies that use dressage and responsibilisation discourse. They position bodies in specific ways CRM is also found in the technologies that are used to monitor student interactions with the university and progress. For Foucault this would be the panoptic audit and constant surveillance |
| Docile bodies | Foucault's (1991) idea that individuals through panoptic disciplinary control are 'subtly influenced to the point of controlling their own behaviour, rendering them 'docile bodies' that perform precisely what is required of them' (Bert, 2010, p.4) |
| Dressage | Dressage, for Foucault (1991), in one form is a technique to train and construct an easily managed people/society. Dressage, in a second form, can also be used as a strategy to be 'seen' to be doing the right things at work. The notion of beeing 'seen' to be doing the right thing is an interpretation of Foucault's framework of the Panoptic audit where academics are under constant surveillance and performance is constantly monitored. Doing the right thing maybe simply doing one's job; however this is constantly monitored through accountability and transparency discourses. |
| Discourse Analysis | For Foucault discourses specify the boundaries of what can be thought and communicated at a certain point within society. This research uses Foucauldian Discourse Analysis (FDA). FDA analysis is concerned with identifying discourses, the subject positions it opens up (or disallows), and the implications of such positioning for subjectivity and social practice, rather than the form or structure of interaction within talk or text. Examples of subject positions would include the student-consumer, |

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| | the independent learner and the academic as service provider |
| Genealogy | Genealogy is a sceptical method of historical inquiry utilised by Foucault, that challenges the view that history is progressive, by seeking out the largely hidden, contingent and accidental events that have, over time, gained an influence or cultural traction beyond their original significance |
| Post-structuralism | Post-structuralism is an ontological and epistemological position that emerged in the latter part of the 20th century within the humanities and social sciences. Post-structuralism is concerned with relations of power and emphasises the role of knowledge and textual processes in attaining and sustaining relations of power. |
| Parrhesia | Parrhesia can be seen as a verbal encounter where the speaker should be able to be frank or tell the truth at the risk of his or her own security. In parhessia the moral duty should supercede self- interest.<br>Foucault discussed its use, for example, in political and educational settings.<br><br>In this study the notion of parrhesia is used to investigate how this is applied in the pedagogic arena, for example, whether academics can or do speak freely with student-consumers or whether academic integrity has to be compromised for customer satisfaction. |
| Rational economic actors | A neo-liberal ideal with the redefinition of the individual as homo œconomicus who 'rationally assesses the costs and benefits of certain actions as opposed to other alternative acts' (Lemke, 2001. p. 201). This rationality is applied in both economic and non-economic spheres where the individual consciously calculates the costs and benefits of all of their actions, choices and beliefs (ibid) |
| Resistance | For Foucault any form of power produces some form of resistance; however Foucault is reluctant to specify exactly what resistance is. Resistance can take many guises. In this study, the forms of resistance analysed included saying no, nostalgia, forms of dressage, complicity, docility and inadvertent compliance. |
| Surveillance | Based on Foucault's understanding of Bentham's Panopticon where prisoners can be watched by a single guard and be under constant surveillance. |

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| | Under constant surveillance people can be judged continuously, and their behaviour altered. With the threat of surveillance people will alter their behaviours. Surveillance for academics can take many forms, for example being monitored through module evaluations, the NSS and the student's voice.<br>In this research students can be seen to be under constant surveillance through various from in technology used by universities. |
| Schizophrenic pedagogic environment | The interpretation of the data that students and academics are pitched against each other, in part through texts produced by universities, for example, NPM's construction of students' charters and codes of conduct. These appear to be confusing due to their inconsistencies. These texts produce discourses that position academics and students in very specific ways, for example they can be seen to responsibilise academics as service providers who will look after students in numerous ways to complete their studies. This can be viewed as indicating discourses of a passive learning experience whilst on the other hand these texts articulate the student independent learner discourse.<br>This can also be seen in the narratives of some of the academics where they feel they are responsiblised to look after students and face the dilemma of having to fail a student should their work not meet the requirements to pass.<br>This aligns with Foucault's (1996) observation that discourse is always contingent and subject to discontinuity |

## Appendix 3 Discourses Identified

This table details the discourses identified in this study

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| Academic capital discourse | Students believe their degree will give them competitive advantage in the jobs market. |
| Academic support discourse | Students appear to have accepted the discourse of the student-consumer, however with this, some want more support. This appears to be through being constantly available for the students, providing care and support, acting as a mentor and providing a service. This academic service discourse can be seen as students ensuring they get what they perceive as value for money as they are now paying for their courses. |
| Accountability discourse | This discourse is identified through the surveillance of academics who it appears to pressured to meet NPM performance requirements of high percentages of students gaining good degrees. Accountability discourses have also been found in university websites, Student Codes of Conduct and Students Charters where accountability can be seen through discourses of responsibilisation. |
| Career discourse | Students suggesting that the only way to get a good career would be through having a degree. This is discussed in 5.2.1 |
| Competitive advantage discourse | Students looking for advantages over others when seeking employment due to the capital of their degree. |
| Consumer rights discourse | UK universities have to follow the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) guidance on consumer law. The aim of this was to increase competition and the reputation of UK universities.<br><br>'Compliance with consumer law is not only important in giving students the protection required by the law, but also helps to maintain student confidence and |

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| | the standards and reputation of the UK Higher Education sector. Complying with consumer law will help you compete for and retain students' (CMA, 2015). Consumer rights for students did not come in until 2015 however notions of such a discourse can be evidenced in DBIS (2011,p.2) where the government indicates it will take on the role of 'consumer champion'. DBIS (2016,p.16) indicates that 'the OfS will be a consumer focused market regulator'<br><br>Though not articulating consumer rights some students indicated that academics had better make their teaching worth it and the expectation of a service. Some students did appear to be adopting a consumerist subjectivity and believing they had a right to more from their academics. This discourse was not found implicitly in the university policies, Student Charters or Codes of Conduct reviewed in this study |
| Cultural elitism discourse | The discourse produced by some of the students where they thought that having a degree was a form of elitism or differentiation. |
| Economic speculation discourse | Student-consumers tasked with investing in themselves to attain the graduate premium. This speculation can be seen through expectations of the competitive advantage discourse. The economic speculation discourse is discussed in 2.4 |
| Entrepreneur of the self-discourse | Foucault's notion that a neoliberal ideology expects workers to maximise their human capital value through entrepreneurialism and investing in the self. Within this context people should be 'flexible, creative, self-reliant and resilient managers of their own lives and careers whose success or failure is up to their level of entrepreneurial spirit or mindset' (Oinenen, 2018, p.5)<br><br>The notion of investing in the self is principally based on the governments discourse of students paying full-fees. The Dearing Report (1997, para 1.21) was the |

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| | first to suggest that students should be investing in themselves due to the 'probable return on their investment'.<br><br>Some students did allude to the discourse of the entrepreneurial self however this was mainly through gaining a degree and attaining competitive advantage in the jobs market. |
| Grade inflation discourse | Concerns about grade inflation and the rise of students gaining good honours degrees and the integrity of the HE system. Baker (2018) suggested this could be due to the increase in student fees, and a dilution of academic standards in the face of more assertive student-consumers. One example of grade inflation was found in this study where students complained about their marks and a university insisted that 60% of a cohort must get 60% or more in their marks. |
| Graduate premium discourse | A discourse promoted by governments that students who graduate will earn more and have greater lifestyle opportunities. Some students did believe in the graduate premium however they interpreted this as some form of competitive advantage in the jobs market. |
| Higher Education Marketisation discourse | Introduction of neoliberalist market ideals into Higher Education. Universities are required to become entrepreneurial to ensure their competitiveness in the Higher Education market. |
| Human capital discourse | This can be seen as where education is favoured by its economic returns as opposed to its educational value. In simple terms the more education possessed the greater the economic returns will be gained. This discourse, which is articulated as the graduate premium, has been promoted by successive English governments through Higher Education |

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| | policy documents. These policy documents were reviewed in Chapter 4 |
| Homo œconomicus discourse | The discourse that students are encouraged through government policy to be make choices through self-interest and become rational economic actors. Higher Education therefore becomes a means to an end. This discourse could be seen through the students' narratives about getting good jobs through their perceived competitive advantage over others in the job markets of having a degree. Some of the academics noted the students' expectations of higher grades appeared to be the main driver of their education. 1st s or 2.1s appear to be the expectation of many of the students |
| Independent learner discourse | The university expectation that students will act as independent as opposed to passive learners. Some students noted that in some cases this appeared to be discouraged by academics who adopted an instrumental approach to their teaching. |
| Instrumental pedagogic discourse | Academics delivering teaching that is purely focused on student outcomes as opposed to pedagogic development. A risk-averse approach to pedagogy. This was also evidenced in the experience of some students in their pre-university education. From a Foucauldian perspective this can be viewed as dressage where students are being trained to perform accordingly to pass their exams. This appears to be happening in some of the universities where this research was conducted. Some students did articulate a resistance to this form of teaching with an expectation that they should have greater freedom in their studies. |

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| Instrumental Student-consumerist discourse | Form a Foucauldian perspective the discourse of the student-consumer determines the practice that the student will adopt. Some academics indicated that they felt some students simply wanted to be spoon fed and taught simply enough to pass their courses with the best grades possible |
| Neoliberalism discourse | A discourse that assumes without question the superiority of individualised market-based competition over other methods of organisation. Focuses on New Public Management, performativity, competitiveness, consumerism and the commodification of services and personnel. These practices can be seen in government policies can be seen in the drive to markeitise Higher Education. New Public Management practices have been identified in the management of the student-consumer discourse. These are explored in Section 1.1.3 |
| New Public Management discourse | A set of discourses and practices used as a management methodology focused on discipline, predictability and positive student outcomes in this research. These are managed through internal and external measurement technologies. The National Student Survey is government measure used to rank universities. Internally, Module Evaluation Surveys are used internally. The results of these evaluations appeared concerning for some academic practitioners. This was investigated in section 6.2.5 |
| Nostalgic discourse | An idealisation of the past that can clarify the values and morals of an organisation. Used as a means of interpreting forms of resistance that academics appeared to display. |
| Predictable outcomes discourse | Where academics adopt an instrumental approach to their pedagogy at the cost of developing the intellect of students. |

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| Rational economic actor discourse | The government discourse that student-consumers will rationally make purchase decisions based on costs and benefits |
| Resentment discourse | Some students appear resentful when academics make their teaching instrumental and expect passive learners. For some this is not what they have paid for. |
| Responsibilisation discourse | Foucault argued responsibilisation is part of the neoliberal biopolitical process that manages the body. Responsibiliation discourses for academics and students were found on university websites, in university policies, Student Charters and Student codes of conduct. |
| Student-consumer discourse | The expectation that students will act as consumers who make 'money judgments about courses in higher education; their motivation for making this financial choice is assumed to be heightened by their awareness of the increased cost they will bear in the future for their higher education' (Sabri, 2011, p.660). This did not appear to be the case in this research with many students simply making choices based on the vocations they wanted to go into once they had completed their courses. For many of the students the cost burden was not an immediate issue with some acknowledging that they may never pay back their loans |
| Student debt discourse | Debt appears to be normalised for many students. Some are blasé about whether they will repay it or not |
| Student passivity discourse | In one context where students are expected to do their work in a highly prescribed curriculum and not question what they were being taught. In the second context some students adopting a passive learning strategy in universities where they expect to be taught only what they need to know to pass their modules. In some universities in this study the discourse of the student as passive learner can be seen through the adoption of instrumental approach by |

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| | academics who, it appears, tell students exactly what to research and what to do. Some of the academics' narratives suggest that they believe many of their students want to be spoon fed with only the information required to pass the course. |
| Student experience discourse | The student experience discourse is part of the governments drive to ensure students get value for money as a consumer. This study found that the student experience in a large part can be seen to be managed through Customer Relationship Technologies |
| Student voice discourse | Students are encouraged to be active participants in shaping how Higher Education is delivered. The neoliberal perspective is that students can be consulted in a range of different ways, for example the National Student Survey, Module Evaluations and Course Committee meetings [which students attend] 'about their learning in order that [academics] will respond, standards rise and attainment increase' (Fielding, 2004, p.203). In this research, the student voice is examined from a consumerist perspective |
| Value for money discourse | Discourse identified in this study where students drew concerns about how they would know if they had obtained value for money for the degree they had paid for. Some students demanding to get their money's worth from their education and that academics should make it worth it. This value for money discourse appears to be changing as some students are expecting academics to provide greater care for them, act as a life coach and almost act as a service provider. |
| Widening Participation discourse | Expansion of Higher Education to include provisions for social groups such as those from socio-economically disadvantaged family backgrounds or social classes. This |

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| | was mentioned by some students however it was in the context that it was fair that everybody could access the same debt. |

## Appendix 4 Participant Information Sheet

Dear student

My name is Peter Pelham. I am currently conducting research for my professional Doctorate in Education at London Metropolitan University which is investigating the perceptions of students and academics of the full fee environment in Higher Education. I would like to invite you to participate in a pilot study focus group with your peers to gain an understanding of your views and experiences as a university student. I will use this pilot study to find out how the group responds to the questions I have for my investigation.

I would like to conduct the focus group in October 2016; I anticipate that this will last for no more than an hour. The focus group will take place at your university at a time which is convenient to you and your peers. The focus group will be digitally recorded and thereafter transcribed with your permission. The data gathered will be cleaned to remove any information that may be specific to yourself, thus anonymised. The data will be stored in a secure password protected database. As a researcher I am bound by the ethical standards set by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2015).

Consent to participate in this research is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any point prior or during the focus group.

If you would like to participate in this research project please contact me either via email pwp0006@my.londonmet.ac.uk or through my mobile phone xxxxxxxxxxx Additionally, should you require any further information or assistance about your participation or the area of research please feel free to contact myself at your convenience.

Kind regards

Peter Pelham
Doctoral Student
London Metropolitan University
pwp0006@my.londonmet.ac.uk.

**Supervisor Details**

Gillian O'Toole

Email address: g.otoole@londonmet.ac.uk

Tel: xxxxxxx (direct line)

## Appendix 5 Student Focus Group Questions Pilot

1. *What do you see as the main purpose of doing a degree?*
2. *What made you decide to do a degree?*
3. *What was influential in your decision making to do a degree?*
4. *League tables*
5. *NSS*
6. *Parents*
7. *Self esteem*
8. *What were your expectations of university?*
9. *How was as it different to what you had experienced before*
10. *Expectations of staff*
11. *Expectations of peers*
12. *How do you see your part in the student/academic relationship?*
13. *Developing knowledge together?*
14. *Expectations of staff, were these met?*
15. *Is the relationship based on academics helping you to get through your degree?*
16. *Tell me about your student experience?*
17. *Has it been good so far?*
18. *Any bad elements?*
19. *Did it meet/exceed your expectations?*
20. *Tell me about any frustrations you may have had as a student*
21. *How do you feel about the having to take out a loan to pay for your studies*
22. *Did this make you think twice about doing a degree or was it of no concern?*
23. *Do you think this changes your expectations of your lecturers?*
24. *Is there anything else I should have asked or you would like to say?*

## Appendix 6 Academic focus Group Questions Pilot

1. *What do you see as the purpose of students doing a degree?*
2. *In your experience do you think this is changing?*
3. *Why is it so important to get a degree?*
4. *What do you feel are the expectations of students from you as academics?*
5. *Do you think these expectations are changing?*
6. *Are students more demanding?*
7. *Ever present/answering emails*
8. *Helping the students pass*
9. *Tell me about how you see managing the academic/student relationship.*
10. *How is this changing?*
11. *What do you think is affecting this?*
12. *Tensions*
13. *Frustrations*
14. *Pleasures*
15. *How do you see this developing?*
16. *What are the most rewarding aspects of your job as an academic?*
17. *Research*
18. *Teaching*
19. *Student success*
20. *Sense of academic community*
21. *How do you feel about the current student fee/grant government policy?*
22. *Has this changed the way you approach your teaching?*
23. *Has this changed the atmosphere of the department/university?*
24. *New pressures/tensions*
25. *Is there anything else I should have asked or you would like to say?*

## Appendix 7 Student Focus Group Questions

1. *What do you see as the main purpose of doing a degree?*
2. *What were your expectations of university?*
3. *How do you see your part in the student/academic relationship?*
4. *Tell me about your student experience?*
5. *How do you feel about the having to take out a loan to pay for your studies*
6. *Is there anything else I should have asked or you would like to say?*

## Appendix 8 Academic Focus Group Questions

1. *What do you see as the purpose of students doing a degree?*
2. *What do you feel are the expectations of students from you as academics?*
3. *Tell me about how you see managing the academic/student relationship.*
4. *What are the most rewarding aspects of your job as an academic?*
5. *How do you feel about the current student fee/grant government policy?*
6. *Is there anything else I should have asked or you would like to say?*

## Appendix 9 VC Letter

Dear Vice-Chancellor

My name is Peter Pelham. I am currently conducting research for my professional Doctorate in Education at London Metropolitan University, which is investigating the perceptions of students and academics in respect of the full fees in Higher Education. I would like to ask your permission to have access to both students and academics to conduct some focus group interviews. I would like to organise four focus groups consisting of 6 – 8 participants, two groups of 1st and final year students and two groups of academics. I would like to hold the focus groups in April. The purpose of the interviews is to gain an understanding of the views and experiences of both academics and students. I will use this work to inform my thesis and hopefully some research papers.

The focus groups would take place at your university at a time which is convenient to you, the course tutors and the students. Naturally, should you consent to this I will contact both the students and academics with a similar letter detailing my research request. Consent to participate in this research is entirely voluntary and the students/academics can withdraw at any point prior to or during the focus group. Please find attached the student and academic consent forms for your perusal.

The data gleaned from the focus groups will be digitally recorded and thereafter transcribed. The data gathered will be cleaned to remove any information which may be specific to your university, thus anonymised. The data will be stored in a secure password protected database. As a researcher I am bound by the ethical standards set by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2015). Should you wish I can make the results of the study available to yourself.

I do hope that you will be able to help me in this research and thank you in anticipation. If you require further information, please feel free to contact me either through email or phone. Details are below.

Kind regards

Peter Pelham MBA, MSc, BSc
Doctoral Student
London Metropolitan University
Tel xxxxxxx
pwp0006@my.londonmet.ac.uk.

**Supervisor Details**

Gillian O'Toole

Email address: g.otoole@londonmet.ac.uk

Tel: xxxxxxx (direct line)

## Appendix 10 Academic Introductory Email

Dear Academic

My name is Peter Pelham. I am currently conducting research for my professional Doctorate in Education at London Metropolitan University, which is investigating the perceptions of students and academics in respect of the full fee environment in Higher Education. I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group with your peers to gain an understanding of your views and experiences as an academic of the full fee Higher Education environment. I will use this work to inform my thesis.

I would like to conduct the focus group in April; I anticipate that this will last for no more than an hour. The focus group will take place at your university at a time which is convenient to you and your peers. The interviews will be digitally recorded and thereafter transcribed. The data gathered will be cleaned to remove any information that may be specific to you, thus anonymised. The data will be stored in a secure password protected database. As a researcher I am bound by the ethical standards set by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2015).

Consent to participate in this research is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any point prior to or during the focus groups.

Should you wish to participate in this research project please contact me either via email pwp0006@my.londonmet.ac.uk or through my mobile phone xxxxxxx. Additionally, should you require any further information or assistance about your participation or the area of research please feel free to contact myself at your convenience.

Kind regards

Peter Pelham
Doctoral Student
London Metropolitan University
pwp0006@my.londonmet.ac.uk.

**Supervisor Details**

Gillian O'Toole

Email address: g.otoole@londonmet.ac.uk

Tel: xxxxxxx (direct line)

## Appendix 11 Academic Consent Form

**Consent Form**

I understand that;

- This research project is part of a Professional Doctorate in Education for a student studying at London Metropolitan University.
- The aim of the research is to gather an understanding of how academics perceive themselves within the full fee Higher Education environment.
- My participation in this research will be a focus group that will last around 60 minutes.
- My participation is entirely voluntary and I can withdraw at any time, prior to or during the interview.
- The data gathered will be anonymised and stored securely in a password protected database.
- The research project will adhere to the ethical standards as laid down by the British Educational Research Association and those of London Metropolitan University

I further accept that any data gathered may be used as part of this research project, contribute to academic literature, and used within journals to help understandings of student views of contemporary Higher Education.

Should you wish to participate in this project, please complete the details below:

Number of years within HE _____ Male/Female (Delete non-applicable)

Position_____

School, faculty or college_____

Email address_____

Phone number_____

Signed _____

Date _____

**Researcher Details**

Peter Pelham

Email address – pwp0006@my.londonmet.ac.uk

Phone xxxxxxx

**Supervisor Details**

Gillian O'Toole

Email address: g.otoole@londonmet.ac.uk

Tel: xxxxxxx (direct line)

## Appendix 12 Student Introductory Email

Dear student

My name is Peter Pelham. I am currently conducting research for my professional Doctorate in Education at London Metropolitan University which is investigating the perceptions of students and academics of the full fee environment in Higher Education. I would like to invite you to participate in a focus group with your peers to gain an understanding of your views and experiences as a student. I will use this work to inform my thesis.

I would like to conduct the focus group in April; I anticipate that this will last for no more than an hour. The focus group will take place at your university at a time which is convenient to you and your peers. The focus group will be digitally recorded and thereafter transcribed with your permission. The data gathered will be cleaned to remove any information that may be specific to yourself, thus anonymised. The data will be stored in a secure password protected database. As a researcher I am bound by the ethical standards set by the British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2015).

Consent to participate in this research is entirely voluntary and you can withdraw at any point prior or during the focus group.

If you would like to participate in this research project please contact me either via email pwp0006@my.londonmet.ac.uk or through my mobile phone xxxxxxx. Additionally, should you require any further information or assistance about your participation or the area of research please feel free to contact myself at your convenience.

Kind regards

Peter Pelham
Doctoral Student
London Metropolitan University
pwp0006@my.londonmet.ac.uk.

**Supervisor Details**

Gillian O'Toole

Email address: g.otoole@londonmet.ac.uk

Tel: xxxxxxx(direct line)

## Appendix 13 Student Consent Form

I understand that;

- This research project is part of a Professional Doctorate in Education for a student studying at London Metropolitan University.
- The aim of the research is to gather an understanding of how students perceive themselves within the full fee Higher Education environment.
- My participation in this research will be a focus group that will last around 60 minutes.
- My participation is entirely voluntary and I can withdraw at any time, prior to or during the interview.
- The data gathered will be anonymised and stored securely in a password protected database.
- The research project will adhere to the ethical standards as laid down by the British Educational Research Association and those of London Metropolitan University

I further accept that any data gathered may be used as part of this research project, contribute to academic literature, and used within journals to help understandings of student views of contemporary Higher Education.

Should you wish to participate in this project, please complete the details below:

First Year/Second year/Third Year  Male/Female (Delete non-applicable)

Age_____  Ethnicity_____

Programme of study_____

Email address_____

Phone number_____

Signed  _____

Date  _____

**Researcher Details**

Peter Pelham

Email address – pwp0006@my.londonmet.ac.uk

Phone xxxxxxx

**Supervisor Details**

Gillian O'Toole

Email address: g.otoole@londonmet.ac.uk
Tel: xxxxxxx (direct line)

## Appendix 14 Table of Academic Profiles

Academic Profiles Post 92 December 5th 2016

| Pseudonym | Number of years in HE | Gender | Position | Discipline | HE Provider |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Charles | 16 | Male | Associate Professor | Hospitality | post '92 |
| Joanne | 20 | Female | Senior Lecturer | Culinary Arts | post '92 |
| Sylvia | 8 | Female | Senior Lecturer | Hospitality | post '92 |
| Colin | 8 | Male | Senior Lecturer/course leader | Events | post '92 |
| Phillipe | 1 | Male | Lecturer | Business | post '92 |
| Bertrand | 16 | Male | Senior Lecturer | Events | post '92 |
| Patrick | 20 | Male | Senior Lecturer | Hospitality | post '92 |

Private Provider Academic Profiles Focus Group Private March 22nd 2017

| Pseudonym | Number of years in HE | Gender | Position | Discipline | HE Provider |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Peter | 8 | Male | Course Leader | Hospitality | Private |
| Patricia | 10 | Female | Senior Lecturer | Events | Private |
| Phillip | 13 | Male | Course Leader | Business | Private |
| Rosemary | 10 | Female | Course Lecturer | Business | Private |

Academic Profiles Dual Provider April 5th 2017

| Pseudonym | Number of years in HE | Gender | Position | Discipline | HE Provider |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gary | 3 | Male | Lecturer | Hospitality | Dual |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gwen | 5 | Female | Lecturer | Business | Dual |
| Marjory | 10 | Female | Lecturer | Business | Dual |
| Sarah | 10 | Female | Lecturer | Business | Dual |
| Mandy | 9 | Female | Senior Lecturer | Events | Dual |
| Lynda | 5 | Female | Lecturer | Hospitality | Dual |
| Reginald | 4 | Male | Lecturer | Business | Dual |

Academic Profiles – Elite May 10th 2017

| Pseudonym | Number of years in HE | Gender | Position | Discipline | HE Provider |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Graham | 20 | Male | Senior Lecturer | Business | Elite |
| Ingrid | 18 | Female | Senior Lecturer | Business | Elite |
| Ivan | 25 | Male | Principal Lecturer | Hospitality & Tourism | Elite |
| Mark | 20 | Male | Senior Lecturer | Hospitality | Elite |
| David | 20 | Male | Senior Lecturer | Business | Elite |

Academic Profile Red Brick 8th November 2017

| Pseudonym | Number of years in HE | Gender | Position | Discipline | HE Provider |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Carlos | 5 | Male | Not declared | Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy | Redbrick |
| Roberto | 12 | Male | Professor | Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy | Redbrick |
| Cynthia | 3 | Female | Not declared | Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy | Redbrick |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Claudia | 17 | Female | Senior Lecturer | Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy | Redbrick |

Academic Profile 2nd Post 92 6th December 2017

| Pseudonym | Number of years in HE | Gender | Position | Discipline | HE Provider |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Danielle | 5 | Female | Lecturer | English Language & Linguistics | post ‘92 |
| Kirsten | 16 | Female | Professor | Creative Writing | post ‘92 |
| Samantha | 22 | Female | Principal Lecturer | English Language & Linguistics | post ‘92 |

## Appendix 15 Table of Student Profiles

Student Profiles Focus Group Post 92 December 6th 2016

| Pseudonym | Year of study | Ethnicity | Age | Programme of Study | Gender | HE Provider |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Florence | 3rd year | White European | 21 | BA(Hons) Hospitality | Female | post '92 |
| Fay | 1st year | English | 19 | BA (Hons) Culinary Arts | Female | post '92 |
| Leah | 1st Year | British | 20 | BA (Hons) Photography | Female | post '92 |
| Sheila | 3rd year | Australian/Lebanese | 30 | BA (Hons) Media | Female | post '92 |

Student Profiles Focus Group Private March 22nd 2017

| Pseudonym | Year of study | Ethnicity | Age | Programme of study | Gender | HE Provi |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Cynthia | 1st Year | White | 18 | BA (Hons) Hospitality Management | Female | Priva |
| Claire | 3rd Year | White | 21 | BA (Hons) Hospitality Management | Female | Priva |
| Tariq | 3rd Year | Thai | 22 | BA (Hons) Hospitality Management | Male | Priva |
| Joanna | 3rd Year | White | 21 | BA (Hons) Hospitality Management | Female | Priva |
| Helen | 1st Year | White | 19 | BA (Hons) Hospitality Management | Female | Priva |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Shamin | 3rd Year | Malaysian | 23 | BA (Hons) Hospitality Management | Male | Priva |
| Carole | 3rd Year | White | 21 | BA (Hons) Hospitality Management | Female | Priva |
| Lauren | 1st Year | White | 18 | BA (Hons) Hospitality Management | Female | Priva |
| Angela | 3rd Year | White | 28 | BA (Hons) Hospitality Management | Female | Priva |
| Sharon | 3rd Year | White | 21 | BA (Hons) Hospitality Management | Female | Priva |

Student Profiles Dual Provider April 5th 2017

| Pseudonym | Year of study | Ethnicity | Age | Programme of Study | Gender | HE Provic |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Paulo | 3rd Year | Mixed White | 31 | BA (Hons) Management Full-time | Male | Dual |
| Giles | 3rd Year | White European | 38 | BA (Hons) Management | Male | Dual |
| John | 3rd Year | White British | 22 | BA (Hons) Hospitality Management (top up) | Male | Dual |
| Sophia | 1st Year | Latin – Mixed White | 26 | BA (Hons) Hospitality Management (top up) | Female | Dual |
| Angelica | 1st Year | White | 25 | BA (Hons) Events Management | Female | Dual |

Student Profiles – Elite May 10th 2017

| Pseudonym | Year of study | Ethnicity | Age | Programme | Gender | HE Provid |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Charlotte | 3rd Year | White | 23 | BA (Hons) International Hospitality Management | Female | Elite |
| Chloe | 3rd Year | White | 22 | BA (Hons) International Hospitality Management | Female | Elite |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Hanna | 1st Year | White | 19 | BA (Hons) International Hospitality Management | Female | Elite |
| Hermione | 1st Year | White | 22 | BA (Hons) International Hospitality Management | Female | Elite |
| Harry | 3rd Year | White | 22 | BA (Hons) International Hospitality Management | Male | Elite |
| Jessica | 1st Year | White | 19 | BA (Hons) International Hospitality Management | Female | Elite |
| Lauren | 1st Year | White | 20 | BA (Hons) International Hospitality Management | Female | Elite |
| James | 3rd Year | White | 23 | BA (Hons) International Hospitality Management | Male | Elite |

Student Profiles – Red Brick 15th November 2017

| Pseudonym | Year of study | Ethnicity | Age | Programme | Gender | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sandy | 3rd Year | White | 21 | BSc (Hons) Nutrition and Food Science | Female | |
| Carole | 3rd Year | White | 21 | BSC (Hons) Food Science and Business | Female | |
| Bryony | 3rd Year | White | 22 | BSc (Hons) Nutrition and Food | Female | |

Student Profiles – 2nd Post 92 6th December 2017

| Pseudonym | Year of study | Ethnicity | Age | Programme | Gender | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Karla | 3rd Year | White | 21 | BA (Hons)English Language and Linguistics | Female | |
| Sinead | 3rd Year | White | 26 | BA (Hons) Creative Writing | Female | |
| Agnes | 3rd Year | White | 25 | BA (Hons)English Language and Linguistics | Female | |
| Alison | 3rd Year | White | 23 | BA (Hons)English Language and Linguistics | Female | |

## Appendix 16 A Chronology of the Education Acts, white and green papers and government policy changes in HE Education since the Thatcher Government of 1979

### 1980 Education Act

Introduces parent charters that have legal force in schools. These charters were supposed to create competition between schools and encourage parents to make informed choices about which schools they sent their children to. In what could be viewed as a back door method of constructing an education market, Local Authorities (LA) had to provide greater information on entry criteria, exam results, and localised policies. These, it is argued, are the initial metrics of market performativity that would eventually construct all of UK education into a marketplace.

### 1981 Expenditure White Paper

The government introduces cuts of up to 14 percent from university budget. 3,000 academics lose their jobs. Government approves the introduction of full tuition fees for international students. Arguably, this is first step towards the full-marketisation of the HE sector. The Thatcher government introduces the concept of competition into universities with the formulation of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). This was not introduced until 1986.

### 1983 Education (Fees and Awards) Act

Empowered the Secretary the Secretary of State to require universities and FE establishments to charge foreign students higher fees.

### 1986 Introduction of the Research Excellence Exercise

'Designed to measure the research output and quality of higher education institutions within the UK and was the progenitor of the various league tables and assessment procedures which exist throughout universities today' (Rutter, 2013).

### 1987 White Paper *Higher Education: meeting the challenge*

Indicated the government's proposals for changing the structure and planning of HE. The White Paper indicates that 'Higher education has a crucial role in helping the nation meet the economic and social challenges of the final decade of this century and beyond' (HMSO, 1987, p.iv) and that HEIs should plan for student numbers to increase.

**1988 Education Reform Act**

Removed the control and funding of polytechnics by local education authorities and allocated the responsibilities to the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC). The act also brought in further changes to reducing Government expenditure and to make them more competitve. HEI's were also encouraged to work closer with industry and commerce. The act further encouraged free-market principles through greater parental choice and control over state education. School league tables were introduced to increase competition between schools and the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) was created to regulate and inspect schools

**1990 White Paper: Top-Up Loans for Students**

Maintenance grants are capped, Student Loans Company (SLC) is created to make possible the transfer of liability for the costs of HE from the state to the individual. Top-up loans are introduced for HE students through the Education (Students) Loans Act 1990. This can be seen as the beginning of the diminution of student grants.

**1991 White Paper *Higher Education: A New Framework for the 21st Century***

Proposals were enacted in the 1992 *Further and Higher Education Act*

**1992 Further and Higher Education Act**

Removed Further Education (FE)and sixth form colleges from Local Education Authority LEA) control. Set up the Further Education Funding Councils (FEFCs). Allowed polytechnics to apply for university status. Unified the funding of HE under the Higher Education Funding Councils (HEFCs), established competition for finding between institutions, eradicated the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) as 'new' universities received degree-awarding powers.

**1996 Education (Student Loans) Act**

Allowed the Secretary to subsidise private-sector student loans.

**1997 Dearing Report**

The Dearing Report recommends the introduction of tuition fees. Maintenance awards are replaced by loans for all, however not for the poorest of students.

**1998 Green Paper *The Learning Age: a renaissance for a new Britain***

Outlined government proposals for lifelong learning. This formed the basis of the 1999 White Paper *Learning to Succeed*

**1998 Education (Student Loans) Act**

Amended the 1990 Education (Student Loans) Act. Transferred the provision of student loans to the private sector.

**1998 Teaching and Higher Education Act**

Launched the General Teaching Council (GTC). Stopped student maintenance grants and established that students would be required to contribute towards tuition fees.

The Labour government introduces tuition fees of £1,000 a year and abolished the remaining student grant.

**2003 White Paper *The future of higher education***

The paper caused controversy as it proposed allowing universities to charge variable top-up fees; this formed the basis of the 2004 Higher Education Act.

**2003 Green Paper *Widening participation in higher education***

Established the government's proposals for the creation of the Office for Fair Access (OFA)

**2004 Higher Education Act**

Allowed universities to charge variable tuition fees subject to evidence of social inclusion. Established the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) for the appointment of the Director of Fair Access to HE; established arrangements for dealing with students' complaints about HEIs; made provisions concerning grants and loans to students in HE and FE

**2006**

The Labour government increases fees to up to £3,000 per year, underpinned by a tuition fee loan.

**2008 Sale of Students Loans Act**

Made provisions for the government to sell student loans to private companies.

**2009 *Higher Ambitions – The future of universities in a knowledge economy***

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (DBIS) proposes it's 10–15-year strategy. Interestingly, this document indicates that universities must do more to market themselves to provide services to industry both domestically and in a globalised market. The document additionally stipulates that universities must make their course content and learning outcomes more transparent. This was justified as increasing student informed choice and therefore competition between universities.

**2011 White Paper *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System***

Published by DBIS, the paper focuses arguably on putting students in the driving seat in HE through the new focus of Student Charters, student feedback and graduate outcomes. The paper reinforces the marketisation of HE as it indicates that 'universities will be competitive pressure to provide better quality and lower cost' (DBIS, 2011, p.2).

**2012**

The Coalition government increase the university fees cap to a maximum £9,000.

**2017 Higher Education and Research Act**

Made provisions for the establishment of the Office for Students (OfS) and the United Kingdom Research and Innovation (UKRI). Abolished HEFCE and the office of the Director of Fair Access to Higher Education (DFA). The act further placed greater emphasis on the OfS as a market regulator with the need to promote competition between HEIs in the interests of students and employers whilst providing value for money. Interestingly, the emphasis in the document indicates that it is down to the OfS to interpret these new regulations. A key provision within the act is was that HEIs would have to register with the OfS. These registrations are used to stratify the marketisation of HEIs:

Registered: this is a largely new category of providers not in receipt of public funds or student support and is intended to provide reassurance to students. Courses must match the academic standards as they are described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) at Level 4 or higher, and they must subscribe to the independent student complaints body, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

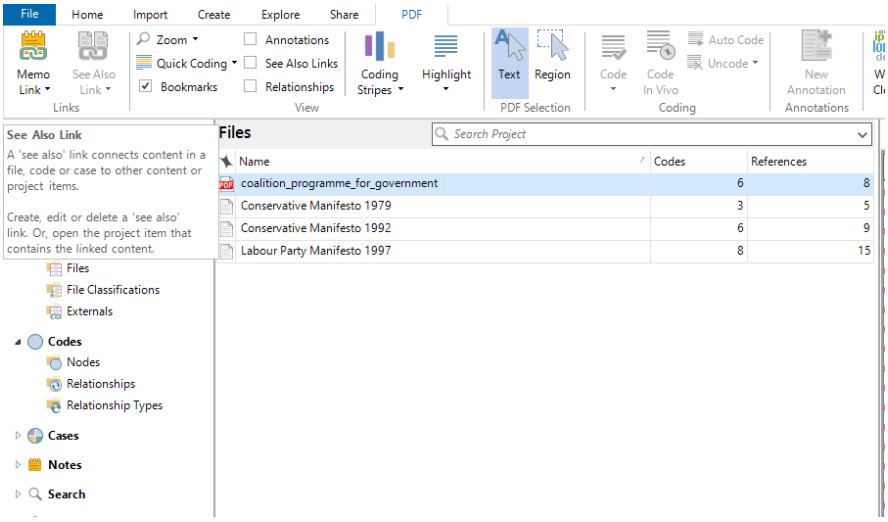
Approved: this is for those institutions who are designated for student support and puts recent ad hoc arrangements on a statutory footing. Successful quality assurance (QA); financial

sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) checks; meeting the Competition and Markets Authority's requirements regarding students' rights as consumers; adherence to the OIA's good practice framework.

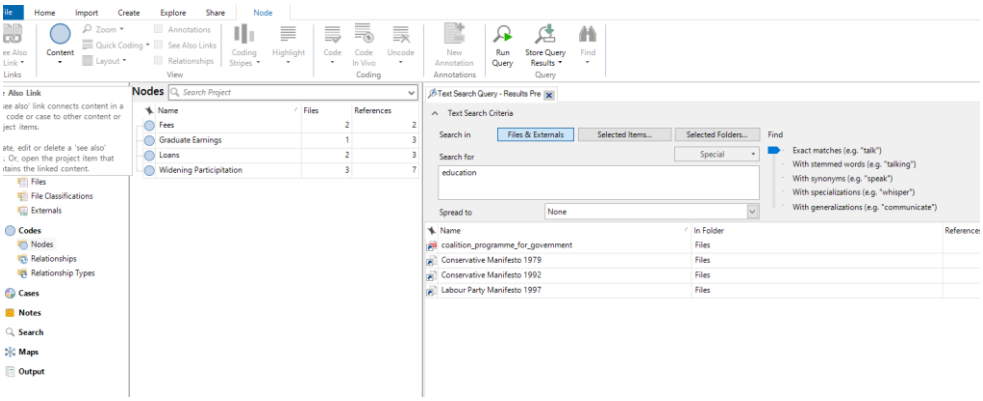
Approved (fee cap): this will include most UK member institutions and is for those institutions who continue to directly receive public funds. In addition to the requirements for approved status, approved (fee cap) will include more stringent FSMG requirements, comparable to current HEFCE requirements and the Higher Education Code of Governance; compliance with the relevant terms and conditions of government grant funding.

(UK, 2017, p.7)

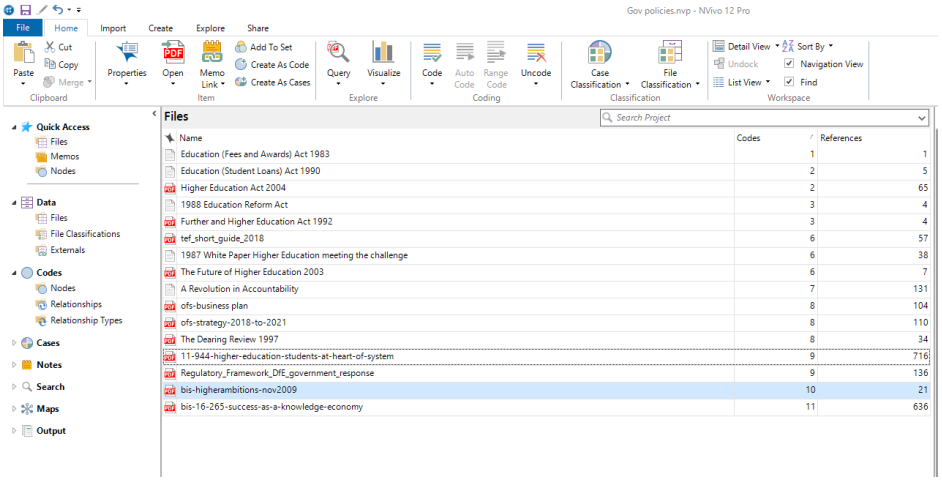
# Appendix 17 Government Manifestos



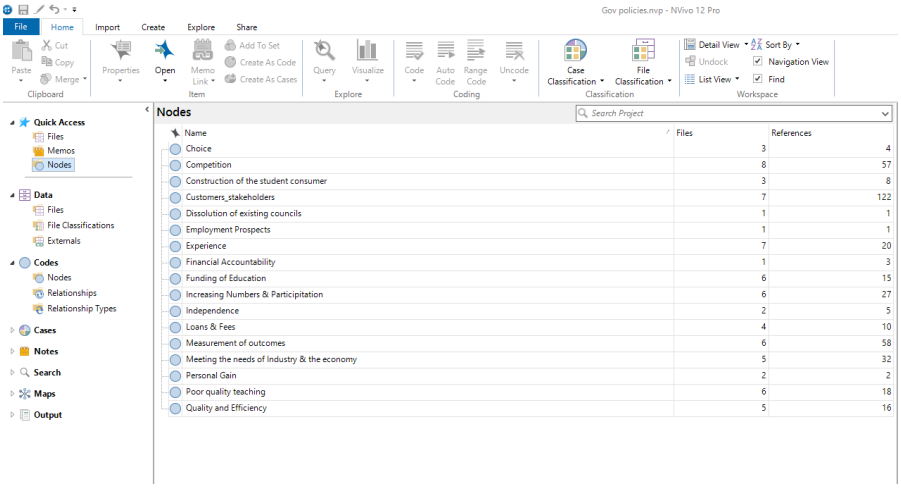
# Appendix 18 Discourses Found in Manifestos



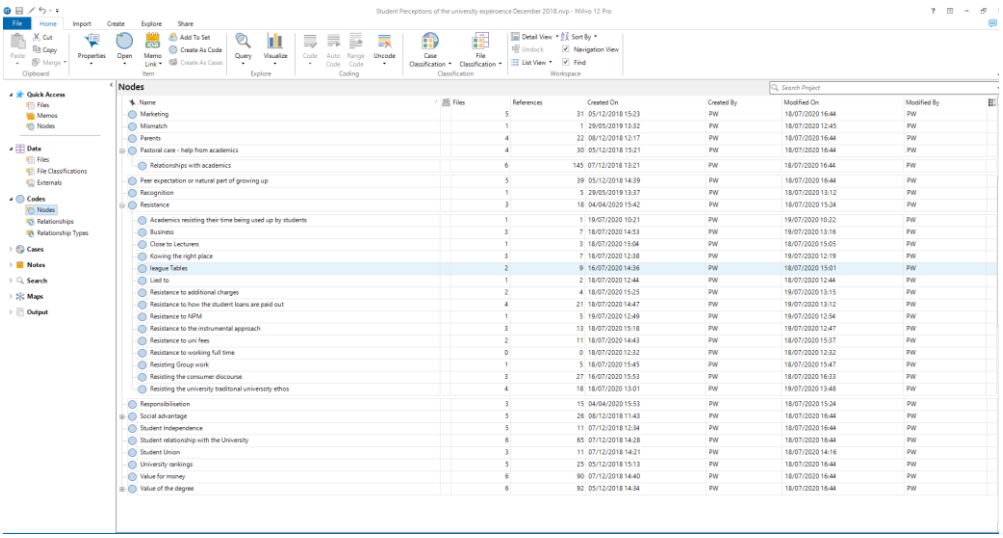
# Appendix 19 Government Documents Reviewed



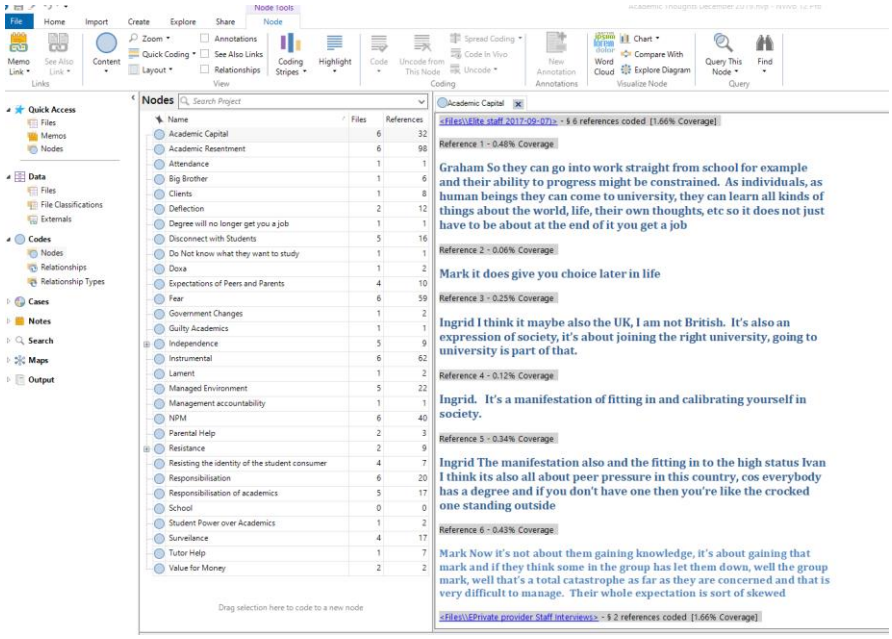
# Appendix 20 Initial Coding of Government Documents



# Appendix 21 Initial Coding of Student Focus Groups



# Appendix 22 Initial Coding of Academic Focus Groups



## Appendix 23 Discourses Identified in Part of a Conversation with one of the Academic Focus Group

**What do you feel are the expectations of students from you as academics?**

Mark first to pass them and then to teach them - Instrumental discourse perceived by academics to be adopted by students

Ivan if they have to choose between one of the two then they will choose to pass them rather than teach them …. That's my feelings sometimes- Instrumental discourse perceived by academics to be adopted by students

Graham in some cases to be there for them, mother, father, explaining every single thing that they have to do… so they don't have to think for themselves Service provider discourse

Mark, there is really an expectation that we spoon-feed them everything along the way, that's a stark contrast to before coming here, they don't want to think for themselves Service provider discourse, passivity discourse

Graham, I think there is a sea change in learning strategy, I don't think we should be going back to the days of the past when academics would sit in their offices and try and intentionally trick students and belittle them with ha you didn't get that! And openly expose their frailties but I think we have gone maybe too far in the other direction where we are literally because of the systems like module evaluations, staff evaluation having to go through these very prescribed processes …Nostalgia discourse

Ivan, so you have experience where there is a very clear link between your module evaluation scores and how you mark your students. So, if you mark them before the module evaluation you will drop at least one point, so you mark them after they have completed the module evaluation to get a fairer evaluation.

Mark, nowadays they're just looking for the grades. Instrumental discourse We had an occasion today working in a group and there are always those who complain about other people (in the group) not doing enough. You say to them well that's part of the problem with group work and you've put in a lot more effort but you've got a lot more out of it … But yes but we got the same mark. Now it's not about them gaining knowledge, it's about gaining that mark and if they think some in the group has let them down, well the group mark, well that's a total catastrophe as far as they are concerned and that is very difficult to manage. Their whole expectation is sort of skewed Competitive advantage discourse

Ivan it is very me orientated

Mark and Ok the students that we get are sort of, well they say they are the best, but that's mainly because they have been spoon-fed and had a huge amount of support from parents with additional tutoring at home to get them through, not all, but the majority of them and then, of course, they don't get that here, they have to be self-determining and they don't have that ability. ill preparedness discourse

## Appendix 24 Discourses Identified in Part of a Conversation with one of the Student Focus Groups

**How do you feel about the current student fee/grant government policy?**

Harry the year I started was the year it went up to 9k and I thought that at the end of the day I'm not going to be paying it back straight away, I might never pay it all back, I don't know. Even when we do earn over 21k it's really only a stupid amount that we have to pay back so it really doesn't bother me, Normalisation of debt discourse half of my friends didn't go to university because they were worried about the debt at college […] But I think that if it's going to open up doors and opportunities then why let money hold you back, it's stupid and I think many people simply don't see the bigger picture, for example I would have never have met the people that I have met from not doing this degree and it's not just that, it's all the connections made on placement and I now know so many people, the people the uni brings in like when would we have had the chance to go Hogwarts for the day and met all of those industry leaders, where else could we get that? We couldn't have done it and I think people need to see that the uni is not just the degree, it's everything else and it costs 52k who cares Normalisation of debt and value for money discourses, note blaze attitude

Charlotte I think a lot of it is to do with our generation so like we are the millennials, we care about what our peers are doing , all of our peers are paying the same as us, all our peers are getting a loan, all our friends are going to have to pay it back so we don't feel as hard done by in a way so we think well everyone here has got a loan, like all of our friends are going to have to pay it back, we're all paying 9k so you feel ok with it Normalisation of debt discourse

Harry – yep Normalisation of debt discourse

Charlotte and I think you know that you're not going to have to pay it all back in one large lump sum , you're not going to have to pay 9k into your overdraft , it's done in a way where you can pay it back but it's done in a way which is realistic and that's ok and I think you realise that what you're getting out of a degree compared to what you're paying .. it's worth it. I think Normalisation of debt and value for money discourses

Harry I just don't see the money side to it all whatsoever Normalisation of debt

Charlotte – it's cos you don't really have to worry about it cos like everyone doing it so everyone has that 9k debt every year so like you don't really think about it like omg I'm that much in debt, like I never think that I am so in debt with all of these university fees, you kind of just get on with it you just worry about it when you're done Normalisation of debt

Harry yeah so I suppose it's 9k a year, woah that's so much money Normalisation of debt but with attitude

Hermione yeah but we wouldn't have got our jobs would we Career discourse

Harry yeah , we are going to be like up there compared to our friends outside so Competitive advantage discourse

## Appendix 25 HEI Texts Investigated on websites, Student Charters and Codes of Conduct: discourses found

| | Red Brick | Post 92 | Plate Glass | Dual Provider |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Texts investigated | Discourses Found | | | |
| Website | x | x | x | x |
| Student Charter | Value our collective identity' | 'active participants in shaping their learning experience' or 'participate actively'<br>'we will use technology to monitor your engagement and success to help you to avoid falling behind'<br>Surveillance discourse | Participating in the development of a student-focused HE experience that exceeds expectations<br>Providing a service discourse<br>Responsibilisation discourse | the responsibility for shaping their learning experience<br><br>Responsibilisation discourse |
| Student Code of Conduct | Attendance not stipulated | Attendance requirement stipulated<br>Surveillance discourse | Attendance requirement stipulated<br>Surveillance discourse | Attendance requirement stipulated<br>Surveillance discourse |
| University Policies | Nothing really on the requirements that students must meet | Student engagement policy<br>Responsibilisation discourse | Student engagement policy<br>Responsibilisation discourse | Student engagement policy<br>Responsibilisation discourse |
| Academic responsibilities identified | Personal tutors offered but actual responsibilities not defined | Once you have been allocated a Personal Tutor, it's *their responsibility* to support you through your time here.<br>Responsibilisation discourse | The core purpose of personal tutoring is to *support taught* students' academic, personal and professional development through an *on-going personalised* | Nothing specific |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Service discourse | point of contact with the University. Responsibili sation discourse Service discourse | |