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THE OCCUPATIONAL DIMENSION OF STRATEGY-MAKING:

THE CASE OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE 'INITIATIVE' IN A UK UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

This study introduces the occupational dimension into the study of strategy-making, with particular reference to Higher Education in the UK. The concepts of occupation and self- and social identity are deployed to explore the relational dynamics amongst the occupational groupings in higher education in the context of the increasing marketisation of the sector. The personal identity work of the university employees is analysed contributing to the study of the occupational aspect of self-identities of the members of the three higher education occupational groupings: academics, manager-academics and non-academics. The concept of 'occupational connectivity' is introduced and developed to reveal the tensions amongst the occupational groupings and to explore the nature of these tensions in relation to the student experience initiative in a university context. University practices of strategy-making associated with the organisational approaches aimed to respond to the student experience initiative are seen as arenas where the occupational interests are acted and negotiated. A framework of four occupation strategies, representing a nexus between the levels of uncertainty and the ease of the access to economic and social opportunities, is developed. This is proposed as a useful conceptual development in the study of work and occupations due to its potential for revealing the strategies of occupational groupings in any given organisational setting.

Publication Declaration

I have presented the following paper related to and arising from the research carried out as part of my doctoral studies:

1. Baranova, P. (2013) '*Strategy-making practices and strategists' identities: a relational dimensions enquiry'*, British Academy of Management, Annual Conference, Liverpool 2013.

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List of abbreviations and acronyms

AUA – Association of University Administrators

CMA – Competition and Markets Authority

DfES – Department for Education and Science

DfBIS - Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

HEA – Higher Education Academy

HEFCE – Higher Education Funding Council

HEIs – Higher Education Institutions

HESA – Higher Education Statistical Agency

NCIHE – National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education

NSS – National Student Survey

NUS – National Union of Students

OFFA – Office for Fair Access

PTES – Post-graduate Taught Experience Survey

QAA – Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

SEPT – Student Experience Project Team

SESC – Student Experience Strategy Committee

SESG – Student Experience Strategy Group

UCEA - Universities and Colleges Employers Association

UFC - Universities Funding Council

UGC – University Grants Committee

VfM – Value for Money

Chapter 1: Introduction

This study is developed as a result of the author's interest in the strategy-making practices in various contextual setting and, specifically, in a university setting. Being a Senior Lecturer in Strategic Management, the author of this thesis has always been keen to explore what goes on when people say that they are involved in strategy-making. It is puzzling to see how various individuals engage in strategy making and how they account for such practices. The reading about the role of self-identity of a strategy practitioner has prompted to consider the various dimensions of self-identity, including the occupational dimension. As a Programme Leader and an Academic Consultant involved in various strategy-making practices across the university, I have observed the occupational status of strategy-making participants to be of significance. Thus, the focus on the occupational dimension of strategy-making became an area of research interest. Further research in this direction revealed that the scholars researching strategy-making practices (Whittington, 1996, 2002, 2006; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski, 2007 *et al*; Johnson *et al*, 2003) have not paid significant attention to the importance of occupations and occupational groupings in strategy-making practices thus far. Hence, the focus of this study has emerged out of the author's significant professional and academic experience in the field of strategic management and their observation of the gap in the study of strategy making.

1.1. Thesis background and research question

Studies of occupations have been strongly associated with the endeavour to understand the nature of work and organisation (Abbott, 1988, 1991; Barley & Tolbert, 1991; Greenwood, 1957; Johnson, 1972; Van Maanen &

Barley, 1984; Watson, 2012). In recent years, attention has been drawn to the notion of an occupation as a conceptual category that could advance theories of organisation due to its potential to encompass the social processes that take place at various levels of organisational life and to interconnect multiple sets of activities (Goodman, 2000). Uncovering the social mechanisms that connect individuals and social systems, as argued for by Hedstrom and Swedberg (2001), creates a fine-grained analysis between the cause and effect, showing how effects are produced. Despite the long-established calls to develop such conceptual apparatuses (Merton, 1957; Coleman, 1986), organisational theory suffers from 'a shortage of explorers with tools to make this exploration' (Bechky, 2011:1157). This study aspires to answer these calls by developing conceptual and empirical knowledge about the role of occupational groupings in the practices of strategy-making.

The purpose behind this aspiration lies in the possibility to advance the understanding of the role that the relational dynamics between various occupational groupings play in strategy-making. This study draws on a set of well-established concepts, including the concepts of: an occupation, an occupational grouping, an occupational aspect of personal identity work and strategy-making, to explore the nature of the relationship between the occupational groupings and organisational strategising (Whittington, 1996). A concept of an 'occupation' translates well across the different levels of analysis: an individual, group, grouping, organisational, industry/sector and organisational field (Abbott, 1988); it is seen as having a significant potential to illuminate the connections between people and social systems across multiple domains.

Conceptualising organisation in the context of occupations and work is a well-established tradition in organisational theory going back to its origins, where there were more porous boundaries between industrial sociology, industrial relations and organisational sociology (Stern & Barley, 1996). As the disciplines developed, the boundaries were drawn and organisational theory became more structured and abstract. This study contributes to the calls for the opposite trend (Bechky, 2011). Namely, to fully ground the understanding of organisation and work - there is a need to recognise that people do not directly respond to social structures, but rather to the situations they face and their interpretation of them (Blumer, 1969). In the case of organisations, the situations people find themselves in are closely bound up with their work and occupation. Thus, ethnography-influenced study (Brewer, 2004; Watson, 1995, 2007, 2011) of the relational dynamics between the occupational groupings in the fast changing context is set to illuminate a nuanced view of occupations, work and organisation.

These dynamics are explored in relation to the strategy-making practices in the context of the increasing sector pressures towards various student experience 'initiatives' in higher education (Browne Report, 2010; White Paper, 2011, 2016). The strategy-making practices have been a renewed focus of academic enquiry associated with the scholarly literature on 'strategy-as-practice' (Whittington, 1996, 2002, 2006; Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski, 2007 *et al*; Johnson *et al*, 2003) since late 90th of the twentieth century. However, this literature has not, thus far, paid significant attention to the role played by occupational groupings in the processes of strategy-making. Sociological categories of an occupation, occupational identity and an occupational grouping are used in this study

to fill a research gap in conceptualising the practice of strategy. The strategy-making actors are seen as members of distinctive occupational groupings with their occupational identities evolving through the practices and interactions with the others in the workplace and beyond (Ashcraft, 2013; Barley & Kunda, 2001; Pratt, Rockmann & Kaufmann, 2006; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984; Watson, 2012). Higher education organisations, with their primary occupational groupings of 'academics' and 'non-academics', often referred to as 'professional staff' or 'administrators', provide a valuable opportunity to address the research gap.

The research question, this study is set to address, is:

What is the role of occupational groupings in strategy making in universities associated with student experience initiatives?

The relational dynamics amongst occupational groupings are explored from a number of angles. First, the occupational dimension of self-identity (Alvesson *et al*, 2008; Watson, 2008), is studied to understand the notion of higher education occupations and the identity work of the occupational groupings in the context of the recent changes in the higher education sector. Second, the concept of 'occupational connectivity' is introduced and developed during the course of the study. This theoretical development contributes to understanding of the relational dynamics between the occupational groupings, specifically the tensions between the interests of occupational groupings for occupational closure (Weber, 1978; Murphy, 1988) and the need for collaborative strategies to advance the occupation strategies. Third, the occupation strategies are viewed as a nexus between the level of uncertainty, the ease of access to economic and social

opportunities and the level of occupational connectivity. The typology of occupation strategies is developed to contribute to the state of art in the studies of occupations and work.

The strategy-making practices are seen as settings where personal identity work takes place, and with that the occupational aspect of personal identity work is at play. These practises are viewed through the prism of occupational connectivity and are seen as arenas where: occupational interests are observed, advanced and protected; occupational aspect of self-identities is constructed; and where occupation strategies are pursued.

The student experience initiatives are of currency to higher education organisations, not the least due to the regulatory pressures to deliver 'a high quality student experience' (Browne Report, 2010; White Paper, 2011, 2016) and the Value for Money (VfM) sector pressures (HESA, 2013; HEFCE 2014; Universities UK, 2015a). These pressures are well debated in the press and according to the recent survey from the Higher Education Policy Institute and the Higher Education Academy, '35 per cent of English-domiciled respondents believed that their time at university had been poor or very poor value for money, with the 1 percentage point increase on the last year continuing a trend that has been evident since the raising of the tuition fee cap to £9,000 in 2012' (Times Higher Education, 2016a). Across the sector, there is an increase in appointments to senior academic (Pro Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor level) and administrative positions with a sole responsibility for student experience (Times Higher Education, 2016b). Many universities are publically signalling their responses to the sector-wide student experience trends by publishing their

student experience 'strategies' on the home web-pages (Google search, June 2016). The student experience initiatives are increasingly seen amongst the strategic priorities for many universities and with that, they are becoming a considerable feature of work and occupation strategies in higher education.

1.2. Contribution

The contribution of this study lies in revealing the importance of occupational dimension of strategy-making and in development of the concept of 'occupational connectivity'. The former is shown to be a significant dimension in university strategy-making practices. The occupational dimension is explored through the occupational aspect of personal identity work of the three higher education occupational groupings, namely: academics, manager-academic and non-academics. The latter is developed from the analysis of the interviews and the participant observation accounts, where the occupation strategies for occupational closure (Weber, 1978; Murphy, 1988) as well as collaborative working were observed as emerging alongside each other.

The study provides insights into university responses to the sector-wide focus on higher education student experience. A critical view of a student experience university 'initiative' is offered which illuminates the tensions amongst the university occupational groupings in the context of the increasing emphases on accountability, league-table performance, data-driven performance management and top-down managerial approaches associated with the sector-wide pressures for the 'delivery of high quality

university student experience' (Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013).

The study makes contribution to practice. The insights into university strategising practices reveal the significance of the occupational dimension in relation to the university strategising and the university strategic outcomes. The relational dynamics between the occupational groupings, viewed through the concept of occupational connectivity, are argued to be of significance to strategic management practice. The nature and the degree of occupational connectivity are seen as important aspects of work and organisation, and as such they become consequential to management practice.

1.3. Thesis overview and structure

A single case study of a distinctive British university examines how its strategic actors, members of the three specific occupational groupings, are dealing with one important set of strategic pressures 'to provide a high quality student experience' (Bowne Report, 2010). These strategic pressures have been significantly mediated by the state as they form a major part of the government policy on higher education in the UK aimed at 'putting students at the heart of the system' (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011).

An intensive interview programme is used; this being contextualised by the documentary analyses and insights gathered from the researcher's participant observation activities within the case organisation. The data from thirty one semi-structured interviews is analysed using thematic analysis with the aim to identify and analyse patterns in the data (Braun &

Clarke, 2006). The materials gathered during twenty eight participative observations of the strategy-making practices at the University of Middleworth provide valuable materials about the university strategising in response to the increasingly prevalent sector-wide student experience focus in UK higher education.

An ethnographically orientated approach (Brewer, 2004; Watson, 1995, 2007, 2011) to data collection, data analysis and presentation of the research findings is used throughout the study.

The structure of the thesis is as follows:

In Chapter One a brief introduction to the theoretical background of the study and the research gap that the study addresses. A brief overview of the main theoretical streams, which contributed to the development of the conceptual apparatus, is presented. The research question is outlined and the structure of the thesis is discussed.

Chapter Two locates the study in the current literature. The literature on occupations, relationships amongst occupations and occupational aspect of self-identity is reviewed in order to explore the established debates in the literature and studies to date. It is followed by the review of the literature on strategy-as-practice (SAP). It further highlights the research gap the thesis is set to address.

Chapter Three considers a conceptual apparatus used in the study. A conceptual framework of the study is developed and introduced in this chapter. At large, the conceptual approach views the strategy-making practices as arenas where the relational dynamics amongst the

occupational groupings evolve. A multi-level exploratory approach is considered in relation to the ethnographically orientated single case study research strategy.

Chapter Four provides an overview of the methodology and methods of this study. The chapter presents considerations for research design, appropriateness of the research methods, quality and reflexivity in the research. The chapter goes on to outline the process of data 'collection', detailing two parallel data collection processes of interviewing and participant observations, as well as ethnographically influenced accounts of the university's everyday life. The data analysis techniques are presented and supported by the reflections of the challenges encountered during the study.

Chapter Five, the contextual setting of the study is presented. Specifically, an overview of the recent UK HE developments is carried out. A number of trends that have significant impact on sector occupations are discussed including: an increasing marketisation of higher education (Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013), the rise of a 'new managerialism' (Deem 1998; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Hood, 1995; Hood & Scott, 1996; Pollitt, 1999; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000) in public services and 'de-professionalisation' of academic roles in the sector (McKinlay & Archers, 1985; Haug, 1993; Reed, 1996). The detailed overview of the development of the 'student experience' sector-wide focus and the impact on universities and the sector occupations is presented.

Chapter Six is the first of four analytical chapters of the study. This chapter presents the analysis and discussions on occupations and occupational

identities in higher education. The conceptual view of the links between individual's self-identity, occupational aspect of self-identity and social identity is presented. The key themes of the identity work across the three occupational groupings studied: academics, manager-academics and non-academics are presented in the chapter.

Chapter Seven is the second analytical chapter in which the impact of the increasing marketisation of higher education on sector occupations is considered. The concept of occupational connectivity is used to illustrate the tensions amongst the occupational groupings in the context of the increasing marketisation of the sector.

Chapter Eight explores the relational dynamics amongst the university occupational groupings in the context of dynamically unfolding regulatory emphases on Value for Money (VfM) (HESA, 2013; HEFCE 2014; Universities UK, 2015a) and increasing institutional focus on 'managing' the student experience in universities.

Chapter Nine is the fourth analytical chapter. It focuses on the university strategy-making practices associated with the strategically important higher education pressures of student experience and the university's responses to them. The analysis of the materials collected through the interviews with the University of Middleworth staff and a range of participative observations of the Student Experience Strategy Committee (SESC), a university-level sub-committee tasked with overseeing a student experience agenda across the university, is presented. The findings are discussed in the light of considerations for occupational connectivity and the university strategic outcomes.

Chapter Ten draws together the research findings and summarises the contribution of this study. It outlines the implications for the practice of strategy-making in general and in relation to the university strategising towards the 'student experience' initiative. The four-occupation strategy framework is developed to be able to demonstrate a link between level of uncertainty, ease of access to economic and social opportunities and level of occupational connectivity. Finally, a view of the student experience university initiative as an arena of tensions between the university central 'professional' services and the academic periphery is developed. The chapter considers a number of limitations of the study and points to possible future research directions.

Chapter 2: Review of the literature on occupations, occupational aspect of self-identity and strategy making

In this chapter the literature on occupations, occupational aspect of self-identity and the literature on strategy making is reviewed. In selecting the body of literature to review, the relevance to the study and the contribution to the development of the conceptual framework of the research were given a priority. The author was particularly attuned to identifying the gaps in the literature to position the study.

2.1. Occupations and organisation

The notion of an 'occupation' is traditionally understood as a mechanism for dividing, allocating and directing labour (Abbott, 1988; Barley, 1996; Scott & Lammers, 1985; Simpson, 1985; Stinchecombe, 1959; Van Maanen & Barley, 1984). Abbot (1991: 873-874) argues that a typical understanding of occupations 'includes three things: a particular group of people, a particular type of work, and an organised body or structure, other than the workplace itself'. The groups of people in a given occupation could be distinguishable by specialised skills and/or knowledge; levels /degrees of occupational standing; common experiences, culture, degree and/or by their gender, race, class and status. The types of tasks they perform may be defined by their products or services, tools, activities, clients and/ organisational locations.

Early writings by Durkheim (1893) explored the role played by occupations in society; specifically he tended to look for occupations as offering possible solutions to the problem of social order. Durkheim saw the role of

occupational groupings in maintaining social cohesion, where the inevitable interdependence of members of occupations one with the other is seen as a source of stability in society (Durkheim, 1893, 1957). Carr-Saunders and Wilson (1933) saw the role of occupations, referred to as 'professions', which are a select group of occupations with extensive 'professional' training, for instance doctors, layers, academics, as 'stabilising elements in society' and 'centres of resistance to crude forces which threaten steady and peaceful evolution' (Carr-Saunders & Wilson, 1933: 497). For these authors, 'professions' embodied the moral steams based on the ability to place fairness, knowledge and altruism at the centre of society and the government. This early thinking inspired a series of attempts to analyse and capture the key traits that distinguished the 'professions' from other occupations (Etzioni, 1969; Goode, 1957; Greenwood, 1957; Hickson & Thomas, 1969, Millerson, 1964). A number of core characteristics of professionals were identified, such as: an esoteric and systematic knowledge base, a formal training programme, self-regulation and publicly spirited ethos. Yet, from the 1970s the dominant functionalist tradition came under attack for ignoring issues of power and privilege and indeed for being close to the claims and the interests of the professionals (Freidson, 1970; Johnson, 1972; Larson, 1977).

An alternative 'conflict and power' framework was developed around the realisation that professionalism is not so much an inherent characteristic of an occupation, but a means of organising and controlling an occupation. As Johnson (1972) noted, professionalism, referring to a status, critically empowers the producers vis-a-vis the consumers of a particular service, thus giving privileged status to an occupational grouping. This perspective

places power and occupational dominance (Freidson, 1970) at the centre of studies of professionalism. From this perspective, the occupations are able to leverage their superior technical, political, and organisational resources to retain control over their own occupational labour markets, including 'the social and economic methods of organising and performance of [their own] work' (Freidson, 1970: 5).

This study is sympathetic to this view of professions and professionalisation. As occupational groupings themselves, professions share characteristics of occupations, such as a sense of solidarity and identity and a claim to profess 'proper conduct with respect to matters concerning their work' (Hughes, 1984:287) and modes of thinking relating to that work. However, professions are held in a higher status and they are higher up the hierarchically organised occupational division of labour (McMurry, 2010:802-803). According to Dingwall (2008), professions differ from occupations in 'degree rather than in kind' representing a more privileged position to which 'any organisation may aspire' (2008:5). Such claims are based on a view that a given occupation has a sanctioned sphere of exclusivity with respect to the theory and practice. As McMurry points out 'this notion of exclusivity and the related rights of practice are key to most explorations of professions' (2010: 803).

Although study of professions, as high status occupations, is well recognised, this study acknowledges it, yet adopts an occupational angle to the exploration of the relational dynamics amongst the three higher education occupational groupings. The rationale for this departure from the established conceptual view of occupations in higher education as

professions is threefold. First, it allows for a more nuanced exploration of the claims to a high status and its foundations for academics, manager-academic and non-academics in higher education. Thus, a more critical approach to treating occupational groupings in higher education is adapted to the study of the shifting power dynamics amongst the occupations. Second, the focus on occupations, rather than professions, allows for a more robust deployment of the sociological concepts of occupational closure, occupation strategy and the conceptual development of the occupational closure (section 7.3, Chapter Seven). Third, it signifies that many occupations engage in 'professionalisation projects' (McCann *et al*, 2013) in order to achieve a higher status in the hierarchical division of labour as part of the drive for occupational closure. This study considers professionalisation projects of non-academics, in particular, as attempts to balance the established dominant position of academics and manager-academics in higher education. Treating all three groupings as professions, offers little opportunity to illustrate the considerable differences in the social and economic status of the higher education occupations.

The literature on professions provides valuable insights into sociology of 'professions', although it is often focused on professionalisation efforts of a particular occupation or two occupations at most (Fitzgerald & Ferlie, 2000; McCann *et al*., 2013; McMurry, 2010; Write, 2008). For the purpose of this study, the focus on occupations, rather than professions, offers a greater conceptual breadth to explore the changing relational dynamics amongst three diverse higher education occupational groupings, particularly if one of them, non-academics, includes a wide occupational representation from the registry to student wellbeing and estates staff.

Such changing relational dynamics amongst the sector occupations could be framed as professionalisation as well as de-professionalisation trends in higher education (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), which are discussed in a greater depth in the section 6.2 of the thesis.

In the present study, professionalisation is seen as a conscious and systematic project designed to 'translate a scarce set of cultural and technical resources into a secure and institutionalised system of social and financial rewards' (Larson, 1977: xvii). The strategies for occupational closure are seen to be at the heart of these projects (Murphy, 1988; Parkin, 1979). It is through them that the occupations seek to maintain the skills scarcity and to maximise rewards 'by limiting access to privileges and opportunities to a restricted number of eligibles' (Parkin, 1979: 44). Throughout the literate supporting this perspective, professionalisation, as a process, is rooted in the power struggles between distinctive groups within a broader political and economic order (Faulconbridge & Muzio, 2007).

The scholarly literature identifies formal and informal professionalisation strategies (Maroto, 2011). The examples of formal professionalisation strategies include: standardisation of training, formation of the professional organisations and incorporation of the statutory regulations (Maroto, 2011: 106). Informal professionalisation strategies include: formation of social networks, which influence information flow, provide rewards and punishment for those involved and create trust among the network members (Coleman, 1986; Granovetter, 2005). Social networks are also seen as the structures that provide social support for the workers,

create accountability across the group and restrict entrance into the occupation (McGuire, 2007; Osnowitz, 2006). In the study of the body art workers (Maroto, 2011) the informal strategies of control included the control over the entry into the occupation through social networking and apprenticeships. In the study, the close network of the body art artists and piercers were able to develop trust, share information and align standards of practice, especially with regards to the hygiene, customer service and sanctions. Such use of the occupational networks was important to maintain the credibility of the occupation and the 'professional' standards. Maroto (2011) observes that although informal regulations at a shop level were strong because of the networks, the informal regulations at a broader level were getting harder to maintain due to the increase in the competition and other external pressures.

The links between a formal, structured at the senior level, and an informal, agentic and 'street' level, professionalisation strategies was explored in the ethnographic study of emergency ambulance work in the NHS (McCann, Granter, Hyde & Hassard, 2013). The study surfaced the tensions between the formal professionalisation strategies, reflecting changing legitimisation demands made on NHS practitioners, and the front-line practices enacted by the practitioners. McCann *et al* (2013) observe that the overall impact of the senior level professionalisation project had a limited impact on the working lives of paramedics mostly because the senior management had a limited power over the organisations that employ paramedics. The authors argue that, as a number of 'professional' accreditation and training organisations including the College of Paramedics as well as other governmental regulators is growing in influence, the power of senior

managers over professionalisation projects is weakening. At the same time, NHS trusts are seen as being weakened by the short-term priorities of hitting targets, winning care contracts and 'keeping the show on the road' (McCann *et al*, 2013:772). These priorities take over the long-term projects and commitments such as 'paramedic professionalisation'. Given the slow progress at a senior level towards the professionalisation project, paramedics continue to enact their identities to maintain a 'blue-collar professionalism'. The study provides a valuable perspective on the nature of professionalisation projects and their enactment at both senior and 'street' levels which can be misaligned and possibly contradictory.

The relationship between occupations and managers attracted a significant attention in the literature on occupations (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Hoggett, 1996; Murphy, 1990; Reed, 1996; Waring, 2014). Some scholars argue that managerial attempts to control occupational work more systematically will render less and less effective occupation strategies to maintain occupational closure and occupational autonomy (Hoggett, 1996; Clarke & Newman, 1997). Authors such as McKinlay & Archers (1985), Haug (1993), Reed (1996), Kitchener (2000) see that the managerial control over occupations will inevitably result in occupations losing the control over both the overall goals of their work and their technical skills. The less radical process of weakening of the power of occupations is viewed as 'bureaucratisation' (Murphy, 1990). It is seen as a blurring of boundaries between the managerial and occupational roles. Some scholars associate this trend with the rise of 'hybrid' professional-manager roles (Ferlie, 1994) and the emergence of the 'hybrid' identities (McGivern *et al*, 2015; Waring, 2014).

In a study of the clinical directors in UK hospitals (Kitchener, 2000), a number of indicators of the bureaucratisation of occupations have been identified, such as: weakening of occupational closure, reduced autonomy and enhanced managerial control over occupations' work. Weakening of the occupational closure is seen as a process which is characterised by the blurring of occupational and administrative domains, reduced occupational autonomy or appropriation of the specialised occupational tasks by others, i.e. outside the occupational group. The enhanced managerial control over work of occupations could be seen, for example, through the introduction of the performance indicators which are used to 'performance manage' and to 'quality assure'. The process of bureaucratisation is often seen as having a negative impact on the autonomy of occupations (McKinlay & Archers, 1985; Haug, 1993; Reed, 1996). Additionally, the trend towards an increased entrepreneurial activity in the public sector roles, i.e. income generation, market oriented approaches in practices, discourse and decision-making, is seen as an important ingredient of the bureaucratisation of occupations (Murphy, 1990; Kitchener, 2000).

An organised structure, which goes beyond the workplace, is traditionally seen as one of the defining characteristics of occupations (Abbot, 1991; Fincham, 2006, 2012; Muzio *et al*, 2007, 2011; Reed, 1996). This literature has been challenged by scholars emphasising the importance of the organisational context in the social identity work and its role in the identity construction (Cooper & Robson, 2006; Dacin, Goodstain, Scott, 2002; Watson, 2012). Increasingly, scholars draw their attention to the importance of organisational contexts as the sites 'where professional identities are mediated, formed and transformed' (Cooper & Robson, 2006

p.416). The majority of the recently established occupations, such as management consultants, project managers, HRM specialist or executive search practitioners, is argued to be born out of organisational contexts and 'indeed .... structure themselves so as to accommodate corporate patterns' (Dacin *et al*., 2002:49). Hence, a number of scholars (Barely & Tolbert, 1991; Lounsbury & Ventresca, 2003; Muzio & Kirkpatrick, 2011; Noordegraaf, 2011) call for more attempts to reconnect the study of occupations with the study of organisations and this study is well placed to address this gap.

The rise of the flexible forms of work organisation prompted attempts to reconceptualise the relationships between occupations and organisations. In this respect, the work of Kalleberg (2003) on 'functional' and 'numeric' flexibility offers a useful angle in viewing these relationships. Functional flexibility refers to 'the ability of employers to redeploy workers from one task to another' (Kalleberg, 2003:154). Associated practices include employee participation schemes, cross-functional work teams, multiskilled work, and abandonment of the narrow job classifications. Numeric flexibility, by contrast, refers to 'the organisational ability to adjust the size of its workforce to fluctuations in demand' (2003:155) by using contingent labour, including temporary workers, freelances, staffing agencies, mobile employees, and other types of employment that depart from a full-time, permanent model. As universities are increasingly adopting flexible work practices in response to the increasing massification and marketisation of higher education (Whitchurch, 2008b, 2009, 2013), a number of tensions are observed. Functional flexibility creates roles that weaken boundaries among traditional occupations, suggesting weakening of occupational

control, for example academics undertaking roles with a broader remit of student experience, international development, oversight of collaborative partnership provision and other. Smith (1997) notes that new organisational practices result in the 'blurring of occupational distinctions'; Heydebrand (1989) reports 'weak, permeable boundaries between the cognitive categories, spheres of competence, hierarchical levels, and social roles'. Numeric flexibility, on the other hand, is associated with a resurgence of occupations that have been fragmented under the organisational control. Kalleberg (2003) asserts that when a long-term employment is a rule, the bureaucratic mechanisms of internal labour function serve these functions; in the field characterised by the contingency and labour flexibility, well-defined occupations and crafts should rise to take their place. Both types of flexibilities are observed in universities nowadays: the flexibility to adjust the workforce has been pursued through the zero-hour contract employment practices (Grove, 2014) and the fragmentation of academic roles, which includes separation of teaching-only and research-only roles, early researcher and associate career pathways (Else, 2015). These trends characterise a significant degree of turbulence and re-framing of occupations, work and organisation in higher education.

2.2. Occupational aspect of self-identity

All occupations are associated with a notion of personal identity work, which involves self-identity construction around the conjunction of "who am I as a member of this occupation?" and "what do I do?". This view of the occupational aspect of individual' identity work, as one of many aspects

of personal (self) identity work that an individual engages in when constructing self-identity in everyday life (Alvesson 2004; Karreman & Alvesson, 2001; Watson,2012) has not attracted significant attention from identity scholars thus far.

The traditional research in this direction has used a concept of 'occupational identity' as one of social identities (Ashcraft, 2013; Bradley, 1989; Pratt *et al*., 2006). This approach has recently been criticised for its one-sided research focus on investigations into 'who we are?' and specifically as to how individuals identify with a particular occupation. Ashcraft (2013) points out that the emphasis in the 'occupational identity' research is very much on individual 'occupational identity' and less on the collective aspects of it. 'It is hardly surprising', she claims, 'as the vast share of management identity research stems from social identity theory (SIT), which stresses how people form self in relation to others through cognitive attachment to social categories – that is, in-groups and out-groups' (2013:11). She calls for a broader conception of 'occupational identity', the one that emphasises the importance of the collective dimensions of the occupations and focuses on the questions 'who we are?', 'what we do?' and 'how we do it?', instead of 'who am I in relation to the occupation I carry the title of?' and 'what do I do as a member of my occupation?'.

Watson (2012) considers the importance of the discursive resources available in society 'of what activities occur within a particular occupation and what contribution that occupation makes to society' (2012: 218) in the personal identity construction. He emphasises the importance of

understanding of the societal role of occupations and the value of their contribution to the society. Such understanding and perception of the occupations in the society creates discursive resources available to individuals to engage in personal identity work in everyday life. These range from using occupational status and reputation to define who they are and what they do to more complex and strategic 'professionalisation' projects seen as 'occupational branding' (Ashcraft, Muhr, Rennstam & Sillivan, 2012).

A number of studies have considered the challenges of changing the perception of an occupation in society and the subsequent links to the personal identity work. For example, Ashcraft (2007) describes how airline pilots worked alongside their union and the airlines to re-frame the self-identity away from the daredevil imagery and towards the self-identity characterised by the scientific knowledge, technical skills, formal rank titles and uniforms. The fundamental activity – flying- remained the same, even as the social identity associated with this activity has changed. Studies of "dirty work" in fields ranging from nursing to domestic help also highlight how occupation members can strive to manage the meaning attached to what an occupation does (Ashforth, Kreiner, Clark & Fugate, 2007, Fine, 1996; Hughes, 1962; Simpson, Slutskaya, Lewis & Hopfl, 2012). As a result of the major sectorial changes in higher education, similar attempts towards reframing of an occupation and associated work are observed in the case of the main sector occupations – academics and non-academics (Whitchurch 2006, 2008a, 2013). These are reviewed in a greater depth in section 2.3 of this chapter.

The efforts to 'customise' the occupational aspect of self-identities in different ways to meet the expectations of who-one-is-within-an-occupation i.e. identity assessment processes, are considered in the work of Pratt *et al* (2006). In the study of medical doctor trainees, the attempts to 'customise' personal identity in different ways were observed. These customisation efforts were not without limitations, as Pratt *et al* (2006) point out that the trainees 'have been able to pick and choose from various identity elements—as if choosing from an identity "menu"—to make sense of their work, but these choices were highly constrained by the organisational context' (2006:257). They echo the recognition of the importance of the organisational context in framing the occupational aspect of identity work (Cooper & Robson, 2006; Dacin *et al*, 2002; Watson, 2012) discussed earlier in this chapter.

It is observed, that in personal identity work, individuals often define their occupation in relation to other occupation(s) (Levitt, Raynolds, Barnes, Scholpzand & Hannah, 2012; Sluss & Ashforth, 2007; Sluss Van Dick Tompson, 2010; Somers, 1994). The scholars argue that occupation members engage in ongoing negotiations about their roles and obligations that accompany their occupations and how these roles and obligations are distinct from those of other occupations. The study of Dick and Cassell (2004) shows how personal identity work may function as means of occupational control not just to exclude certain groups from the entry into an occupation, but also to maintain the pattern of advantage and disadvantage within an occupation. They report how male police officers restrict access to career progression and promotion of their female colleagues with young families due to the occupational norms of 'earning

your stripes by serving on the beat'. In the study of the emergence of the clinical directors' roles in the UK hospitals, Kitchener (2000) shows a growing acceptance of the commercial and managerial responsibilities of clinical directors as opposed to hospital doctors. Despite maintaining the occupational closure of the medical domain, clinical director positions often conflict with their peers due to the managerial pressures and the perceived advantages of being a part of the hospital management.

Some scholars observed how differences and conflicts within and between the occupations are used in personal identity work. For instance, Leavitt, Reynolds, Barnes, Schilpzand & Hannah (2012) explore the case of U.S. Army soldiers, who serve as medical personnel, and how they construct the occupational aspect of self-identity of soldiers against that of medics. The contrast is evidenced as both occupations appeal to the moral judgements, yet they interpreted these judgements differently. The conflict between the soldier identity (more particularistic), sanctioned to use lethal force in the interests of their nation, and the medical identity (more universalistic), empathising the preservation of human life, becomes a major feature of the identity work undertaken by both occupations.

Studies of occupations with an apparent risk of a jurisdictional overlap – as with doctors and nurses, tenure-track versus contract researchers – also highlight how occupation members may define "who we are" by contrasting themselves against other occupations (Abbott, 1988; Bechky, 2011; Begun & Lippincott, 1987; Collinson, 2004, 2006). In the study of academic identities, the central contrasting theme is represented by the academic/non-academic binary. This binary is reflected extensively in the

literature (Marginson & Considine, 2000; Duke 2003; Fulton, 2003; Walker & Nixon, 2004; Deem *et al*, 2007; Kogan & Teichler, 2007; Enders & Weert, 2009a, 2009b; De Boer *et al*, 2010). The concepts of institutional 'centre' and academic 'periphery' (Clark, 1998) and 'managed' and 'managerial' professionals (Rhoades, 1996, 1998a, 1998b) contribute to understanding of the binary in higher education and how academic and non-academic identities negotiate their legitimacy. Thus, contrasting and comparing to other occupations is seen as a significant part of the occupational aspect of personal identity work.

Occupational ideology is often seen as attempts to influence the construction of social identity of an occupation devised by an occupational group in pursuit of occupation strategies, which are often associated with ensuring long-term success of an occupation (Watson 2012). For instance, the earlier discussed professionalisation strategies of occupations are often seen as emerging ideology amongst numerous occupations. As Evetts (2013) argues, professionalism is being constructed and imposed 'from above' in the case of the most contemporary public sector occupations e.g. social work, social care occupations, administrative and 'professional' services in higher education. In his view, the discourse of 'dedicated service and autonomous decision-making' is part of the appeal (or the ideology) of professionalism. This idea of specialised service and autonomy is what makes professionalism attractive to aspiring occupational groups (2013:787). Evetts (2013) observes that the discourse of professionalism is 'grasped and welcomed' by occupational groups since it is perceived to be a way of improving the occupation's status and rewards collectively and individually. It is a powerful ideology and the idea of becoming and being

a 'professional worker' has appealed to many new and existing occupational groupings particularly during the second half of the 20th century. However, Evetts (2013) argues, the realities of the professionalism 'from above' are very different to aspirations. The results of such an ideological direction are often not the tighter occupational control of the work by the worker-practitioners, but rather the strengthening of the control by the managers.

This view is echoed by the numerous studies of professionalisation strategies in the context of the UK National Health Service (NHS) (Currie, Finn & Martin, 2010; Bishop & Waring, 2011, 2012; Metz, 1981). The studies show how the professionalisation projects in NHS exist alongside and in tension with the introduction of the performance management systems and processes, including objectives setting practices (which are often political). This regulates and replaces the occupational control of the practitioner–client work interactions, thereby limiting the exercise of discretionary decision-making and service ethic that has been so important to the medical occupation. Throughout this literature, professionalisation, as a form of occupation strategy and ideology, is often associated with the strengthening of the management rather than an occupational core resulting in further tensions in and amongst the occupations.

2.3. Occupations and identity work in Higher Education

Activity in higher education has been defined traditionally in relation to three broad categories: teaching, research and either service, administration or knowledge transfer (something that is known as a 'third leg' activity) (Whitchurch, 2013). Central to the academic/non-academic

binary is a perceived split between the collegial approaches, implying academic autonomy and freedom, underpinned by the contribution of higher education to the advancement of knowledge; and functional activity, such as planning and budgeting, that is geared to what are seen as management goals. This binary is reflected extensively in the literature (Marginson & Considine, 2000; Duke 2003; Fulton, 2003; Walker & Nixon, 2004; Deem *et al*, 2007; Kogan & Teichler, 2007; Enders & Weert, 2009a, 2009b; De Boer *et al*, 2010). The concepts of the institutional 'centre' and academic 'periphery' (Clark, 1998) and 'managed' and 'managerial' professionals (Rhoades, 1996, 1998a) contribute to study of the academic/non-academic binary in higher education.

The sense of exclusion is a key theme in the literature about the relationships between academic and non-academic occupations. In relation to the academic staff, examples include Marcfarline (2007); Kogan & Teichler (2007); Rhoades (2007); Stromquist (2007); Winter (2009) and Locke & Bennon (2011); and in relation to the non-academic staff in the following studies: Dobson & Conway (2003); Szekeres (2004, 2011); Wolmuther (2008); Burke (2008) and Allen-Collinson (2009). There has been a tendency for both academic and non-academic staff to see the other as more powerful, and themselves as marginalised. This sense of exclusion, together with perceptions of fragmentation and de-professionalisation, has contributed to the binary view of academic and non-academic activities, roles and identities. Whitchurch (2008a) notes that the binary perceptions tend to polarise academic and non-academic activity, which results that the two are often seen as being in tension with each other. The perceptions leading to such tensions could be around

issues of individuals supporting the localised agendas and/or collectively representing institutional or even governmental agendas:

> [N]on- academics are seen both as an enemy and as invaluable partners. They are professionals, many have academic qualifications. There are split views about professional staff: on one hand they are there to help you, but as 'the administration' in the other building, which gets involved in things like branding, and say to you, 'do this, do that', the systems of compliance, they are seen as hindering. (Darlington and Khaleelee, 2010:3)

The literature comments on the fact that although academic staff may see themselves as increasingly burdened with 'non-academic' activity, they may also, at times, be ambivalent about delegating this: '[A]cademics want to govern themselves but they rarely want to manage; they are often poor managers when they do manage; and yet they deny rights of management to others' (Dearlove, 1998: 73). The same point is made in a US context by Lewis & Altbach (1996) and in a Norwegian context by Gornitzka *et al* (1998).

Despite the strong binary perception, Duke (2003) observes evidence of the increasing alliance between academic and non-academic staff, and the 'loosening' of the boundaries in the delivery of academic agendas. Some academics are moving into managerial categories to oversee cross-institutional projects, run collaborative partnerships, etc. Some of the non-academic staff move into the roles that might be considered as 'academic professionals'. The tendency of the increase in 'management' at the expense of academic staff (Tahir, 2010), masks a complex situation, according to Whitchurch (2013). Such a trend is seen (Whitchurch, 2013:13) as a result of a number of factors including the introduction of appointments that support teaching to accommodate organisational

growth through internationalisation and collaborative projects, re-badging of some of the academic staff who are no longer research active and re-designation of some of the administrative roles as a result of the implementation of the National Framework Agreement for the Modernisation of HE Pay Structures (UCEA, 2003).

Despite the binary, Musselin (2008) observes that 'academic work and [other types of professional work] are becoming closer' and 'that [the distance between [academic staff] and other workers are shrinking' (Musselin, 2008: 53). Dowd and Kaplan (2005) point to roles that allow for a more freewheeling approach to an individual career. These trends in work and occupations in higher education are seen as having a significant impact on academic roles and individual attempts of personal identity work.

2.3.1. Academic roles

The recent literature on academic and non-academic identities discusses the challenges of the diversifying workforce and the trends which are consequential to the framing of the occupational aspect of self-identities of the various occupations in HE. One of these trends is associated with a changing disciplinary base, including the incorporation of the practice-based disciplines as in the health field. These disciplines are staffed by the individuals whose career trajectories are likely to have included significant periods as practitioners and teachers. Their self-identities have been formed initially outside higher education. This creates a possibility of not only dual, but a triple allegiance, to their professional body, to their discipline and to their organisation (Whitchurch, 2010).

There is a greater 'casualisation' of the workforce, arising from the increasing use of the part-time and short-term contracts. As noted by Rhoades (2010) and Gappa (2010), the majority of the faculty members in the United States are now in non-tenured positions. In Japan too, following the legislation in 1998, there has been a rapid rise of the staff employed on a fixed-term basis. Increasing number of staff, particularly on short-term contracts, are putting together their own portfolios of activity, incorporating elements that include teaching as well as various forms of research and development and/or consultancy. The concept of an 'internal consultant' appears to be gaining currency, whereby people move from project to project and are paid on a project-by-project basis, with or without an institutional retainer (Whitchurch, 2010).

There is a general trend away from an assumed consistency between academic posts across the sector, even in the same discipline. Contemporary recruitment conducted by universities is increasingly demonstrates a greater specificity in relation to, for instance, programmes to be taught and research to be conducted (Whitchurch, 2010). And moves towards more learner-centred and client-orientated services, involving the recruitment of non-academic staff who are able to work closely with academic tutors in meeting a range of 'student life' needs in relation to areas such as welfare, careers, learning support, and counselling (Whitchurch, 2008c).

These developments characterise a context where the traditional superiority of the allegiance of the academic faculty to their discipline over the relationship with their institution is becoming contested (Henkel, 2000;

Becher & Trowler, 2001). Academics and academic teams are observed to be increasingly challenged by the changing nature of their relationships with the student body, institutional centre, other university occupations as well as the external bodies, including professional organisations, sector regulators, other HEIs and various collaborative partners.

Many scholars have observed a blurring of boundaries between the occupational groupings in higher education. While Becher's (1989) classic account of academic identity gives a primacy to knowledge groupings ("territories") and disciplinary cultures ("tribes"), its second edition acknowledges the difficulty to maintain firm parameters for these "tribes" and "territories" in more fluid, contemporary environments: "these properties are not only relative rather than absolute ... their attributions may change over time and space" (Becher & Trowler, 2001:48). Becher and Trowler (2001) called for studies into the higher education identities that take account of the increasing diversity of the university functions and locations, and the implications of these for higher education organisations.

Since then, the evidence has accumulated that rigid boundaries are becoming less sustainable, not only between academic disciplines, but also between academic and non-academic work. Increasingly, staff without academic contracts contribute to teaching and learning (Rhoades, 2007), research spin-out (Allen-Collinson, 2007; Hockey & Allen-Collinson, 2009), and a range of projects in quasi-academic areas such as widening participation, outreach, and regional partnership (Whitchirch, 2008 a, 2008 b).

Slaughter and Rhoades (2004) see this trend as "academic capitalism in the new economy". They argue that as colleges and universities engage in more market-like behaviours, they develop new models of producing research and instruction, and new circuits of knowledge creation and dissemination that involve the blurring of the boundaries between universities and the private sector marketplace. Managerial capacity has been expanded to the core academic activities and functions. There is a growing appetite for investment in and management of fields of research and teaching that are seen as being close to the market and have a potential to generate new revenue streams. In this context, students come to be conceptualised as 'consumers' and 'customers' to be more efficiently served (Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013; Collini, 2015). Teaching and learning becomes increasingly conceptualised as a delivery of an educational commodity or a service. With that comes the emphasis on the service delivery in a more efficient and effective manner which is seen as a feature of an academic capitalist model of higher education (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Some scholars conceptualise academics as 'managed professionals' (Rhoades, 1998a, 2005) and comment on the noticeable rise of non-academic 'managerial professionals' (Rhoades, 1998b; Rhoades & Sporn, 2002). The contributory factor to this trend is increasing 'invisibility' of the academic staff alongside the strengthening of the 'professional' core of staff in response to the changing sector and market conditions (Rhoades, 2010). Rhoades (2010) sees academic staff as largely 'invisible' due to a greater degree of flexibility in their work. However, he notes that the flexibility lies in the hands of academic managers rather than in the hands

of academics. He argues that the increasing employment of part-time and contingent faculty has systematically and profoundly shifted the balance of power between occupational autonomy and managerial discretion, making academics increasingly 'managed professionals' (Rhoades, 2010:127). In his view, the part-time faculty members have limited rights and professional perquisites. They can be hired, fired, and non-rewarded at extremely short notice, or no notice, with little or no involvement of faculty peers. They have little voice in the governance of the institution. And as larger segments of the curriculum have come to be delivered by part-time faculty members, academic managers have gained increased influence over the curriculum, in terms of what is taught and how it is taught (e.g. online, in distance education; on hybrid on-campus classes that incorporates advanced instructional technologies). Rhodes (2010) observes further as the majority of academics are seen to be working with limited occupational autonomy; the collective body of academics have experienced a decline in their professional influence over the direction of the academy (Rhoades, 2010:128).

2.3.2. Manager-academic roles

This group of academic staff has been growing across the sector with the introduction of senior academic management roles that operate horizontally across the institution as well as vertically managing academic staff (Locke & Bennion, 2011; Fitzgerald *et al*. 2012; Gornall & Thomas, 2014; Locke, 2014). The management roles range from traditional Heads of Departments (with an enhanced role for performance management and quality control of teaching and research), through Faculty Deans (once a symbolic role, now often with a considerable responsibility for financial and

income-generation responsibility) to members of Senior Management Teams such as Pro-Vice Chancellors and Vice Chancellor who are tasked to determine the strategic direction of a university.

The emergence of the new academic leadership roles in recent times is often justified by the need to manage strategic goals of institutions, to address accountability requirements and to position institutions for grants and rewards flowing from a range of national bodies including the HEFCE, HESA in the UK, and recently, to deliver on the 'quality of student experience' sector-wide pressures (HEFCE, 2014, 2015; Competition and Markets Authority, 2015). The proliferation of the academic leadership roles reporting to deans and heads of departments include associate dean positions with specialist designation such as teaching, research, international development, industry and community relations. These are often mirrored at school or department level with, for instance, associate head positions. Deem & Brehony (2005) argue that the creation of the leadership opportunities and the professional development provided, has become a significant attraction for academic staff since it provides reward for demonstrated commitment and competence, increased opportunities for promotions and alternative career paths. In the academic literature, this occupational grouping has been termed as 'manager-academics'.

Some scholars observe the increased prominence of academics in management roles has introduced a stronger divide between manager-academics and academics not in management roles (Deem & Johnson, 2000; Deem, 2003). McInnes (2000) finds that everyday realities of the academic life are pushing collegial governance to one side, as individuals

are increasingly faced with the prospect of choosing between being involved in governance or being a mainstream academic. Mid-career tenured faculty, who were once most likely to be involved in governance and decision making, are declining in numbers relative to the total academic force. 'Casualisation' of the academic faculty not only reduces the critical mass of individuals involved in administration and governance, but also makes great demands on the reduced core tenured faculty with respect to supervision and coordination responsibilities (McInnes, 2000:124).

2.3.3. Non-academic roles

The scholarly literature widely acknowledges the emergence and the expansion of a wide range of non-academic occupations in higher education, who among other responsibilities, mediate between the faculty and various constituencies and forces in the external world (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Whitchurch, 2009, 2010). In the European context, scholars have identified the emergence of the "developmental" periphery that is seen as one of the organisational pathways for the European Universities to become entrepreneurial universities (Clarke, 1998). Scandinavian scholars have also noted and detailed new developments in professional management in European universities (Gornitzka *et al*., 1998; Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004). Whitchurch (2004, 2006, 2008a) is building a considerable body of work on new spaces and the identities of the people working in these realms. Her work on the "Third Space" had emerged from conceptualising work organisation of academic and non-academic domains converging in this direction. Rhoades (2010) sees this space as politically

and professionally contested, revealing a growing shift in the balance between managerial discretion and occupational autonomy.

Often, non-academic staff, who have both managerial responsibilities and specialised knowledge, are loosely termed as 'professional' staff. The recent research confirms that they are increasingly mobile with respect to their career paths, spheres of interest and portfolio of activity (Whitchurch, 2009, 2010). The trends of convergence and divergence in occupations in HE have been discussed in the literature against the increasingly common patterns of joint working between 'professional' and academic colleagues. These trends are occurring as a result of the blurring of the boundaries between some of the academic and non-academic activities on one hand, and the increasing number of staff who are recruited to specialised areas such as wellbeing, business development, marketing and public relations.

Partly, these trends arise from the development of broadly based, extended projects across the university, which are no longer containable within clear boundaries, and the establishment of the new functional portfolios (Whitchurch, 2008b). Whitchurch (2008a) observes that the increasing functional specialisation to meet the legislative and market requirements is accompanied by less boundaried forms of working. A growing number of non-academic staff have, or are acquiring academic credentials, including doctoral degrees, and/or management experience in post-compulsory education. Some of these people see themselves as moving into the senior management roles that have traditionally been occupied by academics, for instance, a pro-vice-chancellorship (Whitchurch, 2010).

Due to the complexity of the career paths and roles described above, it has proven difficult to encapsulate non-academic occupational groupings within generic employment classifications. This contributes to the lack of understanding about their roles, functions and identities (Whitchurch, 2006). Kehm (2006) suggested that "the new higher education professionals" represent emerging expertise. Whitchurch (2008a, 2008b) has described the development of a 'third space' between academic and non-academic spheres of activity, in which "blended" roles occur. Middlehurst (2010) demonstrated how the globalisation of higher education has led to a greater fluidity, and even instability between academic disciplines, functional responsibilities and approaches to role definition, leading to concepts of 'professionals' and 'professionalism' that are "borderless".

In an attempt to capture the impact of such diverse developments on non-academic identities and working practices, Whitchurch (2010) offers an illustration of the links between changes in identity and working practices. On one hand, non-academic /'professional' staff are seen primarily as having a service or support role, in which they "provide services and are therefore subservient .... They are not initiators or developers of the institution" (Pro-Vice chancellor, Post-92 UK university, quoted in Prichard, 2000:190). Such views derive from an "academic civil servant" tradition (Lockwood, 1986; Sloman, 1994). In this scenario, non-academic staff would be expected to provide technical, regulatory and policy advice as members of a homogeneous cadre, whether they were in generalist or specialist roles. The prime purpose of these functions was to support decision-making by academic colleagues, whose management

responsibilities were likely to be additional to their academic interests, and to be for a fixed term in the office.

At the other end of the spectrum, non-academic staff have been directly linked to the rise of 'academic capitalism', the generation of university income and transfer of power to 'managerial professionals', and consequent 'de-professionalisation' of academic faculty (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). This view aligns with the concept of 'managerialism' which refers to a government approach that obliges public-sector organisations to operate in accordance with market imperatives (Deem *et al*., 2007; Ferlie *et al*., 1996; Ranson *et al*., 1998). According to Whitchurch (2010), 'managerial' approaches reinforce the sense of separation and even a polarisation of academic and management activity and the 'othering' of management. Tensions arise partly from problems definition, partly from a lack of understanding about the roles and identities, and also from the way that 'professional' staff are perceived in relation to the academic faculty. The fact that they are portrayed as providing a service to academic colleagues, and also as agents of 'managerialism', with variations in between, illustrates the difficulty of developing clear understanding about such a diverse occupational grouping. Tensions also arise from the issues of comparability, and the way that these are managed in specific organisational contexts (Whitchurch, 2010).

The professionalisation trends in UK higher education have been long established and evidenced through the rise of the discourse of professionalism and professionals; strengthening of the professional bodies, for instance Higher Education Academy (HEA) for academic faculty

and Association of University Administrators (AUA) for none-academic staff; and through the increase in approaches and practices towards managerialism in the sector. Alongside the claims of 'de-professionalisation' in higher education (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), Whitty (2008) argues a case for an alternative view of 're-professionalisation'. In his view, the recent trends demand "the construction of a different type of professionalism, perhaps more appropriate to contemporary needs" (Whitty, 2008:42).

A recent development in study of occupations is associated with a notion of 'network' (Anderson-Gough, Grey, Robson 2006; Nandan & Ciccotosto, 2014). The 'networked' approach considers the role of occupations and the associated developmental patterns that reflect the changes in organisation of work and the nature of the contemporarily organisations. It echoes the issues identified in considerations for the 'borderless education', which emphasise the importance of collaborative and partnership working in HE, increasing internationalisation trends and apparent supremacy of the networking approaches in organising and managing when compared to traditional forms of working. Such an approach supports the view of non-academic staff as being "pivotal for the new self-understanding of higher education institutions as increasingly autonomous actors in the emerging global markets of knowledge and education" (Kehm, 2006:170).

2.4. Universities and strategy making

The literature on strategy-making in universities is scarce. This is partially a reflection of the fact that it is only recently universities started to realise the necessity of formation and implementation of the 'competitive'

strategies informed by the "guidance" from HEFCE rather that a requirements for compliance (HEFCE, Strategic Management related guidance, 2014b). Increasingly, universities are put in a position where they need to compete more aggressively for student numbers in the UK and overseas. Rhoades (2001) considered a number of strategic initiatives in the US universities and engagement of the university staff to support these. He concludes, that despite a well-established discourse in the sector about the need to manage colleges and universities more strategically, the organisational practices confirm the opposite picture. These efforts have been largely characterised by a managerial myopia evident in plans that primarily involve restructuring/re-engineering/reorganising of the academic programmes (Rhoades, 2001). The value for money (VFM) agenda is often a feature of a university strategy for the majority of the HEIs. It is well debated across the sector with HEFCE leading the regulatory pressure on universities to deliver to the agenda. HEFCE launched the VFM strategy in 2013 which aims "to provide a guide to staff and members on how to secure and measure institutional effectiveness" (HEFCE, 2013). As part of the annual accountability process, universities are asked to submit value for money reports. In 2012/13 academic year, only 77 HEIs opted to submit such reports which represent only 59% of institutions. The major focus of the reporting is on achieving cost efficiencies and cost savings within the institutions. As a result of the analysis of the reports submitted, many institutions reported on the general nature of what could be categorised as cost savings, efficiency savings or income generation measures. Most areas of savings were reported as ICT, estates, academic support services (e.g. admissions) and procurement. The most popular

approach to realising savings is the use of IT based processes, followed by the streamlining of processes and the use of competitive tendering (HEFCE, 2014c).

Such an approach to identifying and reporting on the value for money initiatives within HEIs, with a cost savings approach in focus, is far detached from what students understand by' value for money'. The BBC has reported that "A third of students in England, who pay up to £9,000 in tuition fees, say their degree course is poor or very poor value for money" (BBC News, 21 May 2014). There is a potential perception gap between the funding authorities and the sector in relation to 'value for money' and that of students. This creates tensions between the university approaches as to how to 'deliver on value for money agenda' and students' views in relation to 'value for money' university education. At a broader level, is 'value for money' an appropriate discourse to be used within the sector that prides itself on creativity, transformative contribution to the society and opening opportunities for the generations to come? And how does the value for money sector agenda and discourse that comes with it impact on another emerging strategic agenda within the sector concerning the notion, standards and accountability for student experience in higher education (Green Paper, 2015; White Paper, 2016).

2.5. Strategy making and strategy practitioners

As this study explores the occupational dimension of strategy-making practices in a university, the attention is drawn to the literature on strategy-as-practice (SAP) perspective on strategy. Recently, there has been a renewed interest in understanding the practice of strategy originally

brought by Mintzberg (1973), Mintzberg and Waters (1985), Pettigrew (1977) and Quinn (1980a, 1980b, 1982) to the attention of the scholars of strategic management field. The strategy-as-practice (SAP) perspective on strategy has seen a major growth in theoretical, methodological and empirical developments. Following from the original peak of interest at the turn of the 21st century (Hendry, 2000; Jarzabkowski, 2003; Whittington, 1996, 2002; Johnson *et al*, 2003; Samra-Fredericks, 2003; Watson, 2003), the recent investigations into the practice of strategy challenge the field further with regards to the conceptual and methodological approaches (Jarratt & Stiles, 2009; Nordqvist & Melin, 2008; Whittington & Cailluet, 2008; Whittington, Cailluet & Yakis-Douglas, 2011) as well as the empirical investigations (Jarzabkowski & Balogun, 2009; Johnson *et al*, 2010; Heracleous & Jacobs, 2008; Kaplan, 2011; Vaara *et al*, 2010; Whittington & Yakis-Douglas, 2011).

Understanding strategy as a set of practices challenges the traditional perception of structure and causality assumed by a range of models of strategy which see it as an organised and linear activity aimed at ensuring success of an organisation over a long period of time (Ansoff, 1965, 1977; Chandler, 1962; Lorange, 1979; Nelson & Winter, 1982; Steiner, 1969). The SAP perspective views practices associated with strategy i.e strategic planning, development of a firm's strategic direction, boardroom activities and other as 'not fixed but rather constituted by a particular actor in particular circumstances' (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2010:52). Lave's (1988) emphasis on the importance of 'cognition in practice' rather than 'cognition in the head' is an important underlying principle of the research into actual

social practices of strategy with a researcher "being close to the action" (Jarzabkowski *et al*, 2007; Johnson *et al*, 2010).

The SAP perspective sees strategy 'as a situated, socially accomplished flow of activity where strategising involves actions, interactions and negotiations of multiple actors and situated practices that they draw upon in accomplishing that activity' (Jarzabkowski *et al*, 2007). Understanding the reality of strategy was once in the forefront of the strategic management research led by Mintzberg (1973), Mintzberg and Waters (1985), Pettigrew (1977) and Quinn (1980a, 1980b, 1982). The work of Whittington (1996) called for looking at the 'nitty-gritty' of strategy and uncovering a diversity of strategic action in a variety of contexts and settings. He emphasises the importance of the empirical research in this area, which would allow researchers and practitioners to avoid the over-generalisation of the strategic action. Instead, it should contribute to further our understanding of the variety and the diversity of the 'craft skills of strategy' (Whittington, 1996:732). The overall drive for researchers and practitioners is described as a shift from understanding 'kinds of strategy' to uncovering the practice of strategising (1996:734).

A number of studies explored the relationships between the strategy practitioners and the strategy-making practices (Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003; Sillince & Mueller, 2007; Mantere, 2008). Maitlis and Lawrence (2003) carried out a study of failures around strategising episodes at a British symphony orchestra, referred to as ASO, culminating in the conclusion that the failure of strategising results from a complex interplay of organisational discourse and political behaviour. Despite the contribution to further

understanding the links between strategy-making practices, managers' discourse and organisational politics and organisational strategic outcomes, the study attracts a number of criticisms. There is a little consideration given to the social context of the strategising within the ASO, as well as there is a limited analysis of the diversity of the strategising episodes. The authors focus their attention on the official strategy-making events, for example: board meetings, strategy away days, Artistic Advisory Sub-committee meetings, etc., which represents the 'official' mechanisms for strategy-making at the ASO. This concerns a widely disputed issue regarding the nature of the strategy-making practices in organisations. According to Johnson, Melin and Whittington (2003), strategy-making practice involves 'the detailed processes and practices which constitute the day-to-day activities of organisational life and which relate to strategic outcomes' (2003:3). Day-to-day practices of organisational life, which are relevant to the strategic outcomes, could be seen both as an intended and formally articulated strategy and as an unintended and emergent strategy patterns (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).

Among a range of strategy practitioners, middle managers attracted the most attention from the strategy-as-practice researchers. Middle-managers are the focus in Balogun and Johnson (2004, 2005) studies about the strategy-making processes and managerial sensemaking. In Mantere's work (2005, 2008), the focus is on the relational dynamics between the middle and the top managers and the impact of these dynamics onto the strategy-making practices. Mantere (2008) argues that the role expectations that top managers place on middle managers (Floyd & Wooldridge, 1992) have both enabling and constraining effects on the

involvement of the middle-managers in the strategy-making process. Despite operating with the aggregate actors of strategising, i.e 'top management' and 'middle management', the study explores the role of the two distinct groups in strategising and how one (top managers) affect the strategic agency of the other (middle management). Mantere's (2008) study is focused on the strategic actors who are not in obvious strategic positions in organisations (middle managers), but who, nevertheless, are influential strategic actors.

Sillince and Mueller (2007) investigate the reframing of the accounts of responsibility for strategy. The study illustrates that top management's ambivalence about the strategy provides middle management teams with a wide scope for the interpretation of strategy implementation initiatives. Such interpretations have impacted the strategy implementation at its initial stages as the strategy was 'talked up'. In the later stage, when it was considered that the strategic initiative was failing, the middle management teams engaged in 'talking down' the expectations about the strategy. The reframing from the initial 'duty' to 'capability' to later 'accountability' is shaped and reflected in strategy making participants' changing goals as well as their strategic agendas and practices.

Studies by Maitlis *et al* (2003), Sillince and Mueller's (2007) and Mantere (2008), despite providing useful theoretical and empirical developments in understanding the strategic action with regards to the role of politics and discourse in strategising failure (Maitlis *et al*, 2003) and the reciprocal relationships between the main strategy actors (Sillince & Mueller, 2007; Mantere, 2008), failed to provide close insights into the strategising

practice. Such close insights are seen as an important aspect of the research into what happens within the 'black box' of strategy (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski *et al*, 2007; Johnson *et al*, 2003), to ensure that the strategy field is 'figuratively speaking, filled with people' and to strengthen 'a theory of social action within a strategy context' (Johnson *et al*, 2003).

The other group of strategy actors that have received attention from the researchers in the SAP tradition are consultants (Nordqvist & Melin, 2008; Schwarz, 2004) and regulators (Jarzabkowski *et al*, 2009). In addition, the scholars have pointed out the need for research into the roles of strategy teachers and strategy gurus (Hendry 2000; Whittington, 2006). The recent developments of the SAP literature have included a call to define the strategy 'professionals' (Whittington, Cailluet & Yakis-Douglas, 2011). Strategy professionals are seen as 'a distinct group of actors whose task is to address an unpredictable future' (2011:532). They apply distinct bodies of expertise to problems involving risk and uncertainty. They are encouraged to support a shift towards the 'open strategy' practices through the greater inclusivity and transparency in strategising. Whittington, Cailluet and Yakis-Douglas (2011) call to create a broader category of a strategy occupation away from the positional (inside and outside organisation) categorisations such as top/middle managers, consultants, regulators, etc. These developments are viewed to be similar to the professionalisation trends discussed earlier in this chapter. As such, they are seen as means of strengthening the occupational control and maintaining of the occupational closure amongst the strategy practitioners.

Several studies to date have introduced the identity conceptualisations to the study of strategy-making (Beech & Johnson, 2005; Johnson, Balogun & Beech, 2006; Huy, 2011; Miller, Le Breton-Miller, Lester, 2011; Watson, 2003). Watson (2003) illustrates a link between the life of a strategist and organisational strategies. The study develops a theoretical argument around the exchange model, where the emergent life strategy of a strategist continuously interacts with the organisational strategies and where the life story interplays, forms an integral part and shapes the narrative and a story of strategy.

Beech and Johnson (2005) look at the link between self-identity of a strategist and organisational strategizing and how such a link develops over time. The study offers a profiling of the three different identity types: 'Major', 'Streetfighter' and 'Insider-out' (2005:35), based on how individuals respond to a strategic change process. The study explores the identity shifts as part of the progresses of strategic change.

More recently, the effects of the interplay between identity, institutional logics and social context on strategy and performance are explored in the study that compares strategy-making at a lone founder firm and at family firms (Miller *et al*, 2011). The study shows how family owners and CEOs, influenced by family stakeholders in the business, assume the role identities and logics of family nurturers and thus strategies of conservation. By contrast, lone founders, influenced by a wider set of market-oriented stakeholders, are argued to embrace the identities and logics of entrepreneurs and strategies of growth. Family founders and founder-executives are observed to blend both orientations (Miller *et al*, 2011).

The link between emotions, personal identities and strategy-making has been considered in a study of a large technology firm (Huy, 2011). The study shows how the top executives can inadvertently activate middle managers' organisation-related dimensions of personal identities, such as length of time working for the company (newcomers versus veterans) and language spoken by senior executives (English versus French) and to affect the group-focus emotions. These emotions prompt middle managers—even those elevated to powerful positions by top executives—to support or covertly dismiss a particular strategic initiative even when their immediate personal interests are not directly under threat. The study recognises the impact of the link between the senior managers' actions, identities of the middle managers and strategic implementation on the organisational strategic outcomes.

The literature reviewed supports the view that despite the various attempts to explore the relationship between the strategy actors and the strategy-making practices, there have been little attempts to consider the role of occupational groupings in strategy making to date. This presents an opportunity to strengthen the connections between the sociological conceptual apparatus of work and occupations and the study of strategy-making.

Chapter 3: Conceptual framework of the study

This chapter presents the conceptual framework of the study of the occupational dimension of strategy-making. The occupational dimension is explored through the concepts of self and social identity of a strategic actor and their mediating effects in relation to the practice of strategy-making. The four areas of analysis are considered as instruments of testing the empirical value of the framework developed.

3.1. Defining strategy-making practices and strategy actors

As the study is concerned with the strategy-making practices, it utilises a number of concepts from the field of strategic management including the concepts of strategy, strategy-making practices and strategy practitioners. The definition of strategy adopted in this study is originally developed by Mintzberg and Waters (1985) who see a strategy as 'a pattern in a stream of actions' (1985:257). The emphasis on a stream of actions, as opposed to 'a pattern in a stream of decisions' (Mintzberg, 1972, 1978), suggests the importance of considerations for human actors and their actions in strategising.

Strategy-making practices are seen as crucial to how strategies develop either intentionally or unintentionally (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985). Broadly, praxis (practice) is referred to as 'an emphatic term to describe the whole of the human action' (Reckwitz, 2002:249). Schatzki *et al* (2000) articulates practices as 'embodied, materially mediated arrays of human activity centrally organised around shared practical understandings' (2000:2). Practices are also seen as interconnections between the actions

of different, dispersed, individuals and groups and those socially, politically and economically embedded institutions within which individuals act (Sztompka, 1991). The practice-based angle of the enquiry into strategy-making pays particular attention to the actors of strategy and their activities, including the materials and techniques that they use, in various contexts, which shape and are shaped by these activities.

The strategy-as-practice (SAP) perspective on strategy has a particular interest in studying interface between practitioners, practices and practice (Whittington, 2006). For the researchers working in the SAP tradition (Jarzabkowski, 2005; Jarzabkowski, 2007 *et al*; Johnson *et al*, 2003; Whittington 2006), the study of strategy is grounded in the discovery of strategic action in various organisational and sectorial contexts. To date, the empirical SAP research has tended to focus on intersections between praxis and practices (Dameron, Le, LeBaron, 2015, Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015; Jarzabkowski, Burke & Spee, 2015; Kaplan, 2011; Kreutzer, Walter & Cardinal, 2015) or practitioners and the practices they draw on (Lechner & Floyd, 2012; Mantere, 2005, 2008; Mantere & Vaara, 2008; Paroutis & Heracleous, 2013) with much less research focusing on links between practitioners and their praxis (McKenna, 2012; Regner, 2003; Rouleau & Balogun, 2011). The present enquiry is designed to address this challenge by studying the role of higher education occupations (practitioners) in the university strategy-making (practice).

According to Whittington (2006), strategy-making practices, referred to as praxis, are 'all the activities to do with the formulation and implementation of strategy' (2006:615). This definition needs further refinement as it lacks

the clarity in distinction between strategic and non-strategic activities. Johnson *et al* (2003) argue that the key characteristic of a strategic activity is that it is consequential for the strategic outcomes, survival and competitive advantage of an organisation. The issues of survival and competitive advantage are considered to be of importance to organisational success in the long term by many authors in the strategy field (Grant, 1991; Mintzberg 1978, 2007; Porter, 1985, 2008). Linking strategy-making activities to the organisational strategic outcomes reflects intended, formally developed and implemented strategy, as well as unintended and emergent patterns of strategy (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).

I develop the following definition of strategy-making practice as *all the actions to do with the formulation and implementation of strategy, which are concerned with the issues critical for organisational success over the long-term and which affect the whole of the organisation and relate to the strategic outcomes.* This definition of a strategy-making practice is sympathetic of the processual ways of thinking about organisations and how strategies come about (Mintzberg, 1973; Mintzberg *et al*., 1976, Johnson, 1987; Pettigrew, 1977; Jonsson & Lundin, 1977, Melin & Hellgren, 1993). This tradition attracted a number of criticisms about the level of analysis in the process-oriented studies. It is argued that the process research does not probe further into what is going on inside the actual practices associated with the processes and systems (Johnson *et al*, 2003; Watson, 2003). The process tradition tends to focus on the organisational level of analysis, whilst the research which is concerned with

the individual and group levels of strategy-making requires a closer attention to 'how practitioners act' (Whittington, 1996).

Further, the processes tradition is seen as being reluctant to query the role of the managerial agency (Pettigrew, 1985). The principle angle of the research design in strategic management is often on the managers, who are considered to be central to strategising. The studies often ignore the role of other players inside and outside organisation, who often play an important role in strategy-making (Balogun, 2003, Regner, 2003; Rouleau, 2005; Mantere, 2008). This study recognises the significance of the context in which strategy-making practices happen (Whittington, 1996) and that strategy-making actors are part of a wider social-cultural systems, including occupational structures, which would inevitably affect their actions and thus the practice of strategising.

Strategy practitioners, and specifically "Who is involved in the actions of strategy-making in organisations?", form another line of enquiry in understanding the relationship between strategic actors and strategic praxis. The definitions range widely from one initially introduced by Hambrick and Mason (1984) followed by Wiersema and Bantel (1992) as a top-down conceptualisation focused on the role and demographics of strategists, to the recent studies which look at strategy actors, who lack a formal strategic role, yet are actively involved in strategising (Balogun, 2003; Regner, 2003; Rouleau, 2005). Another broad definition states that the strategy practitioners are 'those directly involved in strategy making - most predominantly managers and consultants and those with indirect influence - the policy-makers, the media, the gurus and the business

schools who shape legitimate praxis and practices' (Jarzabkowski and Whittington, 2008:284).

The definition of strategy practitioners to be used in the study is as follows: *strategy practitioners are all the human actors, directly and indirectly involved in strategy-making practices in an organisation*. It supports the argument that there are individuals who do not hold an official position of a strategist in an organisation, but who, nevertheless, are influential strategic actors. Following the ethnographic tradition (Brewer, 2004; Watson, 1995, 2007, 2011), the research participants are identified through a range of participative observations of strategy-making practices in the university and based on the role they play in these activities.

The study treats strategy practitioners as representatives of distinctive occupational groupings in a university setting. In this study, the attention is drawn to the three higher education occupational groupings: academics, manager-academics and non-academics. With that, a number of sociological concepts, such as of occupational dominance (Freidson, 1970), occupational control (Child & Fulk, 1982) and occupational closure (Weber, 1978; Murphy, 1988) are deployed to explore the relational dynamics amongst the occupational groupings and their significance to strategising. This presents a well overdue departure from the well-established approach of viewing the strategy practitioners as the ones who are in management (top, middle, a sole firm owner, family ownership) and in non-management roles.

3.2. Occupations, self- and social identity

Abbot's conceptualisation of occupations (1991), which includes three dimensions of (1) a particular group of people; (2) a particular type of work and (3) an organised body or structure, other than the workplace itself, is used in this study. The study focuses on the two main categories of occupational groupings in higher education: academics and non-academics. Additionally, an occupational grouping of 'manager-academics' is considered in the study due to the increasing adaptation of a 'new managerialism' ideology in the public sector (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Hood, 1995; Hood & Scott, 1996; Pollitt, 1999; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000) and proliferation of the managerial practices and managerial discourse in higher education (Deem *et al*, 2007; Deem & Johnson, 2000). The emergence of this occupational grouping is seen at the interception of two institutional logics (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Lounsbury, 2007; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999) which dominate the higher education: the market institutional logic and the traditional academic institutional logic. The current literature on work and occupations in higher education pays attention to the development of this occupational groping and often associates it with the significant tensions around the increasing marketisation of higher education and a considerable degree of changes taking place in universities (Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013).

The concept of 'identity' is deployed to explore the patterns of identification, changes, and tensions of an individual or a group. The field of identity research is vast and I refrain in this chapter from providing an

overview of the entire field(s), concentrating on my own theoretical position. I draw on the sociological tradition in identity studies where identities are viewed as social accomplishments, rather that natural accruing entities (Giddens, 1991). This tradition treats identity as on-going efforts of an individual to construct the notion of self as reflexively understood by person (Giddens, 1991:53). The reflexive construction of identity, which is assembled out of cultural raw material: language, symbols, sets of meanings, values, is referred to as identity work (Alvesson & Whillmott, 2002; Karreman & Alvesson, 2001; Watson, 2007, 2008). Identity work involves continuous forming repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a precarious sense of coherence and distinctiveness of individual's notion of self (Alvesson & Whillmott, 2002:626).

There are two main categories are used by this tradition of scholars: self-identity and social identity. One's self-identity is referred to as subjective meanings and experience of 'our ongoing efforts to address the two questions 'Who am I?' and -by implication - 'How should I act?' (Cerulo, 1997 in Alvesson *et al*., 2008). Social identity is seen as 'cultural, discursive and institutional notions of who or what any individual might be' (Watson, 2008).

Important elements of the self-identity construction include ideas about central characteristics, cohesiveness, distinctiveness and direction according to Karreman and Alvesson (2001). Central characteristics refer to the question of identification of an individual or a group and seeks to address the question 'Who am I ?' or 'What we are?'. These questions call

for the responses identifying feelings and ideas about the basic concerns and qualities, which form distinctive or defining identity (Karreman & Alvesson, 2001:63).

There are a number of conflicting positions regarding identity cohesiveness throughout the literature. Gergen (1992) argues that identities are often disparate and fundamentally unstable. Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003:1165) provide a counterargument stating that '....individuals create several more or less contradictory and often challenging managerial identities (identity positions) rather than one stable, continuous and secure, manager identity' (see in Thomas & Linstead, 2002). Yet they insist that these contradictions exist within 'a somewhat more stable, personal .... narrative self-identity' (Sveningsson and Alvesson, 2003:1166). Thus, 'identities may be stable without being coherent, and consist of core statements but not being unified' (Clarke *et al*, 2009:341).

Direction, as the fourth aspect of self-identity by Karreman and Alvesson, (2001), suggests that the specific outcome to the question of identity implies action. 'Identity indicates orientation and commitment. It implies what is appropriate, natural, valued for a specific subject' (Karreman & Alvesson, 2001:63). It can be linked to the concept of 'moral identity' (Clarke *et al*, 2009) where an individual's identity would partially constitute of the notion of what is good and bad, and subsequently use that notion to initiate, facilitate, and implement actions in particular organisational contexts. Directional dimension of identity refers to the fact that self-image offers guidelines for decision-making (Mitchell *et al*, 1986) which in turn could impact on and result in actions.

When referring to social identities, I adopt a definition developed by Watson (2008) who sees social identity as 'cultural, discursive and institutional notions of who or what any individual might be' (2008:127). Using these notions, people do identity work and in doing so assign themselves and others into various social categories, including ones based on occupation. These categories are seen as having a number of functions, including: they operate as tools for understanding social environment; they provide guidance for actions and they feed into self-identity work (who am I in relation to a representative of a particular occupational grouping). The relationship between self and social identity is dynamic, ever-evolving and reciprocal. Social identification provides a partial answer to the question 'Who am I?' and impacts self-identity construction. In the construction of self-identity, individuals draw on societal categories, including occupations and occupational groupings.

People in organisations engage in identity work, aspiring to achieve a feeling of a coherent and strong sense of self, which is necessary for coping with work tasks and social interactions (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). Identity work is particularly important in the scenarios where occupations and organisations are experiencing instability and the increasing degree of uncertainty (Alvesson, 2004; Deetz, 1998). In these circumstances, personal identities are constituted, negotiated, reproduced, and threatened in social interactions surfacing tensions amongst individuals and groupings.

The occupational dimension of one's self identity is treated as an individual's endeavour to answer the question 'Who am I as a member of

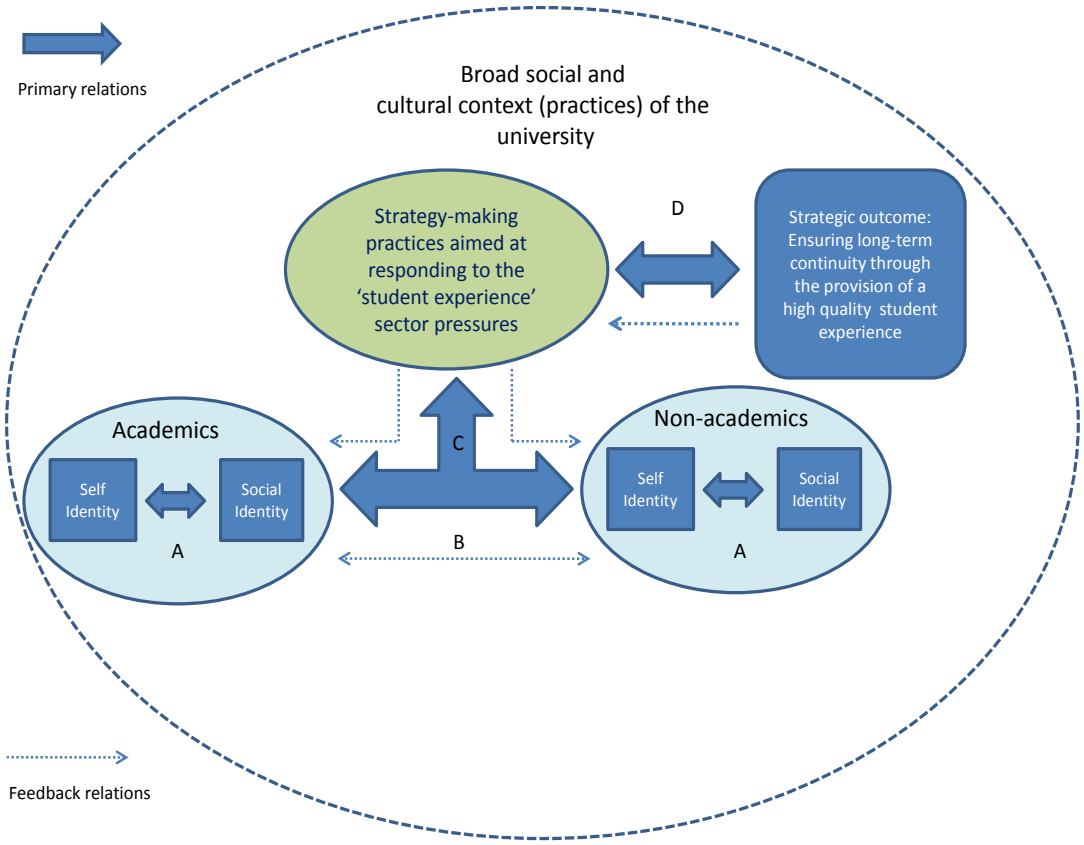
a (specific) occupation? and 'What is it like to be a member of a (specific) occupation?'. In pursuing this endeavour, an individual is likely to draw on a variety of cultural, institutional and discourse resources to engage in personal identity work. In doing so, the challenges, tensions and patterns of relational dynamics with others could surface.

3.3. Conceptual Framework

Deploying the concepts outlined, the conceptual framework of the study can now be presented (Figure 3.1). The present study explores the role of occupational groupings in strategy making with a particular emphasis on the relational dynamics among the occupational groupings and the identity work taking place as part of the strategy-making practices.

The conceptual framework is developed to study a relationship between strategy-making practices, associated with the student experience initiatives, and the strategy practitioners, representatives of the three higher education occupational groupings: academics, manager-academics and non-academics. The enquiry into the role of occupational dimension in strategy-making in universities covers four areas:

Figure 3.1: A relationship between identity of a strategic actor, strategy-making practice and strategic outcomes



Area A: the enquiry into the relationship between self- and social-identity in the context of personal identity work. The enquiry into this area would have to be carried predominantly at an individual level.

Area B: the enquiry into the relationship between the university occupational groupings. Possible areas include: the perception of one another, identity work, issues of politics, occupational control vs collaborative strategies. The enquiry into the relational dynamics between the occupational groupings is likely to be carried out at a group level.

Area C: the enquiry into the strategy-making practices taking place, or a lack of them. The enquiry at an organisational and a group level is deemed to be appropriate at this level.

Area D: the enquiry into the links between the university strategy-making practices and the strategic outcomes (either intended on unintended). An organisational level of analysis is of a preference here.

The model of the relationship between occupations, strategy-making practices and strategic outcomes includes a feedback mechanism. This reflects the reciprocal relationship between the strategist's identity and strategy-making, where the relationship between occupational groupings not only shapes the university strategy-making practices but is also shaped by it. Such a co-creational dimension signifies a relationship between strategy-making practitioners and practices as both are seen as socially constructed entities (Cerulo, 1997).

Returning to the earlier reference to the calls for the strengthening of the multi-level enquiry in social science (Bechky, 2011), discussed earlier in Chapter One of the thesis, the proposed model is well placed to answer these calls. This model provides a framework for an enquiry at various levels. At an individual level, it considers individual’s self-identities and its occupational aspect. It translates well to a group level analysis and explores the relational dynamics amongst the occupational groupings and reflection of such dynamics in personal identity work. It allows for exploration at the organisational level and beyond to reflect the significance of the structures outside the organisation boundaries, including the ones associated with a particular occupation (Abbott, 1991).

Having outlined the conceptual framework of the study, the methodological approach is to be discussed in the chapter to follow. The challenges of an ethnographically influenced, single organisation case study is to be

explored alongside the considerations for the research methods, research design and approaches to analysing the study materials collected.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology and Methods

Research methodology is influenced by the epistemological and ontological position of the researcher and has a major influence on the study design and the choice of methods to collect and analyse the data. Crotty (1998) sees the choice of the data collection and the data analysis methods not being made in isolation, but as guided by epistemological and ontological stances of a researcher. An epistemological stance (epistemology) is concerned with how knowledge is developed and what it means to know. Ontological stance is a broader philosophical position about the nature of reality (ontology) (Saunders et al., 2007; Easterby-Smith *et al*., 2008). Watson (2012) argues that the narrowing of the term 'methodology' to considerations for 'method' only risks to overlook the critical assumptions about what do we know about the world, how this knowledge is generated and 'how can we make valid or 'truthful' generalisations about the world on the basis of the limited materials we gather' (2012:24). In this chapter, the epistemological and ontological position of the present thesis is outlined followed by the considerations for the research design, research methods, and the approaches to the data analysis and ethics. The chapter is concluded by further reflections on the challenges of the methodology chosen.

4.1. Research in a pragmatist tradition

In the research endeavours, which focus on what 'actually happens', there is a need to recognise the existence of a gap between scientific knowledge and the 'realities' with which it is concerned. Such a gap prompts one to reflect on one of the key epistemological and ontological debates in the

area of social sciences with regards to positivism versus constructivism/interpretivism and their interpretation of social reality (Ruggie, 1998). The tradition of pragmatism, is largely an American one (Piece, 1887, 1931-1958; James, 1898, 1956; Dewey, 1922, 1938, 1958). It tries to reconcile the flaws associated with both traditions: in the case of 'naïve realism' – a strict adherence to the knowledge generation through 'measurable' data and objective view of reality; and in the case of 'non-realism' tradition – an overreliance on language and subjectivity in the interpretation of reality as well as, often perceived, little methodological rigour in enquiry about the world (Ruggie, 1998). A number of scholars of organisation studies (Fajoun *et al*., 2015; Whitford and Zirpoli, 2014; Watson, 2010, 2012) argue that pragmatism provides a "third way" between rational and structural approaches and it has even been claimed that it represents a school of organisation theory in its own right (Fajoun *et al*., 2015:1799). It is seen as a 'problem-solving' philosophy, which builds on behaviourally plausible model of human nature. It views reality in terms of processes and relations, and highlights the interplay of meaning and action (2015:1787). The present study is sympathetic to this tradition.

As a philosophy, pragmatism is concerned with the practical consequences of action and places problem solving at the centre of understanding of human action. Farjoun *et al* (2015) argues that trivialising this 'instrumental rationality or practical opportunism misses the point' (2015:1789). The problem-oriented focus of pragmatism is drawn not only on Darwin's evolutionary theory, but also on the philosophical concern with praxis that runs from Aristotle through Hegel and Marx to contemporary practice theorists (Bernstein, 2011). Pragmatism philosophy, with their

focus on problem-solving, brings together ideas about experience, habit, action and reflexivity. It draws attention to the concrete context and epistemic uncertainty of human action and to the activities of interpretation, inquiry, deliberation, creativity and learning. Pragmatism, it is argued (Farjoun *et al*, 2015; Menand, 2001; West, 1989), offers an incredibly useful theoretical conception of practical rationality.

From the pragmatism standpoint, the social world is seen in terms of processes that connect all sorts of entities in relational and recursive ways. Pragmatists adopt a processual view if the world that appreciates the temporal and emergent aspects of social life (Hernes, 2014; Rescher, 2000). The world is seen in an ongoing flux and in the process of becoming. It is a 'work in progress' rather than a final product (Lengley & Tsoukas, 2012). Although pragmatists are generally committed to process ontology, they do not take a strong 'everything in process' view (Rescher, 2000). They rather consider structure and process as an interrelated pair (Elkjaer & Simpson, 2012).

Pragmatists understand social entities and ideas in terms of their relationships rather than in terms of their inherent (essentialists) characteristics. Originally developed by Dewey (1958), a 'transactional view' i.e. relational view opposes a view of individuals as atomic entities; it emphasises, instead, that the essential characteristics of individuals are outcomes of relationships with others (Hodgson, 1994; Simpson 2009). In line with an emphasis on process, this relational view is inherently dynamic :'What is distinct about the transactional approach is that it sees relations between terms or units as pre-eminently dynamic in nature, as unfolding,

ongoing processes rather than static ties among inert substances' (Emirbayer, 1997:289).

Recursiveness of processes and relations is of a particular concern of pragmatists. They argue that stimulus and response coevolve and that preferences are not given, but shape, and are shaped by, action. Individuals are seen capable of reflecting on their own actions and revising their habits; they can enact the environment to which they later adapt, for example in Commons (1934) and Weick (1979). The notion of recursiveness emphasise that the cyclical and 'looping' processes are ongoing, iterative, and cumulative (Farjoun *et al*, 2015).

Another feature of pragmatist's ontology is termed as 'antidualism'. The principle of antidualism attempts to reconcile competing claims and to join together what seems separate: self and social, practice and theory, action and cognition, object and subject, means and ends, logic and inquiry, intent and chance, mind and matter. Pragmatists see categories, for instance – self and social, as both contradictory and complementary, recursively linked and mutually constitutive of one another. A number of scholars (Tsoukas & Dooley, 2011; Whitford, 2002) warn about the dangers of dualism and see it as particularly harmful when phenomena are reduced to arrays of abstract properties, thus missing their holistic and processual aspects. Antidualism, by contrast, appreciates the continuity and interdependence of the phenomena and sees opposing categories as recursively related to one another.

Pragmatists treat reality as circumstances which people have to come to terms with in order to cope with the world (Watson, 2011:26). Thus

research in this tradition attempts to create knowledge about 'how the social world works' in different social spheres. The phenomena under study are experienced as if they were 'things out there'. The value of knowledge about the reality is merited against what are things out there that allows individuals, groups and organisations to make sense and to cope with reality and to successfully engage in practices and projects which they engage in. The lines of enquiry are around 'what works?, 'how does it work?' and 'why it works?' is often a feature of the studies in the pragmatic tradition. The conceptual apparatus is often designed to surface patterns of human relations, processes and understanding by which the research phenomena shape and are shaped.

In recent years, there has been a notable interest in the pragmatist philosophy from the scholars working in the fields of organisation studies, cognitive science, economics, strategic management, public administration, political science and sociology (Ansell, 2011; Cohen, 2007; Elkjaer & Simpson, 2011; Evans, 2010; Hodgson & Knudsen, 2010; Winter, 2013). The organisation scholars have drawn on pragmatism to study a wide range of phenomena such as routines (Dionysiou & Tsoukas, 2013), innovation and creativity (Adler & Obstfeld, 2007; Nooteboom 2012; Stark 2009), institutional change (Berk and Galvan, 2009), ethics (Wicks & Freeman, 1998), virtual work (Bailey *et al*, 2012), knowledge (Carlile, 2002), learning (Elkjaer, 2004) and organisational boundaries (Whitford & Zirpoli, 2014).

Pragmatism as ontological and epistemological grounding opens a number of opportunities in relation to the study. First, relational dynamics between

academic and non-academic occupational groupings are seen as an important exploratory task to understand position of these occupational groupings in higher education. Second, the conceptual framework outlined in chapter three of the thesis calls for the multi-level analysis in line with pragmatist epistemology. Pragmatism influenced methodology stresses the recursive nature of the relationships across a number of levels of analysis, characterised by 'looping' and cyclicity, and emphasises that macro and micro levels of analysis are interrelated. And third, the concept of identity, which plays a significant part in the conceptual apparatus, is seen as significant in the study of the relational dynamics among the higher education occupations. It is seen as directional (Mitchell *et al*, 1986), and as, both, enabling and constraining the problem solving. The occupational aspect of self-identities of academics, manager-academics and non-academics is seen as a relational phenomenon, which allows actors to accomplish their projects and to engage in strategy-making practices associated with the student experience initiative.

4.2. Ethnography in management research

The ethnographic tradition in organisation and management studies can be traced back to anthropological origins of ethnography as a method and practice of data gathering. Anthropologists argue that if one is to understand a group of people, one must engage in an extended period of observation. Anthropological field work, associated with such 'immersion' in a culture over a period of years, would involve learning the language and participating in the social events with the people (Silverman, 2010). The very act of data recording during the fieldwork, when doing

anthropological research, is defined as ethnography (Geertz, 1973). The data recording practice is theory–laden as it enables to inform the way in which the anthropological knowledge is eventually produced. Geertz (1973) makes a point of discussing the intellectual activity involved in ethnography, which he describes as 'thick description'. Such description of the observed material involves construction of a 'text' which involves the coherently constructed interpretation. Crucially, he states, such construction is not there at the beginning, and one that could be easily picked up and observed in the field; instead it requires the invention and building of a framework through which interpretation is possible (Geertz, 1973). Building a conceptual framework, as a product of immersion in the field, is a characteristic feature of ethnography influenced research in management. It differs from grounded theory (Charmatz & Mitchell, 2001; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) as it supports the notion of the initial theoretical and methodological grounding of the field research.

The ethnographic orientation in management research involves the construction of ethnographic material collected in the field over a period of time. Traditionally, it is a single-site case study involving the practice whereby 'the researcher engages with the people being studied, shares their life as far as possible and converses with them on their own terms' (Gellner & Hirsch, 2001:1). Such an approach to the field research provides a powerful methodological grounding for studying various organisational practices. Recently, ethnography seems to be less confined to the single-site studies and as Marcus (1998) notes 'multi-site ethnography is on the rise'. Ethnographic studies are argued to become a mainstream of the organisational and management studies (Watson, 2011), as they hold

important methodological tools towards 'understanding the real world in which we all have to live in' (Watson, 2011:216).

Expanding further on doing ethnographic work, Van Maanen (2011) reflects on the 'rules of engagement'. Importantly, he elaborated on the native's point of view and the dangers of 'going native' whilst being closely involved in the field work. The earlier point involves considerations whether as ethnographers; we will ever know the true perceptions or emotions of those we study – 'we have no privileged access or a magic key of knowing' (2011:227). However, accepting these limitations within the close field work and reflecting on them – gives ethnographers an opportunity 'to understand and to grasp another's perspective in and on the world(s) she/he inhabits – the so called native's point of view' (Van Maanen, 2011: 227). Both Watson (2011) and Van Maanen (2011), warn that day-to-day involvement in the field work over a long period of time, often over a number of years, could result in a danger of 'becoming native'. It is where the criticality of the research could be compromised as no longer tendencies, processes, practices are questioned as they become 'native' to the researcher too. It is important to maintain such critically as the way of understanding the 'real'. Criticality and reflexivity are the core issues in the organisation and management research, specifically, where research design involves participations and observations of a research phenomenon over a period of time, and a close engagement with the culture which nurtures the phenomenon in question.

In this study, a single-organisation ethnographic case study of a new, post-92, university operating in the Midlands is being carried out to address the

research question. The rationale for the research strategy is consistent with Yin's (2003) argument regarding the benefits of a single case study use to research a representative or a typical case and to study phenomenon over a period of time. This case study explores occupational dimensions of strategy-making practices associated with the student experience sector-wide initiative. The research outcomes are representative of the 'new' universities endeavours to respond to the student experience sector-wide initiative and to improve their position in the sector. As the study involves collecting and analysing materials that provide insights into the occupational aspect of self-identity of the university occupational groupings, the specifics of studying the 'identity work' are necessary to be outlined to inform the research strategy and the methods.

4.3. Identity Work

How a person constructs his/her identity, invokes categories, experiments with selves or narrates tales of self is regarded a major line of research when exploring the self-identity of an individual (Giddens, 1991; Layder, 2004; Pratt *et al*., 2006). Identity work is defined by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) as the process of 'forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherences and distinctiveness' (2003:165). In this study of higher education occupations, the angle of the enquiry lies with how the research participants, representatives of the three distinctive occupational groupings, i.e. academics, manager-academics and non-academics, engage in identity work when asked to self-define and elaborate on relations with other occupations in higher education. They are also asked to consider the role of a university in society, current trends in higher

education and to express their views on student experience initiative at the sector and the institutional levels.

The transcribed interviews provide significant textual materials of the accounts as to how the research participants frame the occupational aspect whilst engaging in personal identity work. In addition to the semi-structured interviews material, a wide range of other textual materials is used, including filed notes, minutes if the university meetings at various levels: department, school, college, university, various organisational and sector documents. Such an approach is in line with the Alvesson *et al* (2008) warning about the dangers of the over-emphases on the individual in identity construction. Such over-reliance leads to the excessive agency and resorts to 'naive humanism and voluntarism' (Alvesson *et al*, 2008:18). Utilising the Alvesson *et al* (2008) categorisation of extra-individual forces in self and social identity construction, the identity work, as part of this study, is explored through:

- Other significant actors (inside and outside university): groups of individuals, which significantly influence the construction of the occupational aspect of self-identity, for instance 'professional' bodies and sector regulators.
- Organisational discourses: narrative formations at the organisational level, for instance: corporate (strategic) business plans, annual reports with formal address from the strategic actors, university's Human Resources documents with regards to role specifications held by the strategic actors;

- Societal/cultural discourses or cultural patterns: These include the cultural and social practices of strategy-making in the university. This category of extra-individual factors allows for process-relational perspective (Watson, 2003) to understand the 'self-shaping' exchanges between strategists 'with identity, biography, values, emotions' and an organisation 'with history, cultural characteristics and institutional logics' (2003:1314).

These ideas aid a fuller understanding of the personal identity construction of a strategic actor. The relational nature of self and social identity is studied, where the occupational aspect of self-identity of a strategic actor, a representative of one of the three occupational groupings studied, shape the strategic action and strategic outcomes for the university. Conceptually, such a relationship is represented by the framework of a link between the identity of a strategic actor, the strategy-making practices and the strategic outcomes (Figure 3.1, Chapter Three).

A number of scholars in identity studies warn about the limitations of the overreliance on textual analysis in studying identities. Alvesson *et al* (2008) argue that such a 'textual' dependence limits our understanding of the identity construction to one, which assumes that individuals 'house' identity and that 'researchers can access the sense-making of individuals through interview accounts' (Alvesson *et al,* 2008:20). Here, the danger is not only in overreliance on materials collected prone to the impression management, political action, script-following (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003) and dominant logic (Prahalad & Bettis, 1986), but also in disregard for the role of social practices in the identity construction. To avoid this, I

draw on work of Karreman and Alvesson (2001), which highlights the importance of the organisational settings in identity construction. 'Since identity is an accomplishment, the way it is accomplished is in itself an important question. .... Rather, it is the ways and means deployed by people in constructing their identities that becomes important ..... such processes of identity work are not only more important, but are also more accessible for study that narratives that are fixed texts or frozen states of subjectivity....' (2001:65). Thus, the semi-structured interviews are balanced with a range of (participative) observations to provide in-depth, action-based, insights into the practices of university strategy-making. Scholars are actively advocating similar approaches in identity studies, where the researcher is encouraged to 'get close to the action' and to study not only what people say, but also what they do (Barley & Kunda, 2001; Watson, 2003).

4.4. Research Design and Methods

I took a qualitative, case-based approach (Eisenhardt, 1989; Pettigrew, 1990) to the enquiry into the university strategy-making practices based on the access granted at a post-92 university operating in the Midlands. As earlier outlined in the section 4.3 of the thesis, the University of Middleworth predominantly serves the regional market and has a relatively small proportion of the EU and international students. There were around 29,000 students recoded on all university programmes in 2015-16 academic year. The university has historically strong Further Education provision and has significant links with a number of regional colleges.

The research design is a single, in-depth, ethnography influenced, case study. The rationale for a single-case study research design is in line with Yin's (2003:41) single case rationale for representation. This is an embedded, as opposed to holistic, case study (Yin, 2003) and it aims to capture the circumstances and conditions of university strategy-making practices. It enables to reveal the occupational dimension of strategy-making in the university through the study of the relational dynamics amongst the university occupational groupings around strategy-making practices associated with the student experience initiative. Whilst a single case study has a number of vulnerabilities in terms of access to data, level of analysis and representation (Saunders et al, 2007; Silverman, 2010; Yin, 2003, 2013), the topical contexts, as in the case of student experience initiatives at the sector and institutional levels, give the findings a broader relevance (Balogun & Johnson, 2004).

As case study research is concerned with the complexity and particular nature of the case in question (Stake, 1995), it is deemed appropriate for this study due to the ambition to explore the occupational dimension of strategy making practices in a particular organisational setting. According to Miles and Haberman (1994), a case is a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context. The context of the study, including the sector development and the current trends in higher education, sector-wide emphasis on student experience initiatives and the case organisation, is considered in a greater depth in the section 5.4 of the thesis. A case of strategy-making at the University of Middleworth is examined to give insights into the relational dynamics of the university occupations linked to student experience initiatives and to develop a conceptual view of the role

of occupational dimension in strategy-making. As such, it could be categorised as instrumental case study (Stake, 1994), which leads to greater insights about the phenomenon within its real-life context and to theory building.

The value of a case study, as a method of studying social phenomenon, has been recently emphasised by Cornellinsen (2017) in his appeal to preserve theoretical divergence in management research. He elaborates about the role of a variety of methods of theorising, amongst which the pattern building for theory development is emphasised. Case study research is particularly helpful in this as it combines the quest for analytical explanation of patterns with appreciation for contextual richness and detailed accounts of a phenomenon under study. This facilitates theory building, where 'rich narratives that enable the representation of nuance and ambiguity' feed into 'more structured analytical approaches that favour the articulation and replication of more abstract theoretical ideas' (Langley *et al*., 2013). In the present study, this approach results in the theoretical developments of the concept of occupational connectivity in Chapter Seven and the subsequent conceptual development of the four occupation strategies (Figure 10.1).

The level of analysis is at a level of groups i.e. occupational groupings working at the university, namely academics, manger-academics and non-academics. The focus of data collection is within and across the groups. The choice of data collection methods and approaches to data analysis is influenced by ethnographic orientation, which has resulted in the collection

of 'social data' and data organisation with an aim to preserve 'the unitary character of the social object being studied' (Goode and Hatt, 1952:331).

The access was granted at the University Executive level with permission from the university Pro-Vice Chancellor to join the university-level Student Experience Strategy Committee (SESC) for participant observations. A number of the university staff, representatives of the university occupational groupings, has been approached on an individual basis to seek their agreement to take part in the semi-structured interviews as part of this study. The researcher, as part of her role at the university, is also involved in the strategy-making practices at the programme, subject, school and college levels.

The research commenced during 2011-12 academic year and participant observations started in September 2011. The first phase of interviews took place during May-August 2012. According to Johnson et al (2010), the research process over long period of time is seen to be of value to study (strategy) practitioners and their praxis of strategy making. Moreover, they observe, there is a need to question the linearity of the research process for this type of study as 'because of its relationship-centricity, this type of work follows diffuse lines of causality in the collection and analysis of data, is erratic as opposed to consistent in terms of activity and almost certainly moves forward and backwards in time' (2010:255). This study has adopted a similar approach in terms of the collection and analysis of the study materials, and development of the study. The research process has undergone the stages presented in Figure 4.1

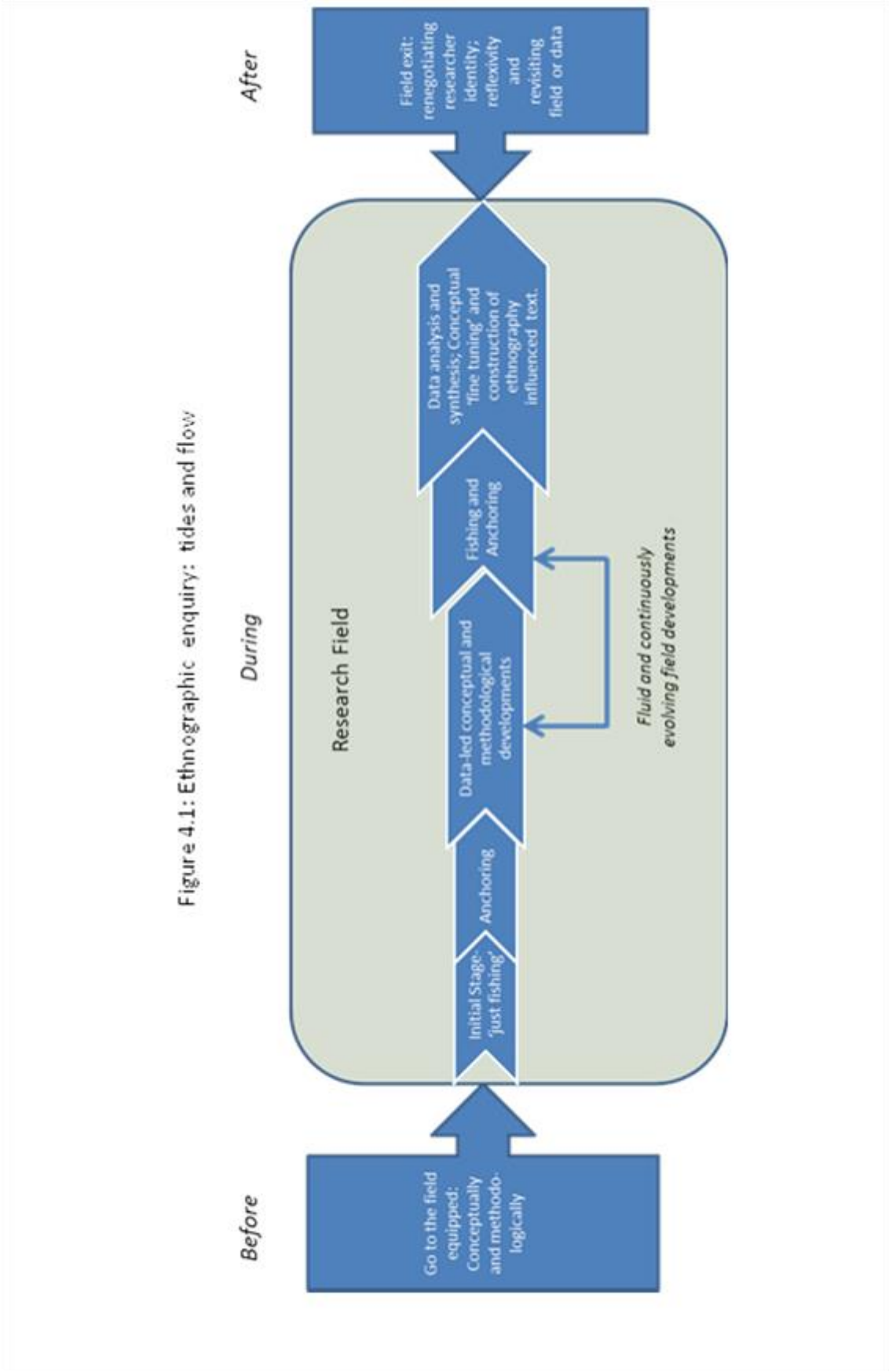


Figure 4.1: Ethnographic enquiry: tides and flow

Before: Prior to commencing the primary research, the conceptual framework of the study (Figure 3.1) was developed outlining the conceptual apparatus to be utilised. The conceptual framework has emerged as a result of a multi-disciplinary approach towards investigation into the role of occupations in the university strategy-making practices. Synthesising the literature on occupations, identity and the strategy-as-practice literature, the lines of the enquiry have emerged at individual, group and organisational levels. Alongside the literature synthesis, the researcher was building on her insights into the strategy-making practices at the university as well as her experience of the day-to-day university working.

During: The initial stage of the field work involved testing some of the conceptual assumptions and connections among the conceptual categories. The 'just fishing' stage involved a lot of unstructured observations of the university day-to-day life and accounts of 'corridor' talks to develop a broad understanding about the context of the study and the main issues associated with the university strategy, student experience initiative and occupations. At this stage, which took place during May-August 2012, a set of ten exploratory interviews was carried out with four members of non-academic staff, three manager-academics and three academic members of staff from various departments across the university. Some of them were members of the university level Student Experience Strategy Group associated with the cross-university initiatives focused on the student experience. The interviews lasted on average for one and a half hours; they were digitally recorded and subsequently transcribed. The data was analysed and used to inform further stages of the research process.

The ‘anchoring’ stage involved assigning the raw field materials to the conceptual apparatus of the study. This stage was rather fluid with ‘to-and-fro’ dynamics between these two stages. The developments in these two stages have subsequently informed the further refinement of the conceptual apparatus as well as the methodological developments in terms of the research design and the selections of the research methods.

As the study progressed further, the ‘fishing and anchoring’ stage involved the deployment of the semi-structured interview schedule, participant observations as well as fluid and continuous working with the conceptual and methodological apparatus of the study. This alliterative work was necessary to allow for the latest sector and the case organisation developments to be reflected in the study. Since the first set of data was collected in 2011, the higher education sector has undergone a number of significant regulatory and funding changes, including the introduction of the £9,000 fee level, changes in the student loan system, introduction of the Key Information Set (KIS) data requirements and the latest introduction of Teaching Excellence Framework in spring 2016 (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2016). The study design allowed accommodating for the diverse developments taking place in the sector over the course of the study. The final stage of the research process included data analysis and synthesis, conceptual adjustments and the development of the ethnographic text as part of the data analysis and the subsequent discussions about the findings and the contribution of the study.

After: The traditional view of the after stage, which involves closure, cutting off relationships with respondents and manoeuvring oneself out of the environment one tried so hard to become part of (Snow, 1980) is contested by the study. The researcher worked in the university throughout the duration of this study. She is engaged with the issues around the student experience and strategy-making as part of her role at the university. During the study the researcher's role has also expanded from a senior lecturer to a senior lecturer with programme leadership responsibilities. Although there has not been a physical exit from the research field, there has been a change in the researcher's role and identity as part of the doctoral training and as part of the continuous interplay between the role of a researcher and the role of a practitioner. As part of the doctoral training, stronger emphases on research and work towards scholarly publications have become a significant part of the researcher's academic role.

Reflexivity is seen as critical to ensuring the quality of qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981). It involves a willingness to probe beyond the level of straightforward interpretation (Woolgar, 1988) and to explore how these biases and characteristics affect the research process. Throughout the study I was mindful that I have a strong allegiance to the academic occupation. Due to my experience of working in higher education in various roles, as a lecturer, programme leader, mentor, and consultant, I have a particular bias about the position of academics in higher education and the relationships with other occupational groupings. Such a reflexive awareness was acknowledged throughout this study, which is best

described as 'ongoing conversations with oneself about an experience while simultaneously living in the moment' (Bryman & Bell, 2007 p. 712).

Although reflexive awareness was consistently applied throughout the study, I needed to be particularly attuned to such an approach in the 'after' stage of the research process (Figure 4.1). As Miller (1997) notes that only with the passage of time does one become aware of the frames of reference that shape the research. The 'temporal distance' is seen to be important in understanding the self and is seen to be an important aspect of the reflexivity in ethnography influenced research (Burawoy, 2003; Goode, 2003). Attempts to revisit the field or data have been made to re-affirm the findings and contribution of the study. The researcher attends the SESC meeting as an Associate Member after the period of participant observations ended in August 2016.

The credibility of the research is ensured through the adherence to a number of principles. First, by providing the accounts that the researcher arrives at, and second, by ensuring that the research has been carried out using good practice (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). The former was designed in the research process and the application of the research methods, data analysis and the development of the study findings and the contribution. The latter is assured through the adherence to the ethical principles which are outlined in section 4.5 of this chapter.

4.4.1. Participant observations

Observation is seen as a valuable research method in social science due to its versatility to spot emerging patterns of human action. It has been characterised as 'the fundamental base of all research methods' (Adler &

Adler, 1994:389) and as 'the mainstay of the ethnographic enterprise' (Werner & Schoepfle, 1987:257). Participant observation is seen as 'data collection over a sustained period of time by means of watching, listening to and asking questions of, people as they follow their day-to-day activities, whilst a researcher adopts a role from their setting and partially becomes a member of the group in question, as in doing ethnography' (Payne & Payne, 2005:166). This form of observation differs from a structured observation, for instance in the study of management by Mintzberg (1973) with pre-determined behavioural categories to observe, report and reflect on, and from non-participative observations, in which the researcher's role is to record what is seen or heard without taking part in any activities (Polgar & Thomas, 1991).

Working as an academic in the University of Middleworth, the researcher requested access to observe the formal committee meetings of the university-level committee: the Student Experience Strategy Committee (SESC). As per SESC Terms of Reference, the committee is tasked with 'overseeing the student experience agenda at the university level with specific responsibilities for the delivery of the guarantees set out in the University Student Charter in the following five key areas: Pastoral and Welfare Support, Learning Support, Careers and Employability support, Student Achievement, Student Satisfaction (including the NSS/PTES strategies)' (SESC, 2012). The access was sought and granted on a number of occasions as there have been four changes of the committee chair during the period of observations 2011-2016. The researcher had to declare frequently (on average at a half of the committee meetings in an academic year) her position at the university and her role as an observer

at the committee meetings. Her participation in the committee work was restricted, but on occasions she was encouraged to present her views as an academic member of staff on issues debated by the committee members.

Over the course of the study, SESC has undergone a numbers of developments presented in Table 4.1. The SESC's predecessor – the Student Experience Strategy Group (SESG) which was originally tasked with the oversight of the Student Experience Strategy 2009-2012 - has become a formal university committee (SESC) in 2012. It is one of the sub-committees in the university so-called 'deliverable structure' reporting to the University Quality Enhancement Committee. It is chaired by a member of the university executive team and it is a subject to formal reporting and accountability mechanisms. The committee has regular meetings scheduled once every two months on average with an agenda set by the committee members with an executive oversight. The committee has 23 members representing a range of central administrative departments (Estates, Finance, International Student Centre, Students wellbeing, Admissions, Student Support and information Services (SSIS), others) and academic representation at the college, school, programme and module

levels. The attendance level at the committee meetings was recorded at 60 per cent throughout the observation period.

Table 4.1: SESG/SESC developments 2011/12 to 2015/16: an overview

Academic Year (AY)	Title	Chaired by	Number of committee members	Attendance per AY (mode)	Academics/Manager-Academics/Non-academics	Number of meetings per AY
2011-12	SESG	Pro-VC (two changes of the chair)	24	14	4-8-12	8
2012-13	SESC	Dean of a Faculty (change of the chair)	20	13	4-6-10	6
2013-14	SESC	Dean of a Faculty	20	10	3-8-9	6
2014-15	SESC	Dean of a College (change of the chair)	21	14	3-10-8	6
2015-2016	SESC	Dean of a College	23	14	3-9-11	7

Despite the continuous emphasis in the discourse of the committee work to encourage more representation from the academic colleagues in the committee membership, the academics represent a minority of SESC members (up to 16 per cent on average throughout the five years of observations). The largest representation is from the non-academic departments at 46 per cent and from the manager-academics occupational grouping at 40 per cent on average during the period of 2011-12 to 2015-16 academic years.

A relatively structured approach to participant observations was exercised throughout this study. The researcher was looking for the patterns of the relational dynamics amongst the committee members, representatives of university occupational groupings, and the role these dynamics play in university strategy-making practices. The patterns were recorded and then

theorised using the conceptual apparatus developed for the study. Broadly, the researcher had followed a number of stages pre, during and post observation:

Pre-observation: refreshment of the conceptual apparatus, the research question and the methodological approach to the study; familiarisation with the documents sent by the committee secretary prior to the meeting (these would usually include minutes of the previous meeting, agenda for the forthcoming SESC meeting, documents towards the agenda items; a brief overview of notes taken at the previous meetings.

During: Before the start of the meeting – record the number attending, changes in the committee composition, changes in the room layout any out of order events (e.g. presence of the external parties, non-committee members). As the meeting progresses, flag the events mentally and at the earliest opportunity make a temporary 'field note'. Make a reference to the speaker, content, context, agenda item and the document(s) circulated or referred to. Often, select verbatim quotes would be recorded at the meeting to develop the rich textual materials to illustrate the events observed. At this early stage, there might be an instant recognition of the conceptual category in association with the events observed. In such a case, the researcher would have made a note of such association and later reflected on the appropriateness of such association.

Post-observation: As soon as possible after the observation, usually at the end of the day, the researcher would develop a fuller research note. Based on the materials circulated prior to the meeting and the materials collected at the meeting, including filed notes and verbatim quotes, a full

observation record was developed and typed. A total of 28 observation records have been developed as part of this study. Each observation record contains researcher's reflection on the events observed, half ideas, possible leads, dilemmas, puzzling and unclear positions. On occasions, events observed prompted a range of emotional responses from the researcher – ranging from delight, enthusiasm and positivity to frustration and negativity. These reactions were recorded as part of the research experience, not only did it help to keep the experience alive, but also such a practice contributed towards the reflexivity in the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Woolgar, 1988).

The observation materials, including the field notes and the full observation records are organised and are filed systematically as they have accumulated. The participant names are changed on the records. All the materials are stored securely and all the digital materials are password protected.

4.4.2. Semi-structured interviews

An intensive interview schedule was used to explore the research respondents' positions on their occupation, relationships with other occupations and the university strategy-making. The first phase of 10 semi-structured interviews was carried out during May-August 2012. As earlier discussed in this chapter with reference to the 'anchoring' stage of the research process, the first set of interviews provided the data to fine-tune the conceptual apparatus and the design of the research methods used in the study.

The second phase of the interviews was carried out over a five month period (April-September 2014) during which a total of twenty one interviews took place in the case organisation. Prior to the interviews, I sought the agreement from each of the research participants to take part in the study providing the brief outline of the project and the broad areas of questioning. This was part of the overall research approach, which is one of openness and honesty to facilitate a mutually beneficial exchange between researcher and participant (Bryman & Bell, 2007). The participants were informed that they can withdraw from the study at any point. None of the respondents have asked to withdraw from the study to date.

All of the interviews were digitally recorded and further fully transcribed using professional academic transcription service prior to analysis, again to ensure reliable accounts (Sacks, 1984). The transcripts were reviewed against the original interview recordings to account for accuracy and reliability (Punch, 2005:174-175). The interviews typically lasted over one hour, averaging at 1 hour and 32 minutes across all the interviews carried out as part of the study. After the interviews the respondents were asked to feedback on their experience of being interviewed for the study. The majority of respondents have positively commented about the value of taking part in the interviewing process, specifically in relation to the currency of the student experience agenda to the university and their role. The research participants were also given the opportunity to add to the interview materials post interview. None of the research participants have taken this opportunity, whilst the researcher, on occasions, has contacted some of the respondents post interview via e-mail exchanges in order to

clarify or to collect additional information, for example documents the respondent referred to during the interview.

A brief description of the interviews carried out, including the number of interview participants and their position within the university, is presented in Table 4.2. The individuals selected to take part in the interviews occupy various positions in the university. They represent three occupational groupings under study and either work in academic departments (colleges, formally faculties, and schools) or in the so-called 'professional', non-academic departments at the university central or college/school levels. The study aimed to access a wide variety of representation across the occupational groupings to reflect the diversity of the university occupations.

The interview schedule was designed to encourage open-ended responses and to allow the researcher to actively and freely probe the interviewee's answers for elaboration during the course of the interview (Payne & Payne, 2004; Robson, 2002; Saunders *et al*, 2007). The interview guide is presented in Appendix A. There are three main sections in the interview schedule: role and occupation; students and student experience; strategy, strategy-making and students experience. In the phase two of the interviewing, there has been a change in the sequence of questioning used in phase one.

The interview sequence in phase one started with the questions about strategy and strategy-making practices, then onto exploring occupational aspect of respondent's self-identity and further onto the student experience agenda and the university practices associated with it.

Table 4.2: List of interviews: representation across three occupational groupings

Interview Phase	Academic Occupation		Manager-Academic		Non-Academic		Total
	No.	Representative Positions	No.	Representative Positions	No.	Representative Positions	
Phase One May-April 2012	3	Lecturer/Senior Lecturer, Programme Leader, Subject Lead	3	Managers and staff of the various central service functions (student facing and 'back office').	4	Senior Members of the university Corporate Management Team working at the university and faculty levels	10
Phase Two April-September 2014	8	Lecturer/Senior Lecturer, Programme Leader, Subject Lead	4	Managers and staff of the various central and faculty/college service functions (student facing and 'back office').	9	Executive and Senior Members of the university Corporate Management Team working at the university, faculty/college and school levels	21
Total	11		7		13		31

From the first round of interviews it was noticeable that the majority of the research respondents did not connect with the notion of strategy and university strategy-making at the beginning of the interview. It is only after elaboration on their own role (changes over time, relationships with others, occupational emphases, etc.) the interviewees were gaining a pace and confidence to talk about the 'less straightforward issues'.

The areas of questioning in phase two were designed to support the enquiry into four main areas outlined in the conceptual framework in Figure 3.1, namely:

Area A: an enquiry into the relationship between self- and social-identity in the context of occupational aspect of personal identity work. The interview questions are designed for an interviewee to construct the

narratives about his/her university role and to reflect on who they are and what they do.

Area B: an enquiry into the relational dynamics among the university occupational groupings in the context of the current changes in higher education and the student experience initiative. The interview questions are designed to uncover the organisational and group level dynamics to explore the relational insights.

Area C: enquiry into the strategy-making practices taking place, or a lack of them. The enquiry at an organisational and a group level is deemed to be appropriate at this level. The interview questions are designed to uncover respondent's opinions about the university strategy-making practices, their scope, activities and the relational dynamics amongst the members of occupational groupings taking part in these practices.

Area D: enquiry into the links between the university strategy-making practices associated with the student experience initiative and the strategic outcomes (either intended on unintended). Additionally, the questions were probing the causality of the above three areas for the university strategic outcomes.

After each interview, the researcher developed a-reflection-on-an-interview note, which included the emerging ideas, observations and personal reflection on the performance of both the interviewee and the interviewer during the interview. Such a practice not only informed the analysis of the interview materials and the theory development, it supported good research practice and reflexivity (Fontana & Frey, 2008; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The above interviewing process has generated over

700 pages of transcribed interview materials and over 50 pages of interview notes.

In addition to the participant observations and semi-structured interviews, other, less structured, methods were used in the research. Due to the researcher's role in the university, unstructured observations of the university day-to-day life and informal practices associated with the student experience initiatives at various levels (module, programme, subject, school, college and university wide) was carried out and recorded as field notes.

As part of a wider research in the field, a variety of materials have been collected and worked with to assist the development of themes and the research outcomes. Such materials included:

- University strategic planning documents, including: University strategies, OFFA agreements and review documents.
- Corporate communication materials to support dissemination of the strategic documents, implementation initiatives and emergent strategic developments.
- Strategic business plans at the faculty and school levels including the 'away-days' materials.
- SESG and SESC documents and dissemination materials.

These materials are viewed as part of the 'centre talk' (Boden, 1994) and as illustrations of a centre VS periphery strategy-making (Regner, 2003). They contribute to a broader understanding of the university's response to the sector-wide emphasis on the 'quality of student experience' in higher education in the context of the increasing marketisation in the sector (Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013). The use of these materials alongside the data analyses from the participant observations

and the interviews contributes to understanding of the institutional logics prevalent in the context of the university.

4.4.3. The Analytical Process

The data collected during the course of this study as a result of the use of various research methods outlined earlier was analysed using a thematic analysis (TA). As defined by Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. In my approach to data analysis I have followed the stages of TA such as: data review, data coding, themes development and finally refinement of the key themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). The development of the themes was not a linear process of moving from stage to stage; instead it can be described as a recursive process with movements back and forth between the stages, allowing the themes to emerge from the work with the data and the conceptual framework of the study.

In interpreting the materials collected in the field, I treated both interviews and participant observations as social actions. As such I have viewed them as performance acts (May, 2001) through which the research participants engage with others and the world in a specific context they are a part of, often to problem solve. The observation accounts are treated not a comprehensive list of actual or potential areas of activities. The accounts and the conceptual apparatus of the study are not treated in isolation. Instead, it is through the researcher's analytical perspective and the analysis of the field materials the construction of the multi-layered accounts of the social world has emerged (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008:294).

Prior to the development of the themes across the interviews, I worked with each interview to 'listen to the 'voice within' (Chase, 2008:73). According to Chase (2008), such approach encourages a holistic perspective at the initial stages of the interview analysis, which illustrates how respondents construct themselves in one story (e.g., about being a strategist and/or an academic) and the construction of themselves in other stories (e.g., about being a members of the university executive team or a competent leader). Such a 'birds' eye view' level of analysis of the interview materials introduces a fresh angle to the study of occupations and the strategy making in universities.

The data analysis approach used in the study is summarised in Table 4.3. This representation of the approach to data analysis aims to clarify the process of qualitative data analysis which often attracts criticisms as being unclear (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). To ensure the transparency in the data analysis and the development of the study conclusions (Bryman & Bell, 2007), the researcher has followed the data analysis process with the data collected in the first and second phase of the data collection. The summative analytical tables are presented in the Appendixes B-D of the thesis illustrating the summary of the data analysis. The study findings are developed throughout the analytical Chapters Six to Nine and a conclusive Chapter Ten of the thesis, where the empirical and theoretical developments are presented.

Table 4.3: Stages of analytical process

Analytical Stages	Actions	Illustrative examples
Stage 1: grouping of the interview materials	The interview materials are allocated into three groups according to the occupational groupings studied: academics, manager-academics and non-academics.	For each group I have created a separate Excel file where the interview data was allocated according to the themes developing through the analysis.
Stage 2: working with the sections of the interview transcripts	Each interview transcript is broken down per three main part of the interview schedule. Each part is analysed in-depth and recorded in a summative table per interview, per occupational grouping.	Three main interview schedule parts are: Role/occupation; Students and student experience; Strategy, strategy-making and student experience.
Stage 3: development of the first order themes	Each of the interview parts is analysed in depth and the first order themes are developed.	Examples of the first order themes: Role/Occupation; Students and student experience; Strategy, strategy-making and student experience.
Stage 4: synthesis of the data per occupational grouping	The data per themes per occupational grouping is synthesised and the overall 'picture' is developed per occupational grouping.	Example of the first order themes per occupational grouping: Role/Occupation theme (RO1): RO1.1:Definition of role; RO1.2:Definition of occupation; RO1.3: Working practices (what do I do?); RO1.4: Relationships with others (occupational groupings); RO1.5: Occupational culture/values.

Stage 5: comparison of the themes across the occupational grouping	The themes developed for each of the three occupational grouping studied are compared across three groups. The narrative is developed.	Comparative analysis across three occupational grouping across the first order themes.
Stage 6: second-order themes development per occupational grouping and across the groups	The second order themes are developed allowing for stronger representation of the conceptual apparatus used in the study.	Example of the second order themes per occupational grouping (Appendix B): Defining occupations in HE through: RO2.1 Defining occupation through various narratives (as job title; as management role; as leadership; as specialisation/area of work); RO2.2: Context Setting; RO2.3: Boundary setting.
Stage 7: use of the materials from other research methods deployed to develop second order themes	Drawing on the materials developed during participant observations, field notes and unstructured observations of the everyday university life to allow for strengthening of the existing themes and the development of the new themes.	Examples of the strengthening of the themes: RO2.1 – use of management speak to strengthen the occupational closure (Exhibit 1); RO2.3 – Boundary setting at observations in order to strengthen the occupational closure and to define the terms of relationships (Exhibit 3). New themes development: T3.1 University strategy-making; T3.2 Strategy making associated with student experience initiatives.
Stage 8: development of the ethnography-influenced text	Development of the 'rich' ethnography-influenced text in the analysis of the study materials and conceptual developments.	The example of the text is presented in chapters 6-9 of the thesis.

The critical ingredient of the coding strategy deployed was in the first instance to work with the materials *within* the occupational grouping and then *across* the occupational grouping. This encouraged depth in the

development of the themes, which emerged first *within* the group and then *across* the groups studied. Such an approach also uncovers the challenges and tensions in the relational dynamics amongst the occupational groupings studied. The coding approach is consistent with the Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) coding approach used in grounded theory: open coding, axial coding and then selective coding. The open coding approach was used in stage 3 of the data analysis approach outlined and involved the broad categorisation of the emergent themes occurring from the initial labelling of the research materials collected. I was mindful not to 'over-code' the research materials, so that the codes are in some way might have been divorced from the data and the original research question (Suddaby, 2006). The intention at this stage was to maintain the balance between 'reading' and interpreting the materials.

The coding approach similar to axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was used in the stage six, where a stronger draw on the conceptual apparatus and the materials collected through the various research methods is deployed. An iterative process of the working with materials *within* and *across* the groups in the development of the study outcomes and the contribution is observed throughout the data analysis approach used. As Tsoukas (2009) observes the product of 'moving up and down 'between' the experienced reality and the conceptual grasp' is the 'analytical refinement' (2009:299).

The final stage of the process involved the development of the ethnography-influenced text. This involves 'borrowing ethnographic techniques' (Wolcott, 1988) in the study rather than producing full-scale

ethnographies. Such an adaptation of the ethnographic approach is highly regarded in social research. As Fielding (1996) points out, the ethnographic approach is often path-breaking and 'as a mean of gaining a first insight into a culture or social process, as a source of hypotheses for detailed investigation using other methods, it is unparalleled' (1996:155).

4.5. Research Ethics

There are a number of key research ethics issues considered to ensure the integrity of the study. The broad areas of consideration include: what is to research, how the research is conducted and what is to happen to the results of the research (Remenyi & Williams, 1998; Saunders *et al*, 2007). This study is concerned with the exploration of the role of the occupational dimension in university strategy-making practices. The study of the occupational dimension considers the relational dynamics between the three occupational groupings identified for the research. These dynamics are explored in a context of a University of Middleworth, located in the Midlands, UK. The subject and the scope of this study did not raise any concerns at the Ethics Committee overseeing doctoral projects at the University of Nottingham Business School, which was confirmed by the study approval from the ethical standpoint.

The research process commenced with the attainment of the approval from the University of Middleworth for me to carry out the study. The university has part-funded this study with the rest of the funds committed by the researcher. The access to participant observation at the university-level committee has been agreed by the acting Pro-Vice Chancellor and renewed on a number of occasions throughout the duration of the study. The

researcher's role was disclosed to all the committee members at the committee meetings, it was reflected in the committee documentation and in the relevant e-mail correspondence with the committee members. I was mindful to ensure credibility of the study by following good practice in social research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

The interview respondents were selected using two main criteria: representation of the university occupational grouping studied and membership/non-membership of the SESC. I aimed to achieve a balance of representation across the occupational groupings as well as to ensure that I have interviewed the members and non-members SESC representing various university occupational groupings too. The interview participants were sent the debriefing information about the project, its scope and the research focus as well as the broad areas of questioning. I have provided a number of assurances (Sekaran, 1992) about the confidentiality of the interview process and the data obtained, opportunity to withdraw from the study and to add to the data collected during the interviewing process.

The majority of the interviews took place at the main campus of the university in the rooms booked for interviewing. On a few occasions, the interviews took place in the research respondent's offices. These instances were noted in the field notes and in the reflective notes after each of the interview carried out. After each interview the researcher collected a short feedback from the research participants about the interviewing process experienced and briefed them about the opportunity to feedback and to add to the interview materials. The interview participants were informed about the potential conference presentations and scholarly publications as

a result of the study and that their anonymity will be observed in such instances.

Throughout the various research methods deployed in the study, the research participants were aware that the researcher is employed at the University of Middleworth and that the study is sponsored by the relevant department within the university. The respondents were aware about the researcher's role and position at the university. None of the research materials were obtained under duress or in situations compromising the employment practices at the university and wider employment legislation.

The data protection principles were observed when receiving, analysing and reporting the research materials. The SESC participant observations data (minutes of the meeting, other committee documentation, field notes and fuller refection notes) are stored securely: in a digital form on a remote hard drive; in a hard copy in a lockable cabinet. The names of the committee participants were anonymised when analysing and reporting the data, study outcomes and its contribution.

The names of the interview participants were anonymised at the transcription stage and remained as such throughout all the stages of the data analysis process (Table 4.3). A similar approach was deployed when working with a wider data collected in the field including unstructured observations and accounts of the everyday life of the university. Where possible, all the individual respondents have been classified by functional role as follows: senior lecturer, programme leader, senior manager, member of the corporate management team, member of the executive team. Furthermore, the abstraction and the theory development provides

an additional layer between individual recognition and expression of the research outcomes.

4.6. Reflection and Limitations

One of the major challenges associated with ethnography influenced studies is about managing the volume of data collected in the field and ensuring that the various data is filed in a systematic manner. Over the duration of the study May 2012 - September 2016, a large volume of the materials have been collected as a result of the research methods being deployed and also as a result of being immersed in the everyday university life. Systematic filing of the data was a necessity to make sure the data is accurately stored and accessible for analysis. Field notes and personal reflection notes were critical to keep the materials 'fresh' noting the experiences, reactions and other significant facts (dress code, location, etc). Adherence to the structured data collection and data analysis processes, as illustrated in Table 4.3, was necessary to ensure the credibility of the collection and interpretation of the study materials (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).

The study lasted for over four years. One of the challenges associated with the research taking pace over a number of years is the necessity to be reflective about the changes in the research including the sectorial and institutional changes. Chapter Five of the thesis analyses a number of significant changes in the regulatory and funding frameworks in the higher education in England. These are viewed to be of significance to universities and their response to the student experience sector-wide initiative in the UK. Throughout the study I had to ensure that data collection and data

analysis and development of the study outcomes are reflective of the critical development taking place in the sector. In addition to that, there has been a major internal 're-configuration' initiative taking place at the university. Again, these developments needed to be 'accounted' for in the analysis of the study materials.

I have considered carefully Gold's (1958) concept of 'going native' as part of the role of the ethnographer. Being a full-time employee at the University of Middleworth, I had to assume a researcher role to balance my position. I found Gans's (1968) view on the multiplicity of participant observer roles to be relevant in the study. He argues that in any given ethnographic project, the researched may assume the following roles at different times and for different purposes: 'total participant', 'researcher-participant' and 'total researcher'. This view was helpful in reconciling different perspective on the role of the ethnographers (Delbridge, 1998; Freeman, 2000; Fletcher, 2002; Parker, 2000; Ram, 1994; Watson, 1994) and supporting the view that the researchers do not typically adopt a single role throughout their dealings (Bryman & Bell, 2007).

It is often suggested that the scope of the findings of qualitative research is restricted due to concerns of over-generalisation (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Especially in the case of an ethnography influenced single case study, the concerns over data representation could be raised (Punch, 2005). To address these concerns, it is necessary to note that this study is not meant to be treated as 'a sample of one drawn from a known population'. Similarly, the research participants are not meant to be representative of a population. They are treated as individuals with their occupational and

organisational allegiances that are studied through the identity work which is carried out either at interviews, participant observations and in other accounts of the university life. The findings of the research are not to generalise to population, instead they are to generalise to theory. The study methodology is to ensure 'the cogency of the theoretical reasoning' (Mitchell, 1983:207) in order to allow for the possibility of generalisation of the study outcomes and its contribution.

Whilst a number of strategy-as-practice researchers call for a greater closeness between a researcher and the strategy-making practices they study (Balogun et al, 2003; Johnson et al, 2010), I was mindful over the concerns of 'getting too close to the fire' (Wensley, 2011). Wensley warns over the risk of losing ones' identity 'as the researcher get too engaged with the practice … and in broad teams their critical facilities' (2011:371). He terms an 'Icarus paradox', similar to the Miller's original representation in terms of corporate failures (Miller, 1990). Throughout this study, it was essential to be immersed in the university practices to achieve effective engagement with practices and practitioners of university strategy-making and yet the distance was kept to avoid losing my identity as a doctoral student and as a researcher. Such an approach was partially helped by: having a structured research approach design (Figure 4.1) and a well-defined data analysis process (Table 4.3); exercising the perspective that encourages the interpretation of the meaning behind a range of context-specific incidents; and being focused on 'route to practice impact' when developing the study contributions (Wensley, 2011). The latter is an intermediate approach between what is termed the 'narrowcasting' approach, which is focused on the research site organisations themselves

and the 'broadcasting' approach through translation and the media. The 'route to practice' approach is concerned with understanding of the practice-participant relations, which are context specific and yet significant for the theory advancement in the studies of human action, work and organisation.

A number of limitations of the study are necessary to be outlined in relation to the methodological stance adopted. As previously highlighted, there is a need to acknowledge the context of the research and that it is representative of the post-92 new university operating in England (UK). The strength of the study is in an in-depth exploration of the social practices of the university strategising. These practices are viewed in the context of the fast changing landscape of higher education in England. The study did not consider the higher education context within the European Union. In its consideration for HE policy, the research therefore makes no claim to inhabit other HE jurisdictions without further research.

As highlighted earlier, it is a single-case study which is focused on one out of over 160 HEIs operating in the UK currently. A broader study involving various HEIs, including private providers, is likely to advance a further understanding of the diversity of university responses towards the sector-wide pressures to deliver on student experience initiatives.

During the course of the study it became apparent that the university is increasingly deploying collaborative and partnership working practices in the projects associated with the student experience. The majority of the research materials were collected at a number of university campuses and with university employees. Had this trend became apparent earlier, the

interview schedule could have been extended to the parties outside the university to a number of in-community based projects and other organisations including the local schools, employers and not-for-profit organisations.

The study primarily deals with the three occupational groupings identified as the main higher education occupations. It is recognised that a more fine-grained analysis could be deployed to explore the diversity of the occupations currently employed in higher education, particularly grouped in a non-academic occupational grouping. Some of the occupations included in this grouping are representatives of well-established occupations with a strong sectoral presence outside the higher education, for instance counsellors, wellbeing specialists, nurses, accountants, lawyers, construction and estate management/maintenance occupations. The decision to group these occupations into one occupational grouping was based on the necessity to contain the research data to a manageable volume for the purpose of a focused approach to data collection, data analysis and the development of the study contribution. Thus, the findings of the study are bound to the three occupational groupings used in the study: academics, manager-academics and non-academics. It is acknowledged that a fuller representation of the university occupations requires a more extended study going forward.

Chapter 5: The UK higher education sector: historic overview, current trends and the case organisation

The context of the study is higher education sector in the UK. This chapter explores key developmental stages of the sector and its current trends. It considers organisational diversity within the sector and the student experience initiatives at a university and sector levels. The case organisation is introduced in this chapter providing the contextual grounding of the research.

5.1. Sector development and policy landscape

Universities have been developing over the last 800 years and yet the majority of the universities around the world are relatively young institutions formed after the Second World War. The major shift in the ideology of higher education from elite to mass education prompted acceleration of the formation of the universities in the UK and England in particular, where 78 per cent of 159 universities currently operating in England (HESA, 2016a) were formed after 1945. It is important to recognise that organisations, which have been referred to as universities, go back for millennia. Several traditions of the university could be traced back to the Greeks: Plato established an Academy devoted largely to the philosophical studies in search of the ultimate truth dating from the fourth century B.C. The Sophists had their schools too, studying rhetoric and other useful skills which would further them in life rather that in philosophical studies. The Pythagoreans among other things studied mathematics and astronomy (Kaplan *et al*, 2006).

Outside Europe, the law school in Beirut, which between early third and mid-sixth century, or the imperial university in Constantinople, founded in 425 and functioned intermittently until 1453, could be recognised in some respects as early forms of universities. Despite the Greek, Graeco-Roman, Byzantine and Arabic prerecession, there is a good measure of agreement (Cobban, 1975, 1988; Kerr, 1963; Perkin, 1997; Silver, 2007) that the history of modern Western university has its origins in the Middle Ages. As Perkin (1997) points out 'All advanced civilizations have needed higher education to train their ruling, priestly, military and other service elites, but only in medieval Europe did an institution recognisable as a university arise .... Only in Europe from the twelfth century onwards did an autonomous, permanent, corporate institution of higher learning emerge and survive, in various forms, down to the present day' (Perkin, 1997:3).

Rashdall (1936) comments that the university is 'a distinctly medieval institution' (Rashdal, 1936 cited in Kerr, 1963 p. 10) with its roots firmly established when the two European universities were formed – Paris and Bologna. In the course of the twelfth century they acquired the status of archetypes which generally determined the pattern of the university organisation in the Middle Ages (Cobban, 1988). University of Paris and University of Bologna were formed as a product of shift from monasteries to the cathedral school (Knowles, 1962:84-86). Similar trends could have been expected in England, however the Parisian tradition was not replicated, and no major cathedral city produced a university. Instead Universities of Oxford and Cambridge were established in towns 'which were innocent of cathedrals' (Cobban, 1988:19).

A number of historical sources (Caius, 1568, 1574; Fuller, 1634; Rous, 1745; Twyne, 1608; Wood, 1792) confirm that Oxford and Cambridge, like Bologna and Paris, were not specifically founded but came into being over a long period of time. Oxford was established as a fully-fledged university or stadium generale1 towards the close of the twelfth century, while Cambridge emerged as a university shortly after 1209. Throughout their history, from the foundation years to the early nineteenth century, Oxford and Cambridge, established themselves as critical institutions in English society (Cobban, 1988:412) and were positioned in the primary league of the European Universities. Their educational power over the British Isles has only been challenged by three Scottish Universities in the fifteenth century, headed by the University of St Andrews established in 1413, University of Glasgow in 1451 and King's college of Aberdeen in 1495. The latter became the University of Edinburgh in 1582 by the Royal Charter from James VI.

By the early nineteenth century, the exclusive status of Oxford and Cambridge in England had not been threatened until 1830s. The University of London was established in 1836 followed by the University of Durham in 1837. The fifth English university was established in 1888 by a combination of colleges in Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds as the Victoria University of Manchester. The formation of the Victoria University of Manchester started the wave of 'civic' universities formation in the major English cities in the

[1] Before the fifteenth century, the abstract term which most frequently and formally rendered the medieval concept of fully fledged university was *stadium generale. Stadium* refers to a school with organised facilities for advanced study, *generale* indicates the ability of school to attract students from beyond the local region (Cobban, 1988 p. 2)

nineteenth century. The period marked the growth in number and in diversity of the higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK.

In addition to the specifics of the historic context of the universities development in England, a range of higher education policies introduced since 1965 had a profound impact upon the transformation of the HE sector over the last half a century and were instrumental to the formation of the present policy and structure dimensions of the HE sector in England. According to Kogan *et al* (2006:30), the present landscape of the higher education in England has been largely shaped by the series of waves of reforms represented by the following periods:

1945-1963: A period of growth in demand and provision for higher education. However, the pattern that separate research-led universities, non-universities and teacher training institutions continued. The universities were largely self-regulating through their senates and the system of external examiners. The non-university sector itself, other than teacher-training, was 'somewhat undifferentiated and included technical and further education colleges offering courses of advanced study at the same time as they offered craft and technical training' (Kogan *et al*, 2006:30). The sector was largely funded by the Local Educational Authorities (LEAs).

1963-1975: This is considered to be a period of growth and consolidation. The Robbins Report (1963) legitimised the expansion of the higher education sector by formation of the thirty polytechnics from a non-university segment. The government's 'Plan for polytechnics and other colleges' (DES, 1966) approved the status of the polytechnics as

'alternative and complementary to the Universities and Colleges of Education'. Crucially, the NACTA (National Council for Technological Education (established in 1956), was replaced by the Council of National Academic Awards (CNAA), which received a Royal Charter in 1964, giving it the right to award degrees for students who achieved approved standards in newly formed polytechnics and colleges (Silver, 2007:63).

During this period the number of universities increased from 23 to 45 (Williams, 1977) including new universities formed from the mix of the elite colleges of advanced technology (i.e. Aston, Bath, Bradford, Brunel, City, Salford) or entirely new creations on green field sites (e.g. East Anglia, Kent, Sussex, Warwick and York). Despite the spending cuts in 1973, the UK higher education system continued to grow having increased by about 50 per cent on the number of old universities and polytechnics in 1972-73 (Ashwin, 2006:4).

This period further solidified the so-called binary divide between the universities, centrally funded through Universities Grants Committee (UGC) and the polytechnics funded through LEAs. The different types of institutions were intended to provide a different type of higher education, with the universities focused on a 'traditional' research-led education and the polytechnics being vocationally oriented (Ashwin, 2006:4).

1975-1981: This period is broadly defined as the 'post-quinquennium period' with the ending of the quinquennial system of grants distribution by the University Grants Committee (UGC) in 1973/4. This meant that universities would no longer rely on block grants from the government accompanied by UGC's advice on how grants should be spent to ensure the

sustainability of its five year plan. Instead of the quinquennial system, abandoned due to its inefficiencies and inflexibility to account for the significant impact of inflation on financial planning (Jones and Taylor, 1990), a rolling triennial system was introduced. Allocations were fixed for one year and provisional allocations were decided for the following two years.

From the 1980s, the distinctive ideologies of the sector growth versus sector efficiency were pursued alongside the drastic reductions in the unit of resource. The oil crisis in the first few years of 1970s has led to questioning of the assumption that higher education must be allowed to grow to respond to the increasing demand with constrained funding allocations. Such tensions led to the situation where despite a continuous increase in demand for higher education, the funding per student fell by 40 per cent between 1976 and 1995 (NCIHE, 1997, paragraph 3.95). The state-university relationships were also undergoing major developments, partially because of the strong ideological position taken by the Conservative government demanding high levels of accountability and cost efficiency in the sector. The central authorities increasingly strengthened their position through the requirements of institutional plans, quality assurance, research assessment and legalisation of the system.

1981-1997: A period of change in which the finance, government evaluation and the substantive content of higher education were subjected to the radical changes alongside the rapid expansion of the sector from the mid-80s. 1981 is considered to be the starting point of major reforms in the UK HE, when the UGC was left to handle a severe cut in funding and

chose to reduce a number of places in the universities by 20,000 students instead of reducing the unit of resource for each student (Kogan *et al*, 2006). This happened at the time of a peak demand from the school leavers (Becher & Kogan, 1992; Kogan & Kogan, 1983) which resulted in a reduction of teaching staff in universities.

A new system of allocating the block grant element of public funding was introduced in the period of 1991/92. It lead to the rise of a bidding system for funding amongst universities where institutions had to bid for support for teaching activities by offering to take on a specific number of students in each degree subject at a specific price per student (Johnes & Taylor, 1990:45). The price in each of the subject areas were required to be at or below the 'guide' price determined by the University Funding Council (UFC). The guide price reflected costs associated with teaching activities in specific subject areas. Please refer to the Table 5.1 for extracts of the guided prices set for the planning period 1991/92 to 1994/95.

Table 5.1: The guide price set by UFC for the planning period 1991/92 to 1994/95

Academic subject group	*Guide Price (£)*
Politics, law and other social studies	2,200
Business and administration studies	2,800
Architecture, building and planning	3,700
Engineering and technology	4,600
Clinical medicine	8,500

Source: UFC 1989a: Annex D

The second feature of 1991/92 funding system was the distribution of the research fund elements in block grants driven by the 1989 Research

Assessment Exercise (RAE). The RAE was aligned to the new funding principles formalised by UFC in 1989 where the research agenda was set to ensure that 'Research funding will be strongly competitive, based on the quality of the research output.' (UFC, 1989b). The 1989 RAE allowed for ranking of HEIs in England according to their research performance which affected funding with most of the research funds being allocated to the top categories and no research funding to the bottom category. In England it led to the widening of a gap between the research-intensive - largely pre-1992-universities and other HEIs.

In 1992, the polytechnics and some colleges of higher education became universities and were granted the degree awarding status. The idea of marketisation of higher education, where all institutions should compete for the same resource on the same market, had a major impact on the sector (Fulton, 1999). A logical conclusion was to elevate the polytechnics to the status of pre-1992 universities and integrate them under the same funding stream in newly formed Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The majority of post-1992 universities did poorly in the RAE and attracted very few funds, with the ratio between teaching and research grants from HEFCE differed between the universities from 267:1 (teaching: research) at one extreme to 0.72:1 at the other for the funds allocation in the academic year of 1999/2000 (Fulton, 1999:5-6).

1997-2010: The Labour Government started to exercise a greater degree of involvement in higher education policy after the turn of the century. Specifically in relation to the introduction of the student fees to compensate

for government's underwriting of the teaching costs. Greenaway and Haynes (2000) conclude:

> ....whilst the growth in student numbers has been accompanied by an increase in higher education expenditure in real terms, the level of public funding per student has fallen dramatically .... expenditure per student has decreased by nearly 50 per cent in real terms over the period from 1980 to present. [academic year 2000/2001] (Greenaway & Haynes, 2000 p.13).

The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (the Dearing Inquiry) recommended that students should meet part of the costs of their higher education which was followed by the imposition of a university flat-rate fee of £1,000 per annum for home-based students. Although the public spending has increased, there has been a further shift towards market mechanisms. Under the Higher Education Act (2004), universities were allowed to further impose variable 'top-up' fees with a fixed limit up to £3,000 for undergraduate degrees. Although the drivers towards higher education contribution to the economy and social mobility have been reinforced, the introduction of the tuition fees has signified further introduction of the market mechanisms to the system of higher education.

The government policy paper 'The Future of Higher Education' (DfES, 2003) proposed a sharper focus to increase research activity and to link research with business and economic development. One of the key strategic priorities outlined in the paper aimed at achieving a greater representation of students from lower social classes in higher education and achieving an increase in the overall participation rate of 18-30 year olds to 50 per cent. In 2008, HEFCE reported, the Higher Education Initial

Participation Rate for 2007-08 at 43 per cent (provisional), up from 42 per cent in 2006-07 (HEFCE, Annual Report 2008-09).

The Widening Participation Agenda (WPA), set up in the 2003 White Paper (DfES, 2003), prompted a major shift in the priorities and strategic goals of the universities in England. It was reflected in a number of governmental and university-based initiatives to ensure the fairness of access to HE for all students, additional efforts into raising the aspirations of students from lower social classes as well as raising the level of performance from lower social classes. The industry-wide drive to provide alternatives and more flexible routes into higher education resulted in further development of e-learning and work-based provision to support the core of university programmes portfolios. However, a number of critics (Gostling, 2004:137) expressed concerns about maintaining a further increase in the student retention and achievement rates as universities are increasingly recruiting from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds.

The divide between 'research' and 'teaching' universities in terms of HEFCE funds allocation increased further after the 2001 RAE exercise when the selectivity policies hardened. The White Paper of 2003 declared a focus on 'world class ' research by proposing withdrawal of HEFCE research funds from all but the units in the top two grades (DfES, 2003) Subsequently, in 2004-05 the quality-related research funding allocation from HEFCE (about 98 per cent of the total) was narrowed down to the top three grades. Kogan *et al* (2006) sees it as a driving force of exacerbating 'the division of academia in two ways: between the researchers in different types of

institutions and between the research and teaching' Kogan *et al* (2006:109).

From 2010 onwards a further adherence to the introduction of the market mechanism in the higher education sector was suggested by Lord Browne of Madingley in an independent review of higher education – 'Securing Sustainable Future for Higher Education' (Browne Report, 2010). The review proposed a further shift of the funding burden from government to students with a potential increase of university tuition fees up to £9,000. The report urged that competition and choice should be the main drivers of quality in the HE (2010:29).

In response to the Lord Browne report, David Whilletts, University and Science Minister for the Coalition government, announced that from 2012, institutions would be able to charge almost three times the average fee levels of £3,290 set in 2010. Universities would be able to charge tuition fees of up to £9,000 and higher-earning graduates would face interest rates on their loans of 3 per cent above inflation (Times Education Higher News, 3.11.10). Since the rise in tuition fees to £9,000 threshold in 2011-12, the sector has continued to grow at an average rate of two per cent per year (HESA, 2015a). There were 2.27 million students who studied across 160 UK HEIs in 2014-15. The sector reported income generation of £30.74 billion and an expenditure of £29.4 billion in 2013-14 (HESA, 2015a).

The recent introduction of the Green Paper 'Fulfilling Our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice' (DfBIS, 2015) is seen as an attempt to re-emphasise the societal role of universities as

institutions for learning, equal access to education and employment opportunities. According to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, the Green Paper aimed to 'boost teaching standards, support more people into university from disadvantaged backgrounds, and ensure better value for money and employment prospects for students' (DfBIS, 2015). Followed by a period of consultations on the Green Paper, the White Paper 'Success as a knowledge economy: teaching excellence, student mobility and student choice' was issued in May 2016. The paper sets out the introduction of the Office for Students to regulate all HEIs, the development and introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in England within next two years and encourages an easier sector entry for 'high-quality' (private) provides. Universities are required to be more transparent and publish operational and financial data as well as student data, including the data on 'applications, offers, progression, gender, ethnicity and disadvantage' (DfBIS, 2016a). The establishment of the 'safeguarding' mechanism to protect students from a provider leaving the market and the 'reputational risk mitigation' mechanism is also considered in the paper.

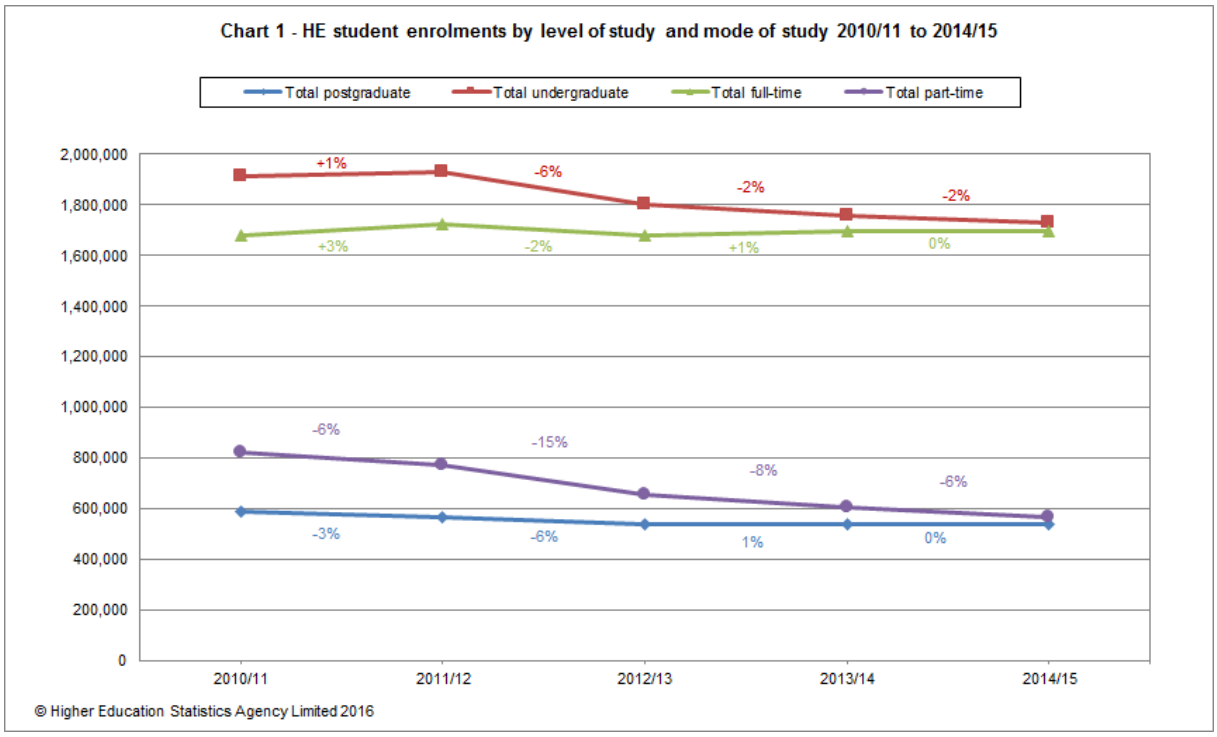
The sector reaction to the 2016 White Paper has been mixed with a number of 'teaching' universities welcoming the introduction of TEF (DfBIS, 2016a). However, a number of high profile Vice-Chancellors commented that the paper is the next step towards the further marketisation of higher education and warn that the current 'undignified rush to drive market competition at all costs risks dismantling the hard-won reputation of our [UK] university system' (Rammell, 2016). In the increasingly market-driven landscape of higher education, the new tensions are about to

emerge as 'every pound spent on marketing is a pound that is not going to support the student experience' and, as universities try to balance these tensions, this could 'weaken the existing successful providers with no net benefit in quality' (Rammell, 2016).

5.2. Organisational Diversity in Higher Education

There is a considerable diversity of HEIs working in the UK high education sector. In 2014-15 there were 227 higher education providers registered in the UK (HESA, 2016a). There were 159 universities operating in the sector alongside higher education colleges and other alternative providers (professional bodies, for-profit providers, others) (Universities UK, 2015c). The size of the HEIs ranges from the Open University in England recording 107,110 students on all the distance learning programmes in 2014-15 to small specialist colleges and schools, with the smallest provider being the National Film and Television School recording 255 students (HESA, 2016c).

There were 2.27 million students studying at UK higher education institutions in 2014-15, where 76% of students or 1.73 million studied on undergraduate courses and 31% or 538,000 students studied on postgraduate degrees (Universities UK, 2015c). The majority of students, 1.7 million, studied full-time during 2014-15 academic year and 569,000 students studied part time. The majority of students studied in the UK HEIs during 2014-15 are from the UK representing 1.83 million of all students in the academic year. There were approximately 125,500 students from EU and 312,000 students from non-EU countries (Universities UK, 2015c). The trends in student numbers and the mode of study is presented in Chart 1.



The Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) reports a decrease of one per cent, 33,280 in overall numbers, in the total number of HE enrolments in 2014-15 when compared to 2013-14 academic year. This overall decrease is mainly due to the decline in the undergraduate enrolments which fell by two per cent and part-time enrolments which decreased by six per cent between 2013-14 and 2014-15 (HESA, 2016a). Postgraduate enrolments showed no change between 2013-14 and 2014-15, but there is an overall decline from the baseline of 2010-11 of eight per cent. Full-time enrolments also showed no change between 2013-14 and 2014-15 and in comparison with the 2010-11 baseline (HESA, 2016a).

In 2014-15 the higher education sector directly employed 395,780 staff, an increase of 14.3 per cent since 2004-05. The number of academic staff employed in UK universities is 198,500, whilst there were 205,000 staff employed on non-academic contracts in 2014-15 (Universities UK, 2015a).

The gap between academic and non-academic staff is recorded to be at its smallest point for the past ten years at 6,500 (Universities UK, 2015a). The sector staff costs are considerable at a £16.3 billion, which is 55 per cent of the overall sector cost of £29.4 billion in 2014-15. The total sector income was £ 30.74 billion in 2014-15.

The sector is seen as a major contributor to the UK economy generating £73 billion of output in 2011 alone (Universities UK, 2015b).The sector contributed £39.6 billion or 2.8 per cent to the UK GDP and generated export earnings of the £10.7 billion. The HE sector contributes significantly to job creation and job creation potential (direct and indirect) estimated at 757,268 (full-time equivalent) (Universities UK, 2015b).

Alongside universities, further education colleges are increasingly engaged in the delivery of higher education qualifications. There were a further 189,635 HE enrolments at further education colleges in 2014-15 compared to a baseline of 180,390 in 2011-12, an increase of 9,245 HE enrolments (Universities UK, 2015b). There is a growing number of private providers in the sector, including BPP University, Pearson's UK Partnerships and others, headed by the University of Buckinghamshire which attracted 2,245 students in 2014-15.

Despite the increasing diversity of the higher education organisations, the following typology of universities linking the type of the university and the successive waves in the sector development is widely used (Tight, 2007: 4-5):

the 'ancient' collegiate universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the large federal university of London, Durham (old, collegiate);

the 'civic' universities established in the Major cities in the late nineteenth century (eg. Birmingham, Bristol);

the 'redbrick' universities founded in the other cities from early to mid-twentieth century (eg. Nottingham, Exeter, Hull);

the 'technological' universities created from the former Colleges of Advanced Technology in the 1960s (eg. Aston, Bath);

the 'old new' universities set up on campus locations in the 1960s (eg. East Anglia, Essex);and

the 'new new' universities, that is re-designed polytechnics and colleges recognised in the early 1990s (eg. Anglia, Bournemouth, Derby). Classifications similar to the above are widely applied amongst the researchers into the HE sector dynamics in England (Dolton & Makepeace, 1982; King, 1970; Tight, 1988, 1996).

The distinction between 'old' and 'new' universities does not only lie in the recognition of the historical aspects in terms of the foundation of the universities, but also in the recognition of university specifics in terms of operations, research focus and university identity. Despite the abolition of the binary divide rooted in the distinction made between academic and vocational qualifications in the higher education sector in 1992, the traditional differentiation between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' HEIs is still a powerful element of university identity (Silver, 2007). These differences highlight the perception about the role of the university in society and are reflected in the university strategy and operations. The following table developed by Silver (2007:49) highlights some key differences between the 'old' and 'new universities.

Table 5.2: Some aspects of differentiation between 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' universities in England

Traditional	Non-traditional
'old'	'new'
full-time students	+part-time students
Few mature students	More mature students
Liberal	Vocational
Research-orientated	More teaching orientated
Non-local/non-regional	Local/regional
Well resourced	Less well resourced
Good library	Poorer library
More autonomous	Less autonomous
Organisationally more decentralised	More centralised
Strong core campus	More dispersed (amalgamations)
Weak relationships with further education	Stronger relationships with Further Education
More subject-cantered curriculum	Less subject centred
Strong alumni relations	Weaker alumni relations
Lawns, ducks, sculptures, art galleries	Few or none of these memorabilia

Source: Based on Silver, H. (2007 p. 49)

The above differentiation reflects only some, often 'soft' characteristics of the 'old' and 'new' universities and some of the discourse associated such a typology. It is important to note that some of the universities display 'mixed traditions'. Some of the old HEIs substantially increased their provision for part-time students as well as the new universities are gaining more credibility through their research excellence and are becoming well resourced, for instance University of Coventry. It is also evidenced by the

continuing rise of some of post 92 universities in the top 50 of the sector leagues tables in 2016, for instance: Oxford Brookes University at 48 (Guardian), University of Coventry at 15 (Guardian), Harper Adams University at 46 (Independent), Nottingham Trent University at 17 (Times Higher Education – Student Experience), University of Derby at 47 (Times Higher Education – Student Experience).

The diversity of higher education in England is illustrated the Table5.3, which utilises Scott's (1995) original typology of 'old' and 'new' universities further developed by Tight (2007).

Table 5.3: UK Higher Education Institutions by size and type, 2014/15

	Open U	London U	Old and Old New Unis	New Unis	New New Unis	U Colleges	Specialists	Totals
40,000+	1							1
30,000-39,999		1	5	2				8
20,000-29,999		1	14	13	1			29
10,000-19,999		3	28	18	10			59
5,000-9,999		4	2		16			22
2,000-4,999			1	2	6	2	2	13
1,000-1,999		2			2	4	3	11
<1,000		7	1				9	17
Totals	1	18	51	35	35	6	14	160
Maximum	132,360	35,615	38,590	31,530	27,710	4,855	2,145	173,015
Minimum	132,360	235	2,245	4,150	1,185	1,155	255	225
Mean Size	132,360	7,870	18,621	19,198	9,223	2,263	1,170	13,734
Total Students	132,360	141,655	949,660	671,975	341,235	13,580	15,610	2,266,075
% Total	5.8	6.3	41.9	29.7	15.1	0.6	0.7	

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), www.hesa.ac.uk accessed on 08.07.16

Despite the decline in student numbers from nine per cent of all sector students in 2004-05 to six per cent in 2014-15, the Open University (OU) presence in the sector is still quite considerable. Comparing with a similar

sector data for 2004-05 academic year (HESA, 2006), the following sector trends are observed:

- There has been a steady increase in student numbers over the last ten years resulting in 20 per cent growth over the period 2004-2014 (an average of two per cent sector growth per year).
- During 2004-2014, a number of specialist colleges and university colleges gained university status, thus sharpening the intensity of the competition in the sector.
- If previously 'old and old new' and 'new' university groups attracted similar numbers of all sector students respectively 34 per cent and 35 per cent, the 'old and old new' group is now in a clear lead attracting 51 per cent of all the sector students in 2014-15.
- There is a greater degree of fragmentation in the sector evidenced by the formation of a number of new universities as well as 'localisation' efforts from the OU as it breaks down its operations into OU England, OU Wales, OU Scotland and OU Northern Island.
- The combined student recruitment of the University of London, if counted as one institution, 'old', 'old new' and 'new' universities were 78 per cent in 2014-15, a reduction from 81 per cent in 2004-05.

5.3. 'Student experience' initiative

The student experience in higher education is firmly placed at the top of the strategic agenda for the majority of UK universities. A number of regulatory documents the Browne Report (2010), the Green Paper (2015) and the White Paper (2011, 2016) reinforce the sector focus on improving the student experience in universities. In the latest 2016 White Paper (DfBIS, 2016a), the primary importance of learning and teaching in meeting the needs of the UK economy and society at large is recognised. In addition to the regulatory pressures, the universities have responded to the new realities of student expectations and engagement with improvements in governance and management arrangements aimed at

enhancing student learning and the student experience (McInnis, 2003; Ramsden, 2008). However, these responses are observed to be of a narrow focus 'on operational issues and matters such as preparation for quality review, discipline-specific issues, performance management of direct reports, or improving National Student Survey (NSS) scores' (Ramsden, 2013:4).

The discourse of 'student experience' and 'student learning experience' has become a significant part of the vocabulary of higher education. The close associations between the student experience and teaching and assessment, as well as broader aspects of the university life, are well observed by the scholars (Biggs & Tang, 2007; Chikering & Gamson, 1991; Ramsden, 2003, 2010, 2013; Pascerella & Terenzini, 2005, Sastry & Bakhradina, 2007). The student experience initiative forms part of national discourse which is often featured in national and international league tables. It is seen as integral to the university success in a 'competitive system' of higher education (McInnes, 2003, 2010; Ramsden, 2008, 2013; Universities UK, 2016).

In the attempts to capture and manage the 'quality of student experience' across the sector, a number of sector-wide surveys are deployed annually, including National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), HEPI-HEA Student Academic Experience Survey, Times Higher Education Student Experience Survey, Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) at a national level, and International Student Barometer (ISB) and Student Barometer by I-graduate at an international level.

The NSS is seen as the 'most influential' sector survey in England and Wales. It is designed to survey the final year undergraduates about the quality of various aspects of their higher education experience, including the aspects of teaching, assessment and feedback, management and organisation amongst others. It is commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and provides a comparative scoring across HEIs in England and Wales with regards to the students' perception of their higher education experience. The results of the survey are linked to the university league table positions and are used by the applicants, their parents and advisors when making the study choices. There are around 302,000 students who took part in the NSS in 2015 (HEFCE, 2015), an increase of 50,000 student responses when compared with 252,000 students taking part in NSS in 2010.

According to the recent NSS results (Table 5.4), the satisfaction level amongst the students in England and Wales has risen from 82 per cent in 2010 to 86 per cent in 2015. The highest satisfaction rate is attributed to the 'teaching' category at 87% and the lowest to the 'assessment and feedback' category at 73%.

Table 5.4: National Student Survey results 2010-2015[2]

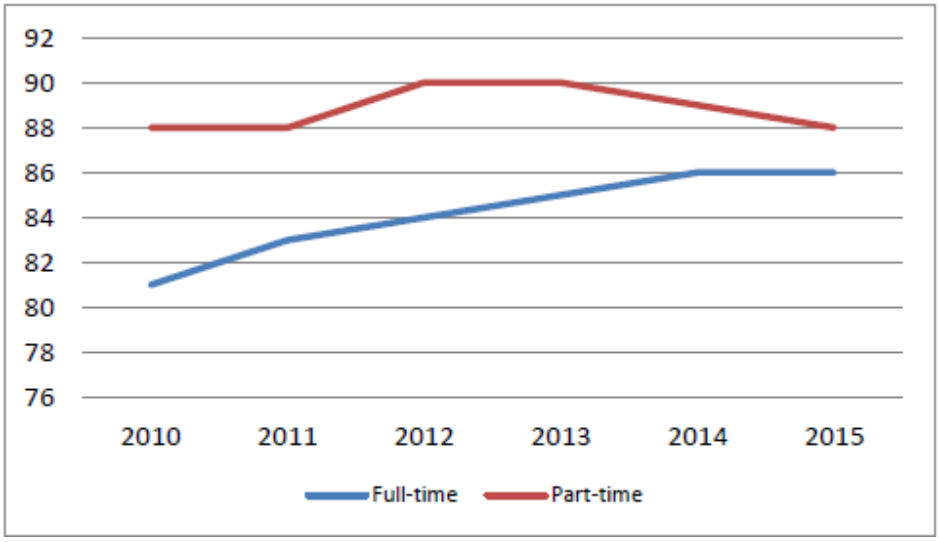
Questions		2010 NSS	2015 NSS
		% satisfied	% satisfied
1-4	The teaching on my course	83	87
5-9	Assessment and feedback	67	73
10-12	Academic support	75	82
13-15	Organisation and management	73	82
16-18	Learning resources	79	86
29-21	Personal development	79	83
22	Overall satisfaction	82	86

Source: HEFCE web-site (www.hefce.ac.uk, accessed on 12.07.16)

2 The figures in the table are for students registered at HEIs and FECs in England and Wales UK).

The recent NSS data shows that course satisfaction is at a near all-time high. There is a difference in course satisfaction rates for full-time and

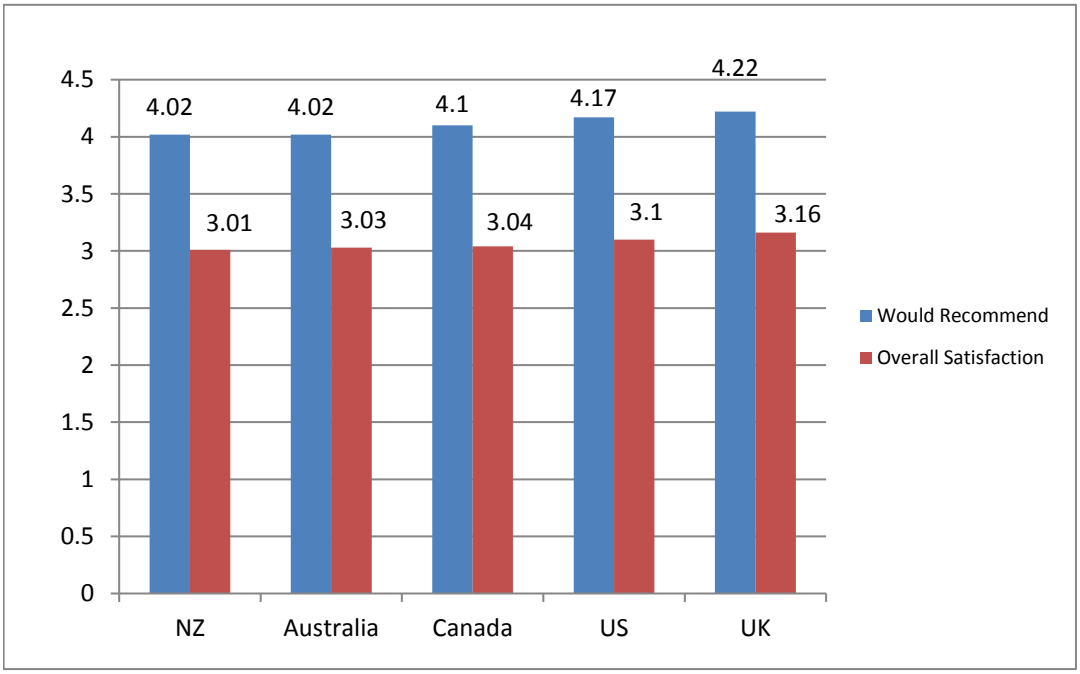
Figure 5.1: Course satisfaction, 2010-2015



Source: National Students Survey, HEFCE, NSS results

part-time students, with full-time students' satisfaction improving and part-time satisfaction rates declining since 2013 (Figure 5.1). According to the International Student Barometer results (I-Graduate, 2013-14) the UK

Figure 5.2: International undergraduate experience, 2013/14



Source: International Students Barometer, undergraduate international students, 2013-14

international undergraduate student experience is rated highly amongst other countries of choice for undergraduate study (Figure 5.2).

In terms of a wider university experience, the data from I-Graduate suggests that UK universities are rated highly, on average exceeding their counterparts in the main English-speaking systems. When asked to rate their institution's clubs and societies on a scale from 1 to 5, international undergraduates in the UK gave their institutions on average score of 3.31, higher than those in the United States, New Zealand, Australia or Canada. UK universities also attract high scores for the campus environment, their multicultural character and generally being a 'good place to be' (Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: International student extra-curricular experience, 2013/14



Source: International Student Barometer, undergraduate international students, 2013-14

The sector analysts comment that the majority of the recent university initiatives towards the improvements in student experience is described as 'low hanging fruit': mainly oriented on achieving high NSS scoring through

targeting student engagement with surveys, improving information available to students and targeting 'NSS-underperforming' modules and programmes. These initiatives are taking place in the increasingly 'managerial' culture of universities, which is often seen as an inevitable consequence of the recent sector changes, and where the tensions between academics and mangers are observed (Ramsden, 2013).

Excessively bureaucratic processes for managing teaching have often been discussed in relation to many post-92 universities, suggesting that the managerialism is not simply a consequence of more recent changes, but it is deeply-rooted in the culture and the identity of the 'new' universities (Bolden, Petrov & Gostling, 2008). Increasingly, the sector regulators (QAA, HEFCE) and the sector institutions including National Union of Student (NUS), Higher Education Academy (HEA) and Association of University Administrators (AUA) engage in a discourse of 'partnerships' and 'partnership working' to develop 'a sense of shared responsibility for the quality of learning and the student experience and a culture of working which involves students, support staff as well as academics' (Parkes *et al*, 2014; Ramsden, 1998, 2013; Scott, Coates & Anderson, 2008). Recent, and well debated across the sector, initiatives by NUS and HEA to construct a view of 'student as partners' (HEA, 2012) are seen as attempts to catalyse the dialogue about the role of students in higher education broadly and in relation to the higher education student experience.

At the latest NUS conference, Brighton, April 2016, the participants of Higher Education zone titled 'Divorce our courses from market forces' stated that they view marketisation of higher education as 'one of the

greatest threats to [our] education system at all levels' (NUS National Conference, 2016). They further argue that 'overreliance on quantitative data and metrics can deteriorate the relationship between students and academics, and it stifles the development of an inclusive learning environment'. The conference resolved that there is a need to provide advice and support to students' unions in fighting for improvements to the student evidence whilst avoiding the pitfalls of consumerism and short-term thinking' (NUS National Conference, 2016:25). This position of NUS highlights the tensions between the current trend of increasing marketisation in higher education and a view of student experience free from league tables and consumerism. The very mechanism by which the sector regulators are trying to ensure the accountability for the quality of student experience seems to attract a negative reaction from the student representation. It is seen as being detrimental to the student-academic relationship, whilst such a relationship is widely accepted to be central to the quality of student experience (Lewis, 1984; Roberts & Higgins, 1992; Hounsell, 1997; Sastry & Bakhradina, 2007).

Despite the current intensity of focus on student experience, Macfarlane (2011) reminds that this focus has been seen as vital to recruiting and retaining students in the sector for decades. As such, he points out, the current focus is not purely a response to the recent changes. Many universities, since moves to widening participation begun in the UK, have been engaging in efforts which enable a diverse community of students to be successful. The majority of these efforts were associated with support and non-academic activities. It is only recently that scholarly literature started to re-position the academic sphere as being central to the

experience and the success of students in higher education, resulting in conceptualising the approaches to developing the whole student (Quinlan, 2011) and partnership working between academic and 'professional' services (Parkes *et al*, 2014).

5.4. Case organisation: University of Middleworth

The University of Middleworth is one of well-established universities in the UK higher education. It has a history dating back to the 19th century when it was formed as an institution for training schoolmistresses. At the beginning of the 20th century the institution was a college of higher education and in 1992, when the binary line between universities and polytechnics was dissolved, it was granted a university status and became known as the University of Middleworth. According to Tight's typology (2007) discussed earlier in the chapter, the university can be described as a 'new' university.

Throughout its history, the university has merged with a number of regional further education colleges in the Midlands, becoming one of the first universities in the country to offer both further and higher education. The recent formation of the university facility, which is established to provide customised training and consultancy services to the local businesses, signifies the increasing focus on business engagement, development and delivery of the commercial products.

The university has recently undergone a major re-configuration during 2014-15 academic year, which has resulted in the formation of seven distinct Colleges instead of four Faculties. The university appointed a new

Vice-Chancellor in September 2015, followed by the changes in the Corporate Management Team (CMT). The university has recently recruited for two new Pro-VC positions: Pro-VC External Affairs and Pro-VC Student Experience.

The majority of the University of Middleworth operations are based in the region. The university has an online business entity, UWOL, which oversees the delivery of the university programmes online. University works with a number of partner institutions oversees to deliver the university programmes. The majority of overseas partner institutions are specialist colleges which operate through the franchising arrangements with the university. The majority of partner institutions are concentrated in Europe, Far East and African Continent.

University of Middleworth has a Corporate Plan 2014-2019, which is used as a formal mechanism to communicate the university CMT's vision of the university strategy expressed as 'working towards the three strategic ambitions – the three 'I's ('Inspire', 'Innovate' and 'Impact'). It is seen (QAA Institutional Review, Self-evaluation document, 2016) as articulation of the institution's strategic ambitions for teaching and learning and provision of a 'best in class' student experience, inspiring learners, innovating the curriculum and delivery, and impacting upon the region and the global economy. The focus on student success and employability as well as diversity is mentioned through the university Corporate Plan.

Since 2012 the university has seen a rise in its position across a number of sector league tables featuring among top 50 UK universities for student experience and graduate employability (Guardian, 2016). The university

has been ranked amongst the top 10 UK universities for teaching quality (Times and Times and Sunday Times University Guide 2016). It has achieved high scores, in a 80-90% region, against 'teaching on my course' NSS category and for 'overall satisfaction' NSS category in 2015, with a significant number of programmes achieving 100% student satisfaction rate.

The latest operating figures (Accounts 2015), report £12.2m operating surplus with an EBITDA which reflects the true trading position in cash terms of £19.0m, which is 13.1% of turnover. After the statutory pension and other adjustments, the Group reported a surplus of £9.0m showing a 6.2% return on income. The net cash outflow for 2014-15 financial year was £8.9m and the net funds position was £2.6m. The university invested £27mln into capital projects to improve infrastructure and teaching resources.

The University employs 1,743 full-time university posts supporting additional 2,100 FTE jobs elsewhere as a 'knock on' effect. The university reported a world-class staff engagement score of 72%, top decile UK universities, achieved in 2015. The latest report on the university's contribution to the UK economy states that the overall direct contribution through direct spending and taxes amounted to £ 264.32 mln for the fiscal year 2015.

The University currently has circa 29,000 students, made up of full-time undergraduates, post-graduate research and taught, distance learners, part time learners, Access and foundation students, online learners, international partners, and UK partners spread across the region, the UK

and internationally. The number of HE students based in the UK has declined steadily by 14% since 2011-12, whilst the number of the HE students based at overseas franchised institutions has increased almost four times over the last four years. The number of FE students has also seen a steady increase over the same period resulting in 4,775 FE students studying at the university in 2014-15, an increase of 66% from the 2011-2012 baseline.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Financial Director states 'Despite the uncertainty and difficulties faced by the sector, as a Leadership team we are confident about our sustainability and progress. We are well placed to achieve our objectives and the goals set within our Corporate Plan. We are encouraged by the continuous recognition received and the confidence shown by all our stakeholders including HEFCE as our regulator' (Accounts 2015).

The Vice-Chancellor of the university has distributed the document titled 'Strategic Priorities 2016-18' and asked for staff to engage in consultations which will be held by 'leaders and managers in teams and departments across the university' (July 2016). The following five areas are described as 'university strategic priorities 2016-18' and are as follows:

1. Recruitment (Home and International), with a specific to two areas: UG and PG and Apprenticeships. The strategic objective is set as 'recruit to target and further develop strategies to increase both recruitment and conversion. Develop a robust apprenticeship model and deliver increased numbers 2016/17'.

2. Student Experience: there is a comprehensive review of all our students from FE to PGRS, including UWOL to be carried. The strategic objective towards this direction is: ' develop a powerful student offer which will form part of our brand and clearly articulate our students' experience; achieve 10% increase in graduate employability'.
3. University Quarter: this area is about a higher representation of the University in the City 'to assured that we create a safe and vibrant social and cultural environment for students and staff – one in which our identity is recognisable and we create a feel of University City'.
4. League Tables: A range of performance measures are introduced to improve performance across a number of sector league tables, including increase in graduate employability to 74%; assure inclusion of all tariff points and increase to 315 by 2017/18, identify the key areas to ensure positive outcome for REF2021, implement Vice-Chancellor's 'Ideas Forum' for all staff to enhance scholarship, research and community agenda.
5. UWOL – Online platform: 'having developed one of the most impressive online platforms in the UK….., we need to maintain our leading position'. The strategic objective is to deliver increased students numbers through internal and external partnership working 2016/17; deliver increased student numbers through apprenticeship scheme'.

The majority of the areas outlined as strategic priorities are formulated using market-influenced discourse. There is an indication of a strong influence of the market-driven institutional logic (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Lounsbury, 2007; Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). The use of the discourse of managerialism (Deem et al, 2007; Deem and Johnson, 2000) alongside

the increasing 'competitive' behaviour and the associated discourse signal the university's increasing business-like *modus operandi*.

Having explored the context of the study in this chapter of the thesis, the following four analytical chapters explore the university occupations and the occupational aspect of self-identities in HE in Chapter Six; marketisation of higher education in Chapter Seven; student experience initiative and occupations in Chapter Eight; and strategy-making and occupations in a university setting in Chapter Nine.

Chapter 6: Occupations and Occupational Aspect of Self-identity in Higher Education

The chapter presents the analysis of the materials about the occupational groupings in the UK higher education, specifically: the ways these occupational groupings define their occupation and how they view the role of the university in society. Considerations about the occupational aspect of self-identities of academics, manager-academics and 'professional' members of staff are discussed in the context of the governmental agenda towards quasi-market structures and the rise of the 'new managerialism' ideology in higher education. A conceptual view of the relationship between the individual's self-identity, the occupational aspect of self-identity and social identity is proposed.

6.1. Occupations in Higher Education

The analysis of the interview materials revealed a pattern in as to how the research participants speak about their occupations. This pattern includes the following features: a self-definition of one's occupation, a context setting and a boundary setting. This pattern was found in the majority of the interviews (Appendix B). Emergence of such a pattern prompts the discovery of the three key dimensions of the notion of 'occupation', which are: content, context and boundary definition/boundary setting. In all the interviews, the research participants talked about their occupation through the relations with others inside and outside the university. This is illustrative of the context and the boundary definition dimensions outlined earlier. These findings are consistent with Jenkins's (2008) conceptual scheme of social identity and identification, where he asserts that

'identification makes no sense outside the relationship' (2008, p.158). The interview materials confirm that such a relationship is often defined by the context setting and the boundary definition/setting 'talk' as illustrated over the next few sections.

6.1.1. "So, yes, I am an academic. Yes? Ok?"

When talking about their occupation, the majority of academics defined themselves as lecturers in a specialist area (human genetics, education, postgraduate studies). A very few drew a distinction between 'being a lecturer' and 'being an academic' and those who did argued that the title 'lecturer' does not capture the distinction between higher education and other forms of education: "the reason why I say I'm an academic is because I think we not only dispense knowledge, but we actually construct it, and I think that's vital" (Reader in a College).

At least two academics interviewed preferred to speak of their occupation as one of a teacher, for instance: "I would say that my line of work is mainly around teaching as opposed to research, so I'm a teacher. I prefer the term teacher to lecturer actually even though I know that's our correct job title" (Senior Lecturer and Learning and Teaching Advisor) and "Before I came to the university I was at the University of [name of the UK university] when I was just a research scientist so I had no teaching. ....I wasn't a teacher I was a researcher, here I would say that I'm a teacher" (Senior Lecturer and Subject Head). For these two respondents, teaching and research are core elements of the job and, as both of them do not engage in research at the university, they see themselves as teachers only.

Throughout the interviews, teaching and research were talked about as vital elements of an academic role:

"...because part of my job is to be a scholar and to be a knowledge creator. It's not just to be a deliverer; it's not just to be a teacher. And actually that's the part of your job it's hardest to prioritise, but the part of your job that is actually most relevant to your credibility, your authority as a lecturer and to what you are here for. So that would be the first dimension is that I'm here to be a scholar, a scholar and a knowledge creator and I will continue to fight to have that identity..." (Senior Lecturer)

The theme of 'being a scholar' and making a contribution to knowledge creation and teaching emerges strongly from the interviews with the academic staff. 'Being a teacher', 'being a researcher', 'being a scholar' appear to be key aspects in academics' personal identity work.

One of the academic respondents, who has a university-wide role for organising a range of workshops, seminars and other activities aimed at enhancing academic practice at the university and the Higher Education Academy (HEA) accreditation processes, argues that to be an academic is more than just an occupation:

"...there isn't a start and stop point, you don't stop being an academic at five o'clock, you don't clock off and then become a normal human being again. It's a vocation, it's who you are as an individual, in a way perhaps other areas of the employment market might not quite be" (Senior Lead in Learning Enhancement and Senior Lecturer)

Here, a broader perspective is taken on being an academic with flexibility and autonomy to design and to deliver curriculum and opportunities for freedom of expression. In fact, being an academic goes beyond an employment contract and office hours work, it is who you are, it is more like 'art' rather than to a 'job'. However, one of our research participants,

a Professor, is not too optimistic about the present state of the academic occupation:

"[quoting John Anderson the Australian philosopher], the role of an academic is one duty only – it is to be critical and to ensure that every opinion, every view held by the status quo is challenged and that is the job of the academic. ... I would also mention both Newman and Matthew Arnold's view of the university as a place where you pursue knowledge without fear or favour and to do that you need academics who are prepared to be critical, but, of course, that is not the situation we have at the present time" (Professor)

They speak about the role of an academic as being that of a critic in society, and the role of the university is intrinsically linked in the endeavour to develop a society where values such as 'freedom of speech', 'academic freedom', 'and 'supremacy of knowledge' are strongly endorsed. The issue of academic freedom is a widely debated topic in the sector not the least due to ambiguity of the available definitions and the need for adequacy of its protection (Finklin & Post, 2009; Karran, 2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2013). The concerns about the influence of the cost controlling focus in universities and the continuous quest for opportunities for making a surplus on the state of academic activity and academic freedom are well aired (Locke, 2014; Karran, 2013; Hayes, 2014). The impact of changes in academic employment practices including employment patterns, increase in teaching only appointments (HESA, 2010-14), sector-wide practices of zero-hours contracts, performance appraisal and progression practices on academic freedom, amongst other academic traditions, are at the forefront of the debates about the state of the academic occupation (Cheng, 2014; Franco-Santos *et al*, 2014; Gappa & Austin, 2010; Gornall & Thomas, 2014; Locke, 2014).

The analysis of the interview materials has suggested that the academic staff associate their identities with education, as an area of activity, but also include broader considerations about who they are and what they do. For instance: "Actually I'm more a criminal psychologist than I am anything else" (Reader and Head of Research of a College); "I'm a teacher..." (Senior Lecturer and Learning and Teaching Advisor); "....my identity is a teacher educator" (Senior Lecturer), "I am a scholar" (Professor). The self-identification reflects one's values in relation to the academic role with different emphasis and personal interpretations of the essence of the occupational role, for instance 'being a subject expert' (in the case of the criminal phycologist); 'being a teacher'; 'being an educator' and, as in the latter quote, 'being a scholar'. This personal identity work is illustrative of self-identity construction using notions of occupations available as discursive, institutional and cultural categories (Alvesson *et al*, 2008; Watson, 2008), thus confirming self-identity and social identity relationship outlined in the conceptual framework of this study (Figure 3.1, Chapter Three).

In defining their occupations, the academic respondents used contextualisation and boundary setting to speak about their occupation. Appendix C illustrates the examples of the definition, contextualisation and boundary setting identified in the interview materials with academic research participants. The contextual elements were quite short and included clarifications about the subject area of teaching and research as well as the position within the university. The boundary setting often included a distinction between the teaching and research focus, practitioner vs theoretical emphasis in teaching, college-based vs central

role in the university. An interesting observation was offered by the Head of Research of a College[3]. That is "don't try and define yourself too tightly, because people will simply simplistically categorise you in that and never think of you as anything else. So, yes, try and be very versatile" (Reader and Head of Research of a College). This illustrates a potential preference by academic staff to be flexible and versatile in defining their occupation. That is to widen the opportunities to advance their research and career aspirations.

6.1.2. Manager-Academics

Among the research respondents working on academic contracts, a grouping, which can be defined as 'manager-academics' (Deem & Brehony, 2005), presented their occupations in terms of management and leadership roles. This group of academic staff has been growing across the sector with the introduction of senior academic management roles that operate horizontally across the organisation as well as vertically in managing the academic staff (Locke & Bennion, 2011; Fitzgerald *et al*. 2012; Gornall & Thomas, 2014; Locke, 2014). Traditionally, divisions between academics are connected to disciplinary/subject boundaries, although some blurring of these has occurred as interdisciplinary work has become more popular (Becher & Trowler, 2001). Other divisions include gender (Brookes, 1997; Eggins, 1997; Morley, 1999; Brooks & Mackinnon, 2001), ethnicity (Modood & Acland, 1996; Carter *et al*, 1999) and different

[3] As a result of recent reconfiguration in the University of Middleworth, the university faculty structure has been changed to a college structure whereby eight colleges replaced five faculties. The reconfiguration has commenced in January 2015 after the primary data collection has taken place. Hence, throughout the interview materials the major references are to the faculty(ies) rather than to college(ies)

pay levels and contacts (Bett Report, 1999), with nearly 46.6% of academic staff in the UK not having a permanent appointment (UCEA, 2016).

The increasing prominence of academics in management roles have introduced a stronger divide between manager-academics and academics not in management roles, despite the fact that many manager-academics have previously worked as academics (and many continue to do so in a more restricted manner) (Deem & Johnson, 2000; Deem, 2003). Management roles range from traditional heads of department (with an enhanced role for performance management and quality control of teaching and research) through faculty deans (once a symbolic role, now often with a considerable responsibility for financial and income-generation responsibility) to members of senior management teams such as Pro-Vice Chancellors and Vice Chancellors who are tasked to determine the strategic direction of their university. The research participants in this study represented every level of the academic hierarchy in the university from Assistant Head of School/College to Senior Members of the University Executive Team.

The majority of manager-academics in this study defined their occupations in terms of management. For instance: "I'm an Academic Manager and I lead a large scheme called [name of the scheme]." (Head of the Programme Scheme) and "Senior manager in the university running a faculty. Now running a college from this week. Academic, leader. ....I think that is fundamentally what the role is." followed by the boundary setting statement "Academic leadership as opposed to business leadership"

(Senior Manager-Academic). The use of the management and leadership discourse in self-defining the research participants' occupations is seen to be illustrative of the 'new managerialism' ideology in public services in western countries, and specifically in higher education (Deem, 1998; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem *et al*, 2007).

The concept of 'new managerialism', is most usefully understood as an ideological configuration of ideas and practices recently brought to bear on public service organisation, management and delivery, often at the behest of governments or government agencies (Enteman, 1993; Clarke & Newman, 1997; Exworthy & Halford, 1999, Cutler & Waine, 2000; Reed, 2002; Deem & Brehony, 2005). 'New managerialism' is in competition with an alternative concept of 'new public management' (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Hood, 1995; Hood & Scott, 1996; Pollitt, 1999; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000), which is seen as defining new forms of administrative orthodoxy about how public services are run and regulated. The major differences between these two concepts are associated with the focus of debates about the conditions and the impact of changes in public sector management. For instance, the debates about 'new managerialism' are focused around its development and critiques of both the policies and the socio-economic conditions that have led to its development and the way in which new managerialism is utilised (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Exworthy & Halford, 1999; Farrell & Morris, 2003). Whilst the debates about 'new public management' are centred on debates in economics about public choice theory, which focuses on advocating and developing less bureaucratic forms of public service organisation and introduction of quasi-markets for public services (Fredrickson, 1991; Bailey, 1993; Hughes, 1994). The

preference towards the term 'new managerialism' signifies the importance of its regard as an ideological approach to managing public services and their employees (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Exworthy & Halford, 1999; Farrell & Morris, 2003).

Characteristics of 'new managerialism' in organisations include: the erasure of bureaucratic rule-following procedures; emphasising the primacy of management above all activities; monitoring employee performance (and encouraging self-monitoring too); the attainment of financial and other targets, devising means of publically auditing quality of service delivery and the development of quasi-markets of services (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993). The research data suggest some of the research participants preferred to self-define their occupations in terms of management. This scenario highlights the fact that in these cases management role is a preferred way to define one's occupation and is often used in personal identity work in higher education.

Those manager-academics, who occupy senior management positions, often referred to their occupation as one of 'educational leadership'. In such cases, educational leadership was discussed alongside business leadership of a programme, school, faculty, and the university, respectively. This confirms observations of significant pressures on manager-academics to perform in line with the growing 'corporate agenda' of universities in which universities are competing for funding and resources in a global marketplace (Bolden *et al*, 2012). This results in adaptation of the 'business-like' approaches to leadership, management and performance (2012:15). The dual focus of academic leadership: on

one hand towards the preservation of academic values and identities and on another hand to achieve 'corporate goals and objectives' of the business is correspondent with a view of university as a 'dual identity organisation' (Albert & Whetten, 2004). According to this view, universities are part church, based on 'normative' principles (values and beliefs), and part business, based on 'utilitarian' principles (outcomes and performance). The dual identity argument supports the multiplicity of self-definitions of occupations observed in the university context. It also points out the likely challenges of work organisation and the possible conflicts between different occupational groupings: of acknowledging the normative concerns and aspirations of academic staff alongside the utilitarian concerns and aspirations of non-academic/'professional' staff.

6.1.3. "I have so many different faces"

A greater variety of occupation self-definitions was found in interviews with non-academic members of staff. The respondents defined their occupations according to the following four categories: occupation as a job title; occupation as a management role; occupation as leadership; occupation as specialisation/area of work (Appendix D).

Non-academic members of staff often defined their occupation by the title of their role in the university. The definitions ranged from the administrative officer working in the faculty, to heads of central university service functions. The job title was frequently used to define the occupation of non-academic staff.

Non-academics often spoke about their role as a manager to define their occupation. The responses ranged from a generic "I'm a manager at the

university" (Senior Manager, Student Experience Team), to a more specific definition with a reference to an area of respondent's managerial responsibility "I manage a team at the university, which works with international students" (Senior Manager). The identity work here is reflective of the 'new management' ideology and increasingly dominant discourse of 'professional' administration and management staff in the UK higher education (Association of University Administrators, 2015).

A number of non-academic respondents, particularly senior administrative staff defined their occupation in terms of leadership: "I lead the Careers Service at the university and also the Study Skills service and I contribute to the leadership of my overall department" and then further contextualising "I'm a manager in education, ...in Higher Education specifically" (Member of the Senior Management Team). And another affirmation of the leadership and management role from a member of the Senior Executive Team "I provide leadership input and management input to that range of things to ensure that we are making progress towards our big outcomes ....that we think will make a significant difference for students and the university". The interplay between the management and leadership discourse resulting in the 'management speak' (Babidge, Greer, Henry, & Pam, 2007) is in evidence. It is linked to the sector-wide agenda towards the development of the leadership competences in universities (Bolden *et al*, 2008, Floyd, 2012; Kok *et al*, 2010; Smith & Hughey, 2006; Whitchurch, 2007, 2008).

Two members of non-academic staff have referred to their occupation as 'a researcher' and as 'an educator'. These could be seen as examples of

the emergent types of so–called the 'third space professionals' (Whitchurch 2004, 2006, 2008). The work on the "Third Space" had emerged from conceptualising work organisation of academic and non-academic domains converging in this direction. Rhoades (2010) sees this space as politically and professionally contested, revealing a growing shift in the balance between managerial discretion and occupational autonomy.

Increasingly, project-based work contracts are becoming popular in HE as universities are responding to the rapid changes in the external environment and competitive dynamics in the sector. For insurance, a number of scholars (Hare & Hare, 2002; McMaster, 2002; Whitchurch, 2006) raised an awareness of local partnership working between academic and non-academic staff. Specifically, Whitchurch (2006) identifies the specifics of a project domain as a distinctive territory, which characterises by major, multifunctional projects in universities such as: the student support project, the human resource project, the business enterprise project. She argues that such territories are 'exemplified by a group of professionals for whom organisational and professional structures are less prominent as an expression of their identity, for instance, the ability to interface with multiplicity of tasks and people' (2006:167). Whitchurch (2006) broadly terms them as 'multi-professionals' who demonstrate: a facility for boundary crossing, a lack of status consciousness, an awareness of organisational cultures and an interpretive role which allows them to be 'fluent' in many languages of many agendas and cultural complexities of a modern university. Two non-academic respondents interviewed fit these characteristics: one is tasked to project-lead the university-wide initiatives to improve the BME student attainment and the First Year Student

Experience project, and another leads the quality assurance of a high profile international collaborative partnership. Due to the project-based nature of the work, the respondents defined their occupation in broad terms associated with either the nature of the project – "a researcher" or a broad position about her role in the university, over and above the job title: "an educator". Such self-definition of the occupation allows for flexibility and fluency discussed earlier. Throughout the interviews, these two respondents presented themselves as pathfinders within the university exercising their ability to cross highly distributed management and leadership structures across various hierarchies and functions to achieve their goals.

Unlike with academic staff, non-academic staff provided a much greater degree of contextualisation when talking about their occupation. It often included the previous position(s) within and outside the university; areas of responsibility; key facts about the business unit (number of staff, income, student numbers); relationship to colleges and the university central services; comparison with other universities in the sector. The contextualisation element of non-academic occupation definitions was quite substantial and was often followed by the boundary setting statements. Interestingly, the statements were more frequently aimed at setting boundaries between the academic and non-academic responsibilities; managerial and teaching responsibilities; academic leadership and business leadership; internal vs external focus; generic vs specific project responsibilities.

The complex nature of social identity concept as a 'cultural, discursive and institutional notions of who or what any individual might be' (Watson, 2008:127), which reflects expectations of others in relations to one's role in society was evident in a range of interviews. The interview participants' narratives about self and occupational aspect of self-identity converged and diverged as conversations went on. In one of the interviews, the respondent concluded, when describing her occupation:

"I usually explain that it's a job that sits between all of the other services and that students sort of see me as like a friendly aunty or something like that but for staff it's something different. So it depends on who's sort of engaging, I have so many different faces." (Student Liaison Officer of a College)

The analysis of the interview materials confirms the use of multiple identity positions in personal identity work. These, sometimes contradictory, identity positions are assigned depending on the context in which the identity work takes place. As discussed earlier in Chapter Three of the thesis, the multiple 'identity positions' exist within 'a somewhat more stable, personal .... narrative self-identity' (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003:1166). Our analysis confirms Clarke *et al* (2009) position about self-identities being 'stable without being coherent, and consist of core statements but not be unified' (Clarke *et al*, 2009:341).

6.2. 'Professionalisation' Talk

A number of respondents referred to the notion of 'being professional' and 'professionalism' in higher education when talking about their occupation. This form of 'occupational branding' (Ashcraft *et al*, 2012) are seen as 'professionalisation projects' aimed at re-establishing and re-emphasising the status of one occupational group over the others are well researched

in public sector settings (Currie, Finn & Martin, 2010; Bishop & Waring, 2011, 2012; Metz, 1981). This trend could be seen as side-effects of the 'new managerialism' ideology where occupational groupings try to re-assert their legitimacy over the dominant position of management.

A Senior Manager at the University Wellbeing Services has referred to the growing trend of 'professionalisation' in higher education: "there is a growing class of professional staff in universities, of which, I think, I would include most of our Student Wellbeing team so professional therapists, social workers, nurses, people who're coming out of a professional background who're required to have, you know, postgraduate qualifications, registered with a professional body". The identity work here illustrates the use of the discourse of professionalism. Further in the interview, they comment that the use of the term 'professional' in relation to the academic colleagues seems to be problematic in the UK context, although it is used more frequently in the USA. They note an increasing interest in the area of partnership and collaborative working between academic and 'professional' staff in universities to address issues of student attainment and progression, student lifecycle and student experience in the HE, which is confirmed by the recent studies (Kehm, 2006; Whitchurch 2010, 2013).

A number of academic staff commented on the issue of professionalism. Often the terms 'non-academic staff' and 'professional staff' were used interchangeably throughout the interviews, whilst the terminology of 'professional' and 'professionalism' was rarely mentioned in relation to the academic staff. One of the research participants commented: ".... a sense

of it being ... becoming professional in academia is quite challenging. It's all encompassing, I suppose the distinction I might draw ... there isn't a start and stop point, you don't stop being an academic at five o'clock, you don't clock off and then become a normal human being again" (Senior Lead in Learning Enhancement and Senior Lecturer). They observe that the notion of 'becoming professional' is mainly associated with non-academic staff and the nature of the 'professional' work, which is characterised by well-defined roles and responsibilities, set contract hours and clearly assigned tasks. The notion of 'becoming an academic' is associated with flexibility in tasks and projects, work hours outside conventional work patterns, high levels of autonomy and freedom of expression, and continuous personal drive for finding and developing new knowledge. This type of working contradicts the societal notion of 'being professional'. This provides an intriguing angle in the study of occupational identities in higher education as 'being an academic' and 'being a professional' could be perceived as mutually exclusive, thus legitimising the rise of managerialism and professional managers to ensure that the higher education delivers under the regulatory pressures.

An interesting distinction between occupational and 'professional' aspect of self-identity was drawn by one of a Senior Manager-Academic. They defined their occupation using the job title and as such "I would always try to uphold the values of the university, I hold them – they're really important to me. And that would probably be what I sort of rely on, if you like, to support me through my work and guide me, is the values that I expect my staff, my students and me to always represent". As for profession, "that's a different story, because my occupation is one thing,

my profession and what I've grown up with is something completely different. Because what underpins my values and the way I work in my profession is, you know I'm a nurse, Adult and Mental Health Nurse, and I guess the Mental Health is what's dominated most of my career. And so putting people first– seeing other people's point of view, having empathy, being mindful, being compassionate, those are all things that are as important values as some of the occupational stuff". The research participant draws on the different connotations in using the term 'occupation' and 'profession'. To them, an occupation is the current role in the university i.e. the job title. Profession, on another hand, is to do with deeper values of the 'professional' training and the vocation that defines the career. In this case, both values: of the occupation, which are the values of the University of Middleworth, and of the 'profession' as a nurse, are recognised as important values that support and guide them in everyday work. They go on to talk about another side of the 'professional' identity: "I guess professionally because I've also been in the army for a quite a long period of time, that's obviously shaped who I am in terms of leadership, in terms of management, and in terms of decision making". The experience of being a nurse in the army had an impact on the respondent's notion of who they are, their decision-making and their actions. This directional dimension (Karreman & Alvesson, 2001) of identity adds to the complex nature of the occupational aspect of self-identity:

"If you're making decision making in an operational area when you're in a war scenario you learn a different type of decision making, and I think all of those things shape you so what you end with now as an end product. In this occupation is something that's underpinned by your profession and all your professional experiences. Because I spent 18 years working in the profession before I came into education, and even though I'm in education

I still liaise with and have contact with the profession" (Senior Manager-Academic).

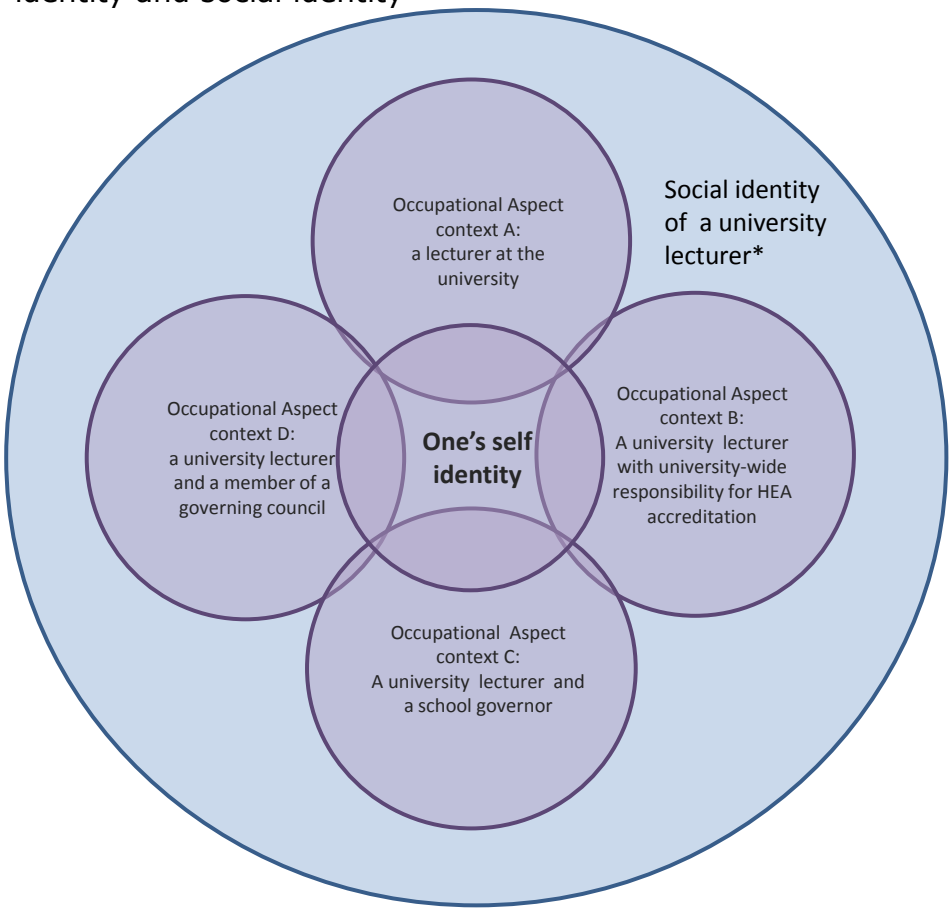
In the example of this personal identity work, the respondent draws on a number of discursive resources to construct their self-identity. They talk about the attachment to the values of the university as they "support and guide" the everyday work. Alvesson *et al* (2008) see emotional attachment to the values of the group as one of the key characteristics of the social identity. In the definition of the respondent's role at the university, they refer to the areas of the work where they engage with external structures, for instance the National Health Service, the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the Healthcare Professions Council, HEFCE. Such external engagements with nursing and higher education 'professional' organisations are acknowledged to be of significance and are used in personal identity work, which echoes conceptualisations about the influence of structure and agency on identity construction and development (Archer, 2000; Giddens, 1991). Similarly, Whitchurch (2006) acknowledges that the personal identities in higher education are influenced primarily by the structures in which they found themselves: home institutions, the personal knowledge base, the higher education sector and the project domain.

The term 'professional' is used in relation to 'becoming a nurse' 'training as a nurse' ('an adult and mental health nurse') and the experience of 'being an army nurse', as part of the respondent self-identity work. The term 'professional' seems to encapsulate deeper values about the notion of self with a subsequent effect on decision-making and actions. These values of 'putting people first – seeing other people's point of view, having

empathy, being mindful, being compassionate' seem to be deeply held and they are intrinsic to the notion of who they are. They are acknowledged as being developed as a result of the 'professional' training and the experience of being a nurse for more than 18 years. These values seem to be part of the respondent's identity irrelevant to what role they occupy at the university or other types of employment. They have become transcendent across the occupational contexts, yet developed as part of 'becoming in occupation'. Furthermore, personal identity work is shaped by the context in which occupational identification is taking place: a place of work, organisational field(s) (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), occupational network(s) and broader contexts. Figure 6.1 depicts the complex links between self-identity, the occupational aspects of self-identity and social identity.

Drawing on the conceptual framework developed in the Chapter Three of the thesis (Figure 3.1), important elements of the self-identity construction include ideas about central characteristics, cohesiveness, distinctiveness and direction (Karreman & Alvesson, 2001:63). The occupational aspect of self-identity identity, as one of many aspects of personal identity, involves individual's position on what his/her occupation is, what activity occurs within a particular occupation and what contribution that occupation makes to society. In this view, an occupational aspect of self-identity relates to the societal expectations of an occupation. Such expectations are significant in the relationship between individuals and the social practices they are involved in. They provide directions for interactions between different occupational groupings in an organisation. As such, they impact organisational practices and outcomes.

Figure 6.1: Links between individual's self-identity, occupational aspect of self-identity and social identity



*As per Watson (2008) these are cultural, discursive and institutional notions of a particular occupation in society (2008:127).

Furthermore, one's self-identity is exposed to such societal expectations and the 'performance' in a variety of contexts. Such contexts influence self-definition of one's occupation, for instance, in an interview with the senior member of the University Executive Team (UET), when asked to define their occupation:

"It's educational leadership. It's interesting, in the context of this role, there are two facets to it. One, and I'm the Vice Chancellor of the University of Middleworth. That's educational leadership and the responsibility is really about the educational mission, character, standards, and quality of the academic institution. The other side of the role is Chief Executive of the University of Middleworth Limited, a company limited by guarantee, with

charitable objectives, that's the legal status of the institution. So I could just as easily say. I'm a chief executive of an educational business. But I suppose when one asks the question, as boldly as you did, it strikes at the values. So the values are as an educationalist. The fact that I happen to be Chief Executive of an educational business is what I happen to do, but the core value is as an educationalist *(*Member of the UET).

When talking about the occupation, the respondent talks about their values as an educationalist, whilst being a Chief Executive of a company. The respondent acknowledges the interviewing context and engages in personal identity work and in doing so the elements of the self-identity emerge - 'a core value is as an educationalist'.

The relationship between self and social identity is an ever evolving project of negotiation between the notion of self and societal expectations of one's occupation. Such negotiations often reveal tensions around the deep personal beliefs of 'who you are' and 'what you should do and how' and the societal expectations towards the occupation. Such tensions emerge when the changes in the regulatory and demand pressures are too rapid and unpredictable as in the case of higher education sector in the UK per the earlier discussions in Chapter Four of the thesis.

Such tensions have been expressed by some of our research participants, for example:

"I would say .... the role of an academic is criticism is one duty is to be critical .....but of course that is not the situation we have at the present time. ..... There has been a retrenchment of academic freedom to a professional narrow focus. In the social attitude survey, people's support for free speech has slightly gone down for the first time ever. That's affected universities, so why should you let these people have these privileges, and certainly why should you let them speak, get on with your research and do it in a much more instrumental way. The whole impact discussion and the way people see it as making academics be public

intellectuals again but that's not what it is about it is just serving functional end." (Professor)

The respondent's observations about the role expectations of academics are in tension with their own values of absolute academic freedom and a role of an academic as a critic. There is a sense that the respondent's deep personal beliefs are in conflict with the societal expectation towards the role of academics. In their criticism of the university sector, they refer to a rise of the so-called 'therapeutic university' (Ecclestone & Hayes, 2008):

"There has been a movement from the idea of the university as pursuing knowledge without fear or favour to what I call 'the therapeutic university'. I was thinking about what was happening in universities. ….. The university has shifted from trying to find the truth to giving lots of support to their students and staff, so it became very much the whole range of things that are happening. ..... So the academic role has become spontaneously therapeutic. It is a range of therapeutic activities that enable students seen as vulnerable to accept their vulnerability and to have a diminished sense of themselves and to willingly engage in activities that maintain that diminished sense of themselves. That's pretty good! This is the way it works" (Professor)

The view of the universities as 'therapeutic' institutions, designed for support and care rather than for the encouragement of critical thinking and 'truth' searching is seen a sector response to the regulatory pressures towards the marketisation of higher education (Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013). Such responses at an institutional level are seen to have implications for how universities perceive their students, the type of student experience they would have to invest in, types of occupations they would like to employ, develop and promote and the nature of the strategic priorities they would want to invest long-term. Such tensions are becoming central in personal identity work of a university professor.

6.3. The role of a university in society

Occupations are part of society and they play a significant role in work structuring. The occupational principle of work structuring presents an alternative to the organisational principle of work structuring in society. It involves structuring of work on the basis of the type of work people do rather than on bureaucratic, administrative and 'formal organisation' basis (Watson, 2012). Understanding occupational structuring of work allows for greater sociological insights into how occupations form and develop over time and their place in society. This study considers occupations in higher education and the role of occupational groupings in university strategy-making. In this context, universities are places of work where the occupation takes place, where the tasks are carried out and the careers are advanced, and it is where the identities form and develop over time. The occupational aspect of self-identity is strongly connected to the place of work and, as Watson (2012) observes, that for most people, the organisation they work for is more salient than occupational membership (2012:182).

From the university perspective, occupations have lasting consequences for its strategic success. They characterise the resource base of universities, they are critical element of the organisation of work affecting the skills base and the way people learn; they have an important consequence for how people enter and develop their occupational careers and how they act collectively through unions and 'professional' mobilisation. The state of academic and non-academic occupations impacts performance of universities and the way they fulfil their role in society.

Consequently, it is important to understand how members of different occupational groupings see the role of a university in society at large.

The analysis of the materials reveals some similarities between what academic and non-academic members of staff say about the role of the university (Appendix C, Table C1). There is a great deal of similarity between academic, manager-academic and non-academic responses highlighting the role of the universities in contributing to personal development through 'providing educational opportunities', 'enabling people to realise their potential', 'promoting fulfilment'. It is often titled as 'an opportunity factory' where people are 'supported to become liberated and take control over one's own life'.

The respondents from all three occupational groupings talked about the critical role of universities "We can hold up a mirror to the society of which we're a part. So I think universities are for producing very intelligent, good values, future generation. We're important because we act as that conscience and that critique of the society of which we are part" (Member of UET). The scope of such a role included tasks to 'unsettle assumptions', 'to challenge a status quo' and 'to turn students into critical thinkers'.

The role of universities in knowledge creation was mentioned by both academics and non-academics. The knowledge creation aspect was often associated with testing and extending of the boundaries, making contributions to knowledge and social capital as well as with extending knowledge and societal capabilities. Some of the respondents highlighted the superior position of 'Oxbridge type' and the Russell group universities in 'pushing boundaries of the academic research'. Such a position is viewed

as different to universities like University of Middleworth, i.e. 'new' post-92 universities. They are deemed to have more of a teaching focus which prioritises activities to 'produce students with a degree qualification'. They are seen as working with students who were not successful with their previous studies and 'getting them up to the level that they are on par with the rest of their peers' (Senior Lecturer and Subject Head).

Manager-Academics and non-academics talked about the role of universities in promoting social mobility and providing wide access to higher education. The economic impact of universities was referred to throughout the interviews with manager-academics. The responses ranged from the role of a university 'to support local and regional economies and to provide jobs', to recognition of the university sector in the UK as a 'major contributor to keeping the economy in a reasonable shape and on track, notwithstanding the largest recession'. These responses were given by both manager-academic and non-academic members of staff, most of them occupying senior and executive management positions at the university. These views echo the 'new managerialism' ideology (Enteman, 1993; Clarke & Newman, 1997; Exworthy & Halford, 1999, Cutler & Waine, 2000; Reed, 2002; Deem & Brehony, 2005) which advocates the importance of the economic role and the economic contribution of the public sector. The prevalence of the economic role of the public sector, and higher education sector makes no exception, is associated with the new kinds of imposed accountability, including the wide-spread use of performance indicators and league tables, target-setting, benchmarking and performance management (Kirkpatrick & Lucio, 1995; Power, 1997). For instance, employability statistics including Designation of Leavers of

Higher Education (DLHE) evidencing the economic impact of university education is one of the key statistical data required to be submitted to HEFCE. The language of economic impact, employability and social mobility effects was widely used throughout the interviews highlighting the current structural pressures in the sector. As previously discussed in Chapter Five, these pressures are associated with marketisation of higher education (Brown & Scott, 2009) and governmental shift from viewing higher education as a public good to viewing it as an 'education delivery mechanism' for private individual benefits resulting in cost-sharing policy agenda (Browne, 2010), where the cost of higher education has been shifted from state to students.

The themes of legacy and contribution to society were present in interviews with both occupational groupings. The role of university in "Educating next generation to be intelligent and open with set of values that are sound" (Member of UET) and in "contributing to the human fabric of society" (Senior Manager-Academic) has been mentioned by the members of the university executive team. Over-arching statements about creation of the good in society, for instance "The purpose of the universities is to make a better, a better world!" and the role of "improving society and human well-being" are voiced in interviews with the university lecturers.

The role of universities as one of the 'ivory tower' which is "outside all the tumult of society, in a sense, but they are also something you can look towards" (Professor) has been discussed in one of the interviews. This imagery is linked to the Bush's (1945) understanding of the university, where scientific truth is seen as absolute pursuit of science and universities

are guardians of such a pursuit. The Professor argued "If you look to university that should be where you looked at it for the truth really and where free speech would be exemplified". In the same vein, they see the role of universities as "the embodiment of the pursuit of knowledge without fear or favour, the enlightenment project, they are the embodiment of that project". This echoes Newman's (1858) and Arnold's (1912) view of a university as a place which pursues knowledge without fear or favour. It is a place of a 'universal knowledge' where academics are prepared to be critical and where the freedom of speech is held at the highest value. According to the Professor, the narrowing of an academic role to a professional focus is a departure from these ideals.

The learning environment where students are able to challenge themselves, take risks, explore new things and make mistakes is seen as an integral part of the idea of a university. Non-academic research participants talked about the university as an opportunity "for students to have a different social environment, which is really important. Independence is really important" (Senior Manager, Student Centre). A university' role is seen as one of the "creation of learning environment where students are able to challenge themselves" (Quality Manager) and where "students should be allowed to make mistakes; take risks and become more independent" (Senior Manager, Student Centre). These views are in tension with the increasing regulatory pressures on universities to be accountable for their processes, which leads to adherence to the achievement of the key performance indicators which are used to generate publicly available Key Information Set (KIS) data. The KIS data does not favour the discourse of 'risk, challenge, independence'; it is much

more process-driven and use the language of 'student satisfaction', 'average salary of graduates on completion', 'a summary of taught hours, tuition fees, etc.' (UNISTAT, 2015). These categories are easier to measure and to manage, as per 'new management' ideology (Kirkpartick & Lucio, 1995), when compared to the categories associated with 'taking risks', 'making mistakes', 'becoming independent' and 'challenging oneself'.

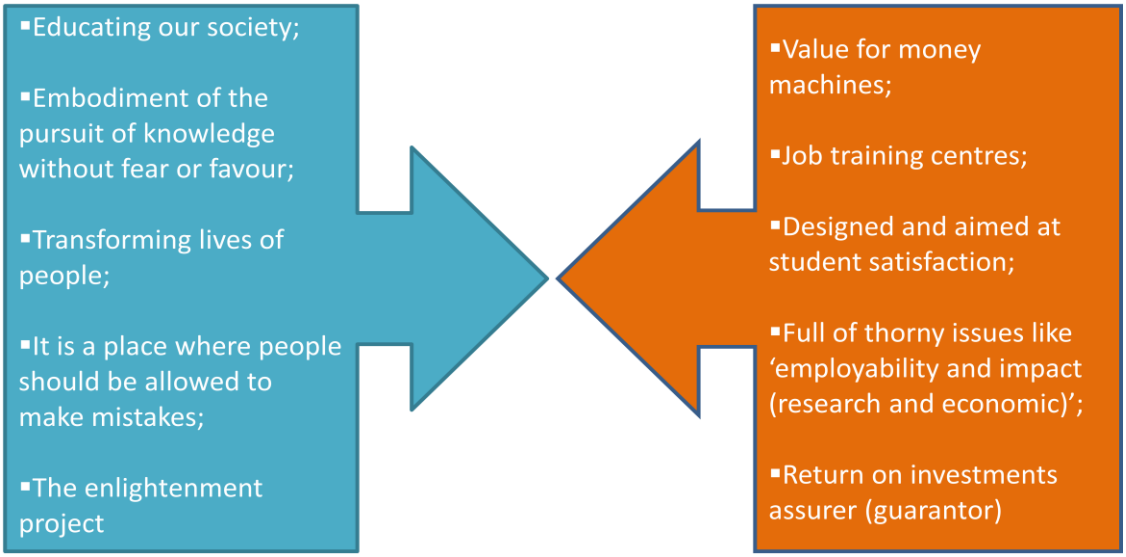
Two aspects of a university role, namely: preparation for work, and developing young adults, were identified in the interviews with both manager-academic and non-academic members of staff. Some emphasised the role of universities in preparing students for work and specifically in 'up-skilling to support economic growth' and 'to educate and give transferrable skills'. A more specialised focus was offered by some of the non-academic staff by suggesting that there is a role for universities to play in developing young adults where it offers a transition from school environment to "being a young adult and giving an environment to develop those sort of fledgling skills of adult independence, away home and away from a structured school environment" (Senior Manager-Academic).

Throughout the interviews, some of the research participants have discussed what the role of a university should be and how they see it. The majority of respondents who offered such perspectives were from the academic background. For some of the respondents the core tensions lay in the narrowing down the role of the universities and the use of the discourse that shape student expectations of higher education as purely transactional activity designed for student satisfaction: "Customer satisfaction discourse is at odds with that core function and it's to bring

human richness and human challenge into our society and so I think I would be, the Universities' catch phrase does worry me. You know the one that says 'good value for money delivered with a personal touch'. I really don't, I think it's really important for universities not to be complacent in promoting those satisfaction discourses because they are doing themselves out of a job..." (Senior Lecturer).

A broader range of tensions are further observed: between a view of a university as an educator of society or as a 'value-for-money' machine; designed for fulfilment and designed for student satisfaction; between the inevitable connection of a university with the state and the need to keep a critical distance; between the need for reproducing an existing occupational structure and renewing it by promoting social mobility; between societal expectations to 'deliver qualifications and skills' and academic endeavour to encourage open and critical debates in the environment free from immediate utilitarian pressures.

Figure 6.2: The role of a university: tensions identified as a result of analysis of the interviews



Seeing such tensions through the prism of occupations, the following dilemmas emerge:

- Between the preservation of the traditions of academic occupation, such as academic freedom, criticality, collegiality, and adherence to the emerging agenda of 'professionalism' in higher education;
- Between the supremacy of academic occupation in higher education sector and a view that encourages dilution of the academic occupational dominance to other occupations in the sector;
- Between a view of university student experience that is challenging, exciting and 'life transforming' and a view of the experience that is concerned with accountability for student lifecycle with measures around 'progression, attainment and achievement' and performance in the sector league tables.

These dilemmas are to be considered in relation to the nature of the student experience initiative in the UK higher education and the regulatory pressures around it. Building on the analytical and conceptual materials developed in the chapter, the following Chapter Seven explores the relational dynamics between the university occupational groupings in the context of the increasing marketisation of higher education.

Chapter 7: Marketisation of higher education: emerging trends and impact on sector occupations

The marketisation of higher education is seen by some commentators as one of the most profound changes taking place in the sector over the last decade (e.g. Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013). The sector-wide strategy for introduction of the mechanisms of the market to higher education sector in England was strongly voiced in the Browne Report (2010). Apart from the structural changes in the sector funding, i.e. withdrawal of the annual block grant that government makes to universities to underwrite their teaching and reshaping of the allocation of student loan system, the report claimed that higher education is no longer thought as a provision of a public good, articulated through educational judgement and largely financed by public funds (Browne Report, 2010). Instead, it is thought of as a 'lightly regulated market in which customer demand, in the form of student choices, is sovereign in determining what is offered by the service providers (i.e. the universities)' (Collini, 2012:178-179). In the light of these changes, many universities are increasingly adopting business-like approaches in their day-to-day working to deal with the considerable changes in the sector (Universities UK, 2015a).

Such a dramatic change in the position of the government towards higher education has been largely debated as having a major impact on sector occupations: on academics (Harris, 2005; Lynch, 2006) and on mangers and non-academics (Whitchurch 2006, 2008, 2013; Brown, 2013). In this chapter I explore such an impact in the context of the University of

Middleworth and develop a concept of occupational connectivity, which is used as a conceptual tool to understand the relational dynamics of the university occupational groupings.

7.1. Marketisation of higher education: views of the occupations studied

Throughout the interviews, the majority of the respondents have agreed that the increasing marketisation of higher education is taking place. A range of responses to the initial question ranged from 'Yes, I would agree'/'Yes, absolutely' to very affirming statements like 'Undoubtedly'/ 'It is inevitable'/'Undeniably, yes'. All but one respondent were using the term 'marketisation' throughout the interviews. They confirmed that such a trend is taking place in the UK HE and beyond. One academic respondent has referred to the trend as a 'pseudo market', as in their view 'because of inter-market in education you can't put a value on it, so it is much more complicated than that. I suppose it gives you a pretend structure. .... you could have done it in the Middle Ages and based it on angels, doesn't matter what as long as it keeps you going but I don't think there is a market at all' (Professor). In their view, 'marketisation' is a term that is borrowed from the management discourse to describe the complexity of changes taking place in HE. They talked about the increasing pressure to adhere to the guidelines to deliver lectures and seminars, increasing emphasis on reporting and bureaucratisation of the academic occupation alongside the increasing pressures to ensure that students are 'happy and satisfied' rather than challenged. In their view, these changes could lead to higher education becoming a training programme.

There are a lot of similarities in the ways the members of the three occupational groupings talked about marketisation trends (Table D1, Appendix D). Academics, manager-academics and non-academics said that marketisation of higher education is strongly associated with government policy to increase competition in the sector. For instance, according to a manager-academic: "Under the current government for the past several years, you have this more explicit desire to introduce competition in terms of market pricing of higher education and public and private entrants into a market to deliver higher education. It's purely driven by the government. They've made the change and the change has been dramatic" (Dean of a Faculty). This view is echoed by the academics who find the scenarios, where universities competing against one another as well as collaborating on research, as being puzzling. As for non-academic members of staff, they talked about how the potential change of the government (interviews took place before the General Election 2015) might lead to changes in wider policies, for example policy on immigration, and the affect it might have on international student recruitment as an important source of the university income (Havergal, 2015; Universities UK, 2014, 2013).

Other trends associated with government policies in HE were liberalisation of fees, opening of the HE sector to private providers, introduction of league tables and surveys (NSS and PTES) to measure student satisfaction. The respondents from all three occupational groupings have referred to the increasing dominance of the 'Value for Money' sector discourse (HEFCE, 2014; Universities UK, 2015b) associated with the governmental policy for accountability in HE. A Student Liaison Officer has commented that student demands for compensation are on the increase: "They talk very much

about compensation about getting money back, about how much it's cost them and about how it's not value for money. That's one of the very first things they're asking for is compensation. And you know they're not coming and saying "Can we have this or that? Can you organise for us to have the time?" They're saying we haven't had it, so, you know, where's the compensation in this?" (SLO, Faculty). The 'Value for Money' discourse is used to describe what manager-academics do: "It's another part of the job, to help them [students] judge whether what they're going to spend, as they see, £,9000 on a year is actually going to give them value for money but also an outcome that is a whole raft of different things" (Dean of a Faculty). Academics voiced concerns about the use of 'Value For Money' discourse to determine the quality of teaching: "The quality that you provide, value for money, becomes an issue because the learners are involved in determining that" (Programme Leader, LTA Central Lead).

'Value for Money' discourse is seen to be associated with the 'students-as-customers/consumers' discourse. The respondents from all three occupational groupings have used customer/consumer discourse to describe the marketisation tends: "There is that emphasis on the student as consumer, the student as customer, although I think we've actually been quite good at turning that into sensible direction" (Programme Leader); "So, whilst there has been an attempt to create a market, really there isn't one. Everyone's just gone at £9,000. So how does the customer then distinguish, the student then distinguish between different offers?" (Dean of a Faculty); "The university's been through the process of thinking about students as customers, and thinking about students as students. And I think we've gone back to that student terminology rather than the

customer terminology" (Senior Manager, Career Services). These quotes illustrate the university efforts to debate the conception of students as customers. The notion of students as customers challenges the traditional view of students as learners and, with the introduction of the market mechanisms to deregulate the sector, marketisation-inspired discourse of students as customers is frequently in use. For instance, our respondents have commented on student behaviour as consumers when choosing a university to study at: "Students are increasingly making final decisions which are about more of a consumer-type relationship with universities: What is it that I will get? How many hours will I be taught for? What will my £8-9,000 worth of fees get me?" (Senior Manager, Student Services). All three groupings talked about the role of parents in student/consumer decision-making: "Students' parents as probably more sophisticated and mature consumers. They are certainly looking at some of those issues in terms of what makes a sensible choice of university for their son or daughter. Parental involvement in the marketplace has increased, I see those signs" (Manager, Student Services).

All three occupational groupings, some with a degree of frustration, spoke about the increasing pressures to engage in marketing activities at work: "A large part of my job is around marketing and recruitment, that's a big part of my job. And in some ways I regret that because sometimes I think it's that's it's at the expense of my time and energy" (Dean of a Faculty); "I see an increasing agenda about marketing and positioning of universities and brands emerging. There are particular flavours to universities that you might choose from, which is not left to word of mouth anymore" (Manager, Student Services); "Increase of the importance is attached to marketing

that we've constantly got to think about how we market ourselves" (Programme Leader). These demands to engage with marketing activities at an increasing rate create frictions between academics and non-academics:

"Marketing will have one idea of how to do this. We'll have another idea of how to do this and sort of conflicting ideas maybe of who our target audience is, who our market is. That has sort of often led to email exchanges and grief basically. Well marketing propose to do certain things and we very much feel that that's the wrong way of attracting students or that that is going to attract certain students who we don't necessarily want to attract as well" (Senior Lecturer)

This position illustrates the tensions between 'established' and 'emergent' occupational groupings (Noordegraaf & Schinkel, 2011) in day-to-day university working. These tensions are also observed in this account about the pressures to recruit at large and the need to observe the academic standards:

"You go into clearing and it's grab, grab, grab don't care what they like just grab them and then three weeks later it's like what have you take all these rubbish students for. You know these are never going to get a2:1 what are you going to do about them? You know they've failed everything get rid of them. It's like you told us to take them!" (Programme Leader, UG).

This scenario illustrates the tensions between the operational and strategic focus to recruit more students in order to ensure university's business continuity and the academic standards for access and progression in higher education. These are tensions between a strategic need for a university to survive and to recruit more students and the core, traditional academic values of academic judgement and academic rigour (Brown, 2013). One of the academic respondents suggested that not all universities experience the same tensions and thus they vary as to the extent to which they are

market driven. He has commented that universities that strongly rely on the student numbers for their survival, and these are mainly teaching-focused universities, are more responsive to the logic of market. He asserts that these universities try to emulate strategies and tactics of a business to succeed in a market. Universities that have strong research profile and reputation that attract high quality students are far less market driven and are seen to be better at preserving traditional university values and the relational dynamics between the university occupational groupings.

In the context of the University of Middleworth, a teaching-focused, post-92 university, the tensions between the occupational groupings become more obvious when considering the differences in how academics, manager-academics and non-academics account for marketisation trends. The majority of the academics interviewed confirmed that they have experienced a higher degree of accountability in the teaching practice and that they felt that teaching focus is increasingly market driven. From their perspective, there is a tension between being an 'excellent' teacher and being an 'excellent' researcher. They said that marketisation trends prompt re-definition of the role of a student and the role of a lecturer where "the position of a lecturer as an authority in their subject is challenged" (Senior Lecturer). The Senior Lecturer then went on to talk about the dangers of 'hollowing' the education. They warned: "We are in danger of hollowing their education. Their decision is they'll be hollowing it out because they, like us, are being drawn into a discourse that is not necessarily their own". The reference to the discourse of a market and the associated notion of students as customers/consumers is a reminder of a danger of simplifying higher education to a commodity status (Slaughter & Rhodes, 2004). In

this case, the consumption of a commodity should be easy and hassle-free; there is little room for challenge and criticality. The Head of Research of a School commented "Education is about mutual challenge and we have got to be examples of the willingness to be challenged. You know by entering into our own studies and doing scary stuff, that kind of stuff is really important".

The concern about the commercialisation of research was apparent to some of the academics interviewed. One of the academic respondents reflected on the recent experience of a research 'away-day':

"Ah, marketisation. Well, certainly there's a more commercial edge, for sure. I think about the research away day that just kind of brought it home to me. It certainly was a classic example of that, where almost all the key speakers were talking about the commercial nature of doing research. And I remember, I didn't know the lady, but I did congratulate her afterwards, but I think she said, "What about the notion of social justice? What about doing research for that purpose?" And I went, "Yes". What about that? We forget that in all this trying to bring income in" (Head of Research of a School).

The debates about the nature of research and teaching, the role of a lecturer and role of a student seem to be at the heart of the discussions about the marketisation of higher education amongst the academics interviewed. These debates are about the very essence of what the academic occupation is for and the role of a university in society (Collini, 2012; Brown & Carasso 2013). The manager-academics echoed some of the concerns about the ever increasing 'commoditisation' of higher education:

"It's the commoditisation of higher education, I suppose, as being something that the discourse is increasingly about buying a product, a customer buying a product for a particular desired outcome, which is now articulated increasingly as just getting a job in a particular area. So you've

got that sort of commoditisation of higher education, which is in the popular press, in the less popular press, but just in the general discourse around higher education. That's been going on for several years easily. But now, for the past several years, you have this more explicit desire to introduce competition in terms of market pricing of higher education and public and private entrants into a market to deliver higher education" (Senior Manager-Academic).

According to manager-academics interviewed, the discourses of market and commoditisation, which are reinforced by the behaviours, are viewed as signs of marketisation. As a Member of University Executive Team commented: "The kind of behaviours that we all engage in as universities in competing with each other and the language we use. Winning market share, etcetera". These new and increasingly powerful discourses are prompting universities to turn to competitive behaviour and in doing so to develop and implement their strategies often concerned with gaining the advantage over others, inside and outside their 'benchmark' group. Such moves are often supported by the attempts to align internal processes and systems to ensure that the university practices 'deliver on customer (student) satisfaction'.

For the majority of the non-academic staff interviewed, such an internally-focused impact of marketisation is significant. They commented on the increasing trend of universities investing into infrastructure and estate "to give that sort of 'wow' factor". As for university processes: "There are elements of student experience", Senior Manager at the Career Services comments, "that are very much the student perceives as a contracted service. So anything to do with the administration, for example, they just expect to run smoothly. Anything to do with their use of the estate, the library, etc.". This quote illustrates that the impact of marketisation is felt

through students demanding higher quality of university services and such demands are responded to by the university-wide initiatives resulting in changes in systems, processes, working practices and, sometimes, in more substantial attempts of university-wide re-structuring and re-organisation initiatives. Despite the prevailing 'operational' focus in the discussions with non-academic staff about the marketisation trends, one of the comments was about the loss of elitism associated with the university work: "There's not the same level, perhaps, of elitism as there, perhaps, once was" (Team Leader, Faculty Administration). This reflects feelings about the diminishing 'special status' of higher education and the sector occupations (Higher Education Network, 2014; Collini, 2015; Ryan, 2015).

7.2. The impact of marketisation of higher education on occupational groupings

In the discussions about the impact of marketisation on higher education occupations, there have been notable differences in the answers of the three occupational groupings studied. Based on the answers provided by the academic respondents, the following themes have been identified (Table 7.1):

Table 7.1: Reflections of academic staff on the impact of marketisation on academic occupation

Themes	Representative statements
Increasing number of audits, evaluation and accountability in teaching	"Yes, certainly the focus on integrity of curriculum, quality of teaching, quality of learning experience, quality of learning environment". "As a university, we are lot more accountable for our teaching practise to make sure that we are hitting the targets that not only the students are setting in their own mind but also the university setting, I feel we are probably moving now more down the route of where the schools need to be where it's becoming a little bit of a you must hit this to be achieving a good outcome". "Module evaluation was one that I've just mentioned and I think that's going to, I'm not going to do."

Standardisation of teaching	"Yes, I have seen a number of kind of official and unofficial trends. In terms of standardisation and moves to electronic submission and marking of assignments, the use of turn it in. I think it is an increasing kind of systematization of things. The increasing use of delivery systems which are based on power point and lecture recordings, which has become so institutionalised. So, but the worse thing is that you have to have a power point, you have to make it available and that really in a way you say well you know do you need me then, can't I just do one lecture record it, I'll do some power points and then that's it, I'm redundant".
Managerialism in HE	"I think over 40% of new employees in higher education are managers without any academic experience so why are they employing all these people, why does everyone have mission statements and to me it is a sign of confusion so I would say that is a false marketisation". "So I think all of these kinds of things go, I mean the marketisation goes together with modularisation, standardisation, delivery, audit and those kinds of things I think is still a very kind of managerialism approach and particularly notions of best practise, so I'm very much against notions of best practise….".
Investment in university infrastructure and learning spaces	"Certainly in the last ... just in the last four or five years here, this institution, the amount of investment that has been focused on learning spaces and particularly student facing learning spaces, as opposed to just teaching spaces, has changed enormously for various reasons. This goes back to the marketisation principle, if University A invests £10 million on making the university seem brilliant, beautiful and attractive, University B cannot afford not to do the same but that's a virtuous thing, it's a positive"
Increasing emphasis on recruiting more students and 'finding the business case'	"There's more of an emphasis on attracting students and there's more small fights I would say over how best to do that. I think in my role we are very much aware that we want to attract students, we have to attract students and we're kind of accepting that but I think what's sort of there is now the sort of little fights" "We go out and find the business, so our role has shifted massively because our off-campus teaching where we're teaching whole groups from one particular school, one school at a time, is utterly different to the on-campus Level 7 teaching where you get people coming in from a range of backgrounds, a range of places, a range of institutions".
Pressures to achieve high student satisfaction (NSS, PTES) scores	"It's really important we got over ninety percent student satisfaction this year and of course, I want to protect my team".

These themes reflect the concerns about the bureaucratisation trends affecting the academic staff, which are evident from the increasing demands for standardisation, accountability, achievement of KPIs and the rise of the managerialism in HE (Deem *et al.*, 2007; Deem & Johnson, 2000). The trends discussed are seen as having a significant impact on academic occupation. Often, the respondents spoke negatively about such trends: 'I feel redundant', 'It is a sign of confusion', 'It is a false

marketisation'; and some have seen them as threats to academic occupation 'I want to protect my team' (Programme Leader).

Although the academic respondents spoke positively about the increasing investment in the university infrastructure and the learning spaces, they expressed concerns that some universities might not be able to afford to invest and thus loose to the competition. Nevertheless, the comments about the investment in learning spaces that provide opportunities for creative use of technologies and multimedia for 'more interesting, impactful and dynamic learning' have been voiced across the sector (JISC, 2015).

The manager-academics interviewed echoed some of the concerns expressed by the academics about the pressures to recruit students and the supremacy of the 'business case' to attract executive support and internal finding. In addition to that, the following themes have been identified as a result of the interview analysis:

Table 7.2: Reflections of manager-academics on the impact of marketisation on occupation

Themes	Representative statements
Greater emphasis on business case and income generation	"The appointment of Business Development Managers to help with bid writing and income generation, all of that has been, you know has become normal for universities to see themselves as businesses and I think, you know some struggle to get their heads round that, definitely".
Recruitment and marketing activities	"A large part of my role here is about recruitment and marketing and so on but even elsewhere a large part of my role was around third stream income generation". "Are you getting the message about it [university programmes] out clearly to prospective applicants and are you giving people a great experience when they're here? I think the imperative in the last few years in England in particular has just ratcheted up dramatically in that you have to make sure the product is fantastic. You have to make sure that you get your message out really clearly to prospective applicants, because they are so attuned".

Tensions between academics and administrators	"That's a whole new segment, in terms of working relationships, elsewhere I've worked there was definitely tensions growing between academic and admin because everyone felt like they had more work to do and the lines were drawn between what was seen as academic work and what was seen as administrative work and my role really crosses over between the two. I kind of don't see myself quite largely as an administrator rather than academic, so I don't really care but I know a lot of my colleagues care deeply about the role and the division of labour and that does cause problems and I think this marketisation has increased that because it's put academics under pressure to have responsibilities and duties that they don't really think are part of their job, frankly".
Working with data to inform customer decision-making	"One of the effects of charging £9000 is that people who are thinking of applying are so much more attuned. I would say to what it is they are going to be purchasing in terms of information and wanting to be absolutely sure that they're making the right choice. That's just changed dramatically. That's developed enormously in the last few years. And making sure then that you give people a really, really great experience when they're here, because underlying all of this is that you have to keep, certainly for me, I have to keep an eye on the underlying metrics, whether I like it or not because the underlying metrics affect how we are perceived outside". "They look at the data, or they come and meet us as well mainly, but even before they meet us they look at the data, how are we ranked, what are they going to get in terms of employability. How are we doing in terms of student satisfaction, how are we doing in terms of the chance of getting a 2:1 or a first. What's the cost, all these different metrics drive choice and that's before they even step through the door to come to the open day or anything like that".
New occupational groups entering HE	"So the driver has been from the professions to come into Higher Education, not for – HE hasn't said, "Come on in", it's just been a case of the professions have said, "We need to be in Higher Education." Of course Higher Education institutions have embraced that, because you know it's good to have that extra mix of people coming in, but the driver was from the profession itself".
Shifts towards business-like universities	"I'm not uncomfortable with the principles and methodology and language of business. I think actually it can be quite effective in understanding universities and what they need to do. And so I don't think actually that the new changes have lead me to be more map oriented or more business-like, more commercially focussed, because I've always been that way. What I do observe is that more people share that language. The policy agenda focuses and shapes the discourse a little bit more pointedly. What I do observe, some vice chancellor colleagues in some institutions that really find it awfully new and difficult to deal with. So I think there's a little bit of an unevenness in the impact across the sector".
Increasing drive for efficiency and effectiveness	"You are a business like in the sense of harnessing and deploying resources effectively, extracting maximum academic value out of what you do, giving the highest level of service, support, challenge, etcetera, to those that have trusted you with that decision. We are probably a little bit slicker, a little bit more capable of taking an institutional strategic decision and then seeing it implemented than a university that has slightly different structures or a slightly different history".
Forward-looking ('strategic') approach to programme design and university operations	"You just have to be constantly thinking about that and understand the journey that you're on. So five years from now, where do we want to be? Even ten years from now, where do we want to be? It could be somebody leaving primary school, moving into secondary school, ten years from now is going to be the next student coming through. What sort of education are we going to be providing for them, but how are we going to be perceived externally? And the course we develop today, well, the person's not going to graduate from that course, if we go for approval for that course and we launch it, it's going to come in 2016, they're not going to graduate until 2020, that's six years from now"

Reflections of manager-academics were primarily centered upon the rising tensions between academics and administrators as a result of the increasing workload for both occupational groupings and the growing pressure on academics 'to have responsibilities and duties that they don't really think are part of their job' (Dean of a Faculty). Such tensions are seen in the context of the increasing drive for efficiency and effectiveness in universities and the currency of the 'value for money' sector pressures (HEFCE, 2015; Universities UK, 2015b). Some of our respondents have commented on the increasing number of the new occupations entering HE sector, as in the case of nursing where nursing training is rapidly growing of as part of HEIs' provision. Manager-academics said that increasingly they are working with university and sector data to inform potential applicants' decision-making. This is not surprising since the universities has to publish their official key information set (KIS) data through HECFE hosted portal to inform the potential students about the key features of their programmes and the student satisfaction data. Manager-academics are increasingly asked to oversee the preparation of such a data as well as use it to performance manage individuals and teams.

A number of manager academics interviewed talked about the increasing 'strategic' focus in their work. The questions about the future trends in student demand, future shape of the university provision and the importance of being relevant as a university to the increasing number of stakeholders are increasingly being asked at the university executive committees. Debates about the relevance of higher education and its role in society in general and about the role and the purpose of the University of Middleworth in the context of the increasing marketisation of higher

education have often occupied agendas at various university executive committees as observed during the study. As the sector landscape dramatically changes, the questions about the role of universities and the role of academic occupation become a feature of the debates at the management meetings at various levels in the university. Throughout the observations of the Student Experience Strategy Committee work, these debates were at the heart of the discussions at the committee meetings and were often linked to the debates about the nature of university student experience, the university's approach and the practices towards the sector-wide pressures of student experience in higher education.

Out of the three occupational groupings studied, the responses of non-academics about the impact of marketisation on occupation have been most varied. The following themes can be drawn as a result of the analysis of the interview accounts:

Table 7.3: Reflections of non-academics on the impact of marketisation on occupation

Themes	Representative statements
Increase in collaborative and partnership working	"One of the key things that's developed at quite a rapid pace over the last couple of years, are things such as collaborations with further education colleges and relatively local ones, so regional FE colleges. There's also greater international collaboration but not as many as we've got regionally".
Accreditation of programmes	"There's a big push on accreditations, so most of the engineering programmes and technology programmes have got some kind of additional accreditation attached to them. So if you get this qualification, then you can come out with this as well. So that has quite an impact then on the work that we do within programme support".
Increasing complexity of working: across titles, campuses, programmes, employer engagement	"We've also got things like some of the art and design programmes are based at XTheatre, we've got a dance programme developed that should be starting in September we've got Park site, we've got Mill site. That only represents a proportion of the work that's done, there's a greater amount that's starting to happen further afield. So that impacts on the volume of work, yes, they might be sharing modules with programmes on ... with other programmes in the faculty as it is but then in terms of they've got to still go through a module board, you know, there's processes they have to

	follow, so that sort of increases that kind of activity and also then that might mean that we need to go to those sites in terms of fulfilling meetings, programme committees, that sort of collaboration work as well". "So that's one thing. I think the other is also to do with some of the emphasis on e-learning, some of the emphasis on partnership development. A lot of it to do with working with employers. All of this stuff somehow to me is about marketisation and it's very hard to define, but it does mean that we're producing something that's a product, which we then sell to students".
Increasing focus on achieving Key Performance Indicators	"I think we've seen much more of a focus around the Key Performance Indicators and how we meet those in building reputation and profile for what we do. The university wants to be seen to be an institution that's serving, very much serving the region socially and economically, and we've got a big contribution as the careers service to make to that. So there is more of an expectation of demonstrating that. So that has been a change".
Emphasis on being financially diligent and 'supremacy' of a business case	"I think the university's always been careful financially, and I think you see increasingly you have to build much more a business case and evaluate what you've done and demonstrate that's in been successful or it hasn't been. If it's not, funding will be withdrawn from that and … so that more business focussed at its heart, the need for a greater willingness to make some tougher decisions has been there". "The emphasis for example on business planning. The rationale we provide for that. The market intelligence that we are asked to do. There is also the due diligence. I mean, some of these things you would do anyway, because you don't want to develop a programme that doesn't have a market, but somehow the emphasis is changing, and it's being driven more by market need than necessarily the educational or academic rationale".
Greater personalisation of university services	"I think as well we're always seeking to be able to deliver a very personalised service, because that's what the students are demanding. But trying to find ways to do that that are efficient. It is just thinking through that – all of those benefits, drawing in all of that evidence and evaluating what you're doing and thinking about that".
Catering for international markets	"There's a thirst for growth in the international markets because there's a lot more competition by other universities and that comes not from the new marketing vision but really back to when they started capping home student places". "I've used the word market. That is where people are seeing there are bucks to be made. Coming back to my role and the way that we work with students, overseas students are ones that may need much more additional support and do we think about that when we're recruiting them? Potentially not. We don't think necessarily about their particular cultural, social needs. That's another student that we can get the full fees for rather than being contained within the student number cap we have on, how many new students".
Inclusion of parents	"There is definitely a theme which is around parental involvement and having to get our heads around the data protection issues associated with that but also the inclusion of parents as a part of the kind of consumer, doesn't sit comfortably with language, but consumer that we might need to think about".
Activities around wider community responsibility	"I mean, you know, a marketplace of fees leads to a high expectation of accountability and transparency for universities about what you do and feeds a high set of expectations about what you'll get for your money, linked to a much more detailed methodical consideration of "So where do we want to be?" in that dividing between what is our responsibility and actually what is a wider community responsibility or individual responsibility for the student".
Use of social media	"I think communication and voice are the two massive things that we've done, so what we have done is interact with students a lot more in their world so Twitter and Facebook they're things that students get on their

	phone, they might be exploding on Twitter and not thinking that anybody's going to be doing anything about it but we're watching it and we're on it". "I would say is the biggest change in workload shift for us because we are watching those technologies and are engaging with students in a communication way which is supporting a louder voice for the students, so where voice was more about surveys and focus groups and communications with the emails that we're going to send you to let you know what's happening".
Rise in 'Value for money' complaints	"I mean what, what we've found, what I've certainly found is that when I talk to students who're having problems they very often say to me this isn't what, this isn't what was advertised so they, very often the expectation of the student is driven by what we're selling them as a product and they'll very often refer to well in the prospectus it said I was going to get this. I would never have had a student have that sort of conversation before. .. it said I was going to get this and I'm not getting this therefore I'm unhappy. So yes that's definitely something that's changed yes". "Yes, certainly before, there are many more complaints now that I see; a few years ago the complaints would be very individual it would be about not particularly getting on with a member of staff or it would be, it would be a very individual thing you know something that's happened, but now the complaints seem to be, there are a lot more group complaints where a group of students will band together and come and see me and it's usually about value for money". "I don't know whether that's as much about the university or about compensation culture in general I don't know but yes they, the beginning of the compensation … Exactly PPI cases yes and whiplash claims but they do tend to talk about what money am I going to get back".

The types of impact identified can be themed around the following areas: increasing complexity of working with internal and external parties; increase in accreditation initiatives of the university programmes; growth in operations to support the expansion in international markets; focus on KPIs; personalisation of the services to meet customer demands; working with a wider community and parents; increasing use of social media; rise in 'value for money' complaints. Throughout the interviews the words 'students' and 'customers' were often used interchangeably. For many non-academic staff working in the central or departmental university services, students were referred to as users/customers of a service. Many of the non-academic staff interviewed had a university degree in management and administration and have used the terminology of 'customer satisfaction', 'ensuring smooth delivery of the services', 'resolving

customer complains' quite regularly. Throughout the interviews, there was less negativity expressed towards the marketisation trends in HE. For the majority of the non-academic members of staff, the marketisation offered opportunities for career progression and personal growth. The Student Experience Team Leader reflects on the change in their status and the focus in their role from 'operational' to 'strategic':

"I been here now I think it's seven years and I'm incredibly empowered and enabled …in my day to day work I get to go in the direction that I think I need to go in and I'm empowered and enabled to do that with my team. I think it is, it can be incredibly challenging if, if the direction of the travel of the institution doesn't fit then with what you need to do because I have to do then an awful lot of influencing and that's blooming hard work." And further:

"I have had managers in the past who would have been slightly intimidated by the people I have to work with, whereas my current boss [name of Pro-VC] have absolutely no qualms at all about popping up and seeing [name of VC] if I need to. I will and have done in the last couple of weeks had some incredibly in-depth conversations with the corporate management team or individuals from the corporate management team. So I think that not only am I empowered to do my day to day job but I'm empowered to be able to influence the people that need to be influenced in order to make bigger changes" (Team Leader, Student Experience).

There is an indication of the changes in occupational boundaries and the widening of the remit of student experience 'professionals'. Another non-academic reflects on the similar trend in another university-central department:

"So there is a difference and boundaries are changing and we're playing with those boundaries all the time, but it is interesting. Things are changing quite a lot they're changing quite a lot" (Team Leader, Student Support and Information Services).

The analysis confirms that all three occupational groupings studied acknowledged the impact of marketisation on their occupation. For

academics, marketisation is viewed as having a major impact on the academic occupation and the nature of higher education. The impact is mainly seen as having negative connotations and as being threatening to the occupation. The manager-academics commented on the university processes, systems and management practices becoming more business–like; rising tensions between academics and 'administrators'; increasing work with data and frequent discussions about the future of the university at the university executive committees. They commented on a number of opportunities that exist in the sector, but also on a great degree of turbulent changes taking place at present and in the near future. Non-academic members of staff are seen to have experienced the greatest variety of changes as a result of marketisation in the sector. Despite the numerous challenges associated with universities becoming more business-like, marketisation has provided opportunities for career progression, personal growth and greater remuneration.

Such a difference in the accounts about the impact of marketisation on the sector occupational groupings could be conceptualised as follows: the marketisation trend challenges the core values of academic occupation in relation to the value of higher education and prompts to redefine the relational dynamics between a student and a lecturer, a lecturer and a university, a university and society. Being a dominant occupation in the sector, academics feel largely frustrated, threatened and resist the university attempts to engage in market-driven practices and initiatives. Manager-academics, despite having strong connections to the academic occupation, are tasked to 'manage' and to 'respond' to the growing market-like behaviours of students, other universities, new entrants to the sector,

regulators, and the government. As for non-academic occupational grouping – they are often on the front-line of the university's 'adaptation' to the marketisation pressures and they are tasked to 'deal' with the situations as they emerge. Such a fast changing relational dynamics between the sector occupational groupings could be better illustrated through the concept of occupational connectivity (Figure 7.1).

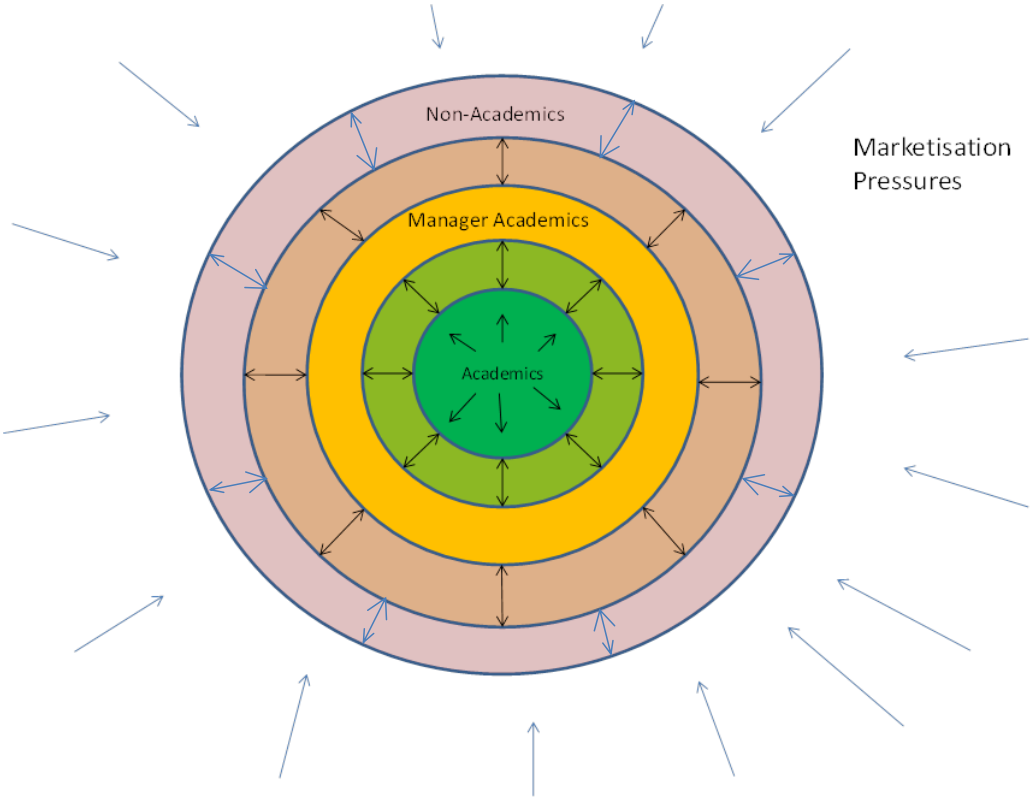
7.3. The concept of occupational connectivity

The concept of occupational connectivity is developed in this chapter to understand the relational dynamics between higher education occupational groupings. Often a single organisation would 'house' a number of occupational groupings with some of them being 'established' occupational groups, for instance academics in higher education, doctors in health sector, musicians and artists in creative industries. Alongside the established and potentially dominant occupational groupings, there are other, for instance university administrators, nurses, surveyors, counsellors. These occupations, although they might be working in the sector for a number of years, are not seen as dominant/'original' to higher education. They play an important part in the sector, but they lack the status of a dominant occupational grouping. In the study, these occupational groupings are generically viewed as non-academics. It is acknowledged that there is a great diversity of occupations fall into this grouping and, as the study confirms, there are a number of new occupations coming into the sector, for instance nursing, counselling and others. According to Whitchurch (2010, 2013), these so-called 'third leg' activity occupations are characterised by an increasing number of changes

in work patterns, roles, responsibilities and career progression opportunities. Such changes are viewed as organisational responses towards the increasing marketisation trends in higher education (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2010).

Manager-academics, as an occupational grouping, form the basis of management and governance structures in most universities. The representatives of this occupational grouping occupy executive positions in universities including pro-vice chancellor and vice-chancellor roles. These roles have requirements for a career in academia combined with substantial managerial experience and a 'track-record' of achievements in both fields: academic and management. They are seen as mediators between academic and non-academic occupational groupings. The relationship between all three occupational groupings is captured in Figure 7.1.

Figure 7.1: Occupational connectivity in a university context



Academics, as a dominant occupational grouping in the sector, are positioned in the centre of the occupational connectivity at a university. Non-academics are positioned in the outer layer of the occupational connectivity and manager-academics occupy the intermediate layer, between academics and non-academics. They are tasked with 'managing' both 'camps' and act as an intermediator in ensuring dialogue between academic and non-academic occupational groupings in day-to-day university working. Their working has elements of both: academic and non-academic; and they are in the positions that oversee departments, projects and initiatives, where academic and non-academic interests come together, and which could become arenas of tensions.

The concept of occupational connectivity helps to develop a better understanding of the relational dynamics between the occupational groupings in an organisation and to explore the potential areas of tensions between the various occupational interests. Each of the three occupational groupings studied has their own occupational interests to advance and to protect, in Weber's (1978) terms 'the closure of social and economic opportunities to outsiders'. Protection of the occupational status and autonomy has been observed as elements of the occupational strategies to reduce attempts to 'institutionalise' specialists skills and expertise in occupational forms, so that they become a resource to be used to social and economic advantage (Freidson, 2001). Yet, all three of the groupings work together in universities to ensure organisation's strategic success and business continuity. Knight and Trowler (2001) see modern universities as 'constellation' of communities' where diverse groups, cultures and practices work alongside each other and a more Weberian version of this phrase would be 'constellation of interest groups'.

The concept of occupational connectivity allows one to explain the relational dynamics between the occupational groupings where they have to work together, in another words they are 'connected' to ensure the strategic success of organisation, yet they have their occupation-specific interests to further. The complexity of such a relationship has been previously highlighted in the earlier studies (Hanlon, 1998; Miller *et al*., 1996; Noordegraaf & Schinkel, 2011). The interpretation offered in this study provides a useful tool for researchers and practitioners to explore the relationships between occupational groupings, organisation and strategy.

The starting point of such an analysis is to identify the occupational groups comprising the occupational landscape. The concept of 'occupational landscape' is linked to the notion of an occupation which is not bound by organisational boundaries and functions (Abbot, 1991). It refers to the arenas where occupational groupings come together and where their interests are 'played'. Thus, such arenas, at a group, an organisation, an industry level, are referred to as occupational landscape. Complex organisations, like universities, would often host a variety of occupational groupings. In this study, they are broadly grouped into three occupational groupings: academics, manager-academics and non-academics.

After the occupational groupings are identified, it is necessary to consider their position in terms of 'dominance' in the sector/industry. The dominant occupational groupings are often linked to the sector/industry occupational heritage and traditions, for example academics in higher education. The dominant group(s) is displayed in the centre to emphasise the centrality of their position to the industry/sector/organisation. Other layers of the occupational connectivity framework represent other occupational groupings, followed first by an intermediary layer of an occupational grouping representative of the management in an organisation, in this study – manager-academics. The outer layer is a generic representation of the other occupational groupings in an organisation i.e. non-academics in the context of this study. The interests of each of the groups are represented by arrows, where the significance and direction of these interests are indicated by the size of the arrow and the direction of its end-point (s). The arrows are plotted across the layers of the framework

depicting the possible areas of alignment and tensions between the interests of the occupational groupings.

The concept of occupational connectivity enables us to explain the findings of the analysis of the interview respondents' responses about the impact of marketisation on their work and occupation. The responses of academics indicate negativity towards marketisation of higher education. They appear to be threatened and uncertain about the future of the academic occupation and the position of higher education in society at large. The marketisation trends present challenges to the interests of this dominant occupation group in HE due to the increasing pressures for standardisation and accountability in academia, pressures to achieve high student satisfaction scores, bureaucratisation of academic work and rise of managerialism in the sector. In Figure 7.1, the direction of arrows in the 'dominant' layer of the framework is pointing outwards indicating resistance, negativity and tensions toward the sector strategic direction towards marketisation.

The intermediary layer of the framework, representing manager-academic occupational grouping, reflects the duality of manager-academics' position as they often have firm roots in academia, yet, have management responsibilities for running a faculty, department(s) and ultimately the university. They are often trying to align the interests of academics and administrators and ensuring the delivery of the university's strategic priorities. The dual-ending arrows reflect this position, emphasising the feed-in and feed-out direction of the interventions and the flow of activities. They also emphasise the dual nature of the interests of this group: to be

part of the academic community and inclinations to 'protect ' the interests of their 'home' occupational grouping, on one hand, yet, on another hand, they are in a position of accountability to deliver on targets, key performance indicators and the university strategic priorities.

Non-academic occupational grouping experience a diversity of changes and challenges as a result of the increasing marketisation of higher education. Their 'impact' stories, although with connotation of worries and uncertainty for their roles, on the whole sound more positive. Some of the respondents interviewed have seen career growth as a result of the recent changes in the university structures, where departments dealing with career and employability, international students, on-line provision, university student experience have been growing in size and importance. There is a sense of growing opportunities, personal and occupational, that this grouping has been exposed to as a result of customer and market focused initiatives in the university. These developments 'had to be embraced' according to the respondents. Although not without challenges and worries of uncertainty, the marketisation trends are in-tune with the interest of this occupational grouping. The dual-ending arrows, illustrating a weaker resistance end and a stronger supporting end of the sector strategic direction towards the marketisation, depict non-academics' position on Figure 7.1.

The analysis of the interview materials surfaces a number of tensions between the occupational groupings and the framework of occupational connectivity is helpful in articulating those. There are growing tensions between the interests of academics and manager-academics around the role and the nature of academic work and the rise of managerialism in

academic work (Dunleavy & Hood, 1994; Hood, 1995; Hood & Scott, 1996; Pollitt, 1999; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2000). There are tensions between manager-academic and non-academic occupational groupings around the increasing complexity and diversity of university working; the fast-shifting strategic priorities; and the emphasis on cost efficiencies in the university day-to-day working to deliver on sector-wide 'value-for-money' strategic pressures. There are tensions between academic and non-academic occupational groupings around lines of responsibility for university student experience and the shifting boundaries of academic and administrative work. Such an array of tensions amongst the interests of the occupational groupings studied paints a complex picture of the occupational connectivity in the university context. It allows for an in-depth exploration of the occupational landscape and evaluation of its potential impact on the university strategizing practices, as arenas where the interest of occupational groupings are acted and observed.

The above tensions can also be explained by the increasing uncertainty of the external environment, where the occupational groupings sense the threat to their status and power at a sector and at a university level. The connection between power and uncertainty has been explored by Hickson *et al* (1971) resulting in the development of a strategic contingency theory of power. This theory suggests that if the unit or groups of an organisation can show that it can deal with strategically important uncertainties, it has a stronger 'power' position when compared to others. As Miller *et al* (1996) points out 'ability to manage uncertainty on behalf of others provides a vital power base'. The analysis of the accounts about the perceived impact of marketisation on occupational groupings show that academics express

a great degree of uncertainty about the future of the academic occupation and higher education sector. These are supported by the accounts of worries about the increasing accountability and managerialism in the sector. Manager-academics and non-academics express less of a concern and more of a caution of what might be the next governmental move towards the marketisation of higher education in England, to some it is a removal of the student recruitment cap and a full liberalisation of tuition fees.

The application of the concept of occupational connectivity in different contexts would likely produce different patterns of occupational connectivity mapping. A certain degree of misalignment between the interests of occupational groupings is expected as such is the nature of occupations - to observe their own interest and power (Freidson, 2001). However, it is argued that for an organisation to respond faster and in a more effective way to the changes in its environment there is a need for the interests of the occupational groupings to have a degree of alignment. This could allow for the tensions to surface and to be resolved, and for the conflicts to be dealt with in a manner that would allow for the creation of the working environment where people are 'on the same page'. In this case, the majority of arrows in different layers of the occupational connectivity profile would point in the same direction. Thus, the state of the occupational landscape and the occupational connectivity becomes an important imperative for the strategic success.

The concept of occupational connectivity is going to be further explored in the context of the student experience 'initiative' and its influence on the

day-to-day university working and the university strategizing. Accounts of how university occupational groupings view and negotiate their interests in relation to the sector-wide student experience pressures and the university responses to these pressures are going to be explored in Chapter Eight.

Chapter 8: The student experience higher-education 'initiative' and occupations

The student experience initiative in higher education is associated with the marketisation in the sector, sector discourse about the commoditisation of the university education and a view of students as customers and/or consumers (Brown & Scott, 2009; Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013). This initiative is seen as a 'strategic priority' in the sector, which has been emphasised in a range of governmental and regularity papers on higher education recently (Browne Report, 2010; Green Paper, 2015; White Paper 2011, 2016). The introduction of the Student Experience League table by the Times Higher Education/Guardian indicates the sector-wide competitive ambitions towards the student experience agenda. This chapter explores the relational dynamics of the university occupational groupings in the context of dynamically unfolding regulatory emphases on Value for Money (VfM) (HESA, 2013; HEFCE 2014; Universities UK, 2015d) and the increasing focus on understanding and 'managing' student experience in universities.

8.1. Student experience: definitions, currency and tensions

8.1.1. Student experience defined: academics

As part of the study, the notion of 'student experience' has been explored amongst the university occupational groupings. The academic responses were predominantly focused on the academic experience and the experience of learning: "For most students the student experience is an experience of learning" (Senior Lecturer and LTE Lead). An occupational

focus and preparation for becoming a member of an occupation was also seen as an important element of the university student experience:

"Student experience - again I suppose the forefront would initially be their academic knowledge and achievement that they come in with A levels with. Realistically, though they wouldn't necessarily realise it when they first started, they would have a fairly basic knowledge of science. …. So it is very much about making them a scientist it's what I think the student experience is about" (Senior Lecturer and Subject Head).

Some academics expressed concern about how a view of students as customers hinder the best of endeavours to provide a stimulating and challenging learning experience. This echoes the discussions in the previous chapter about the impact of marketisation on the academic occupation and the concerns associated with the market and customer/consumer oriented sector discourse.

"I think it's difficult to separate student experience from student learning. What I sometimes wonder that what we mean by student experience - to what extent it is related to the notion of customers and keeping people happy. One of the things I think, which is an odd thing, about student satisfaction surveys is that really we don't want to satisfy students. We shouldn't be merely satisfying them. We should be kind of stimulating, exciting, challenging, unsettling people. To say are you satisfied - that's really bland" (Senior Lecturer).

Although the majority of conversations about student experience with the academics were mainly around student academic experience, quite a number of academic colleagues expressed a broader view of student experience:

"Student experience, for me it means the whole of the student's life in university. So it's not just about their academic experience. It's about their social experience; it's about experiences outside that, it's to do with the growth of their identity. It means the whole journey through, through university and every student experience is unique. Every individual is taking a unique journey and what we've got to do is construct systems that

allow them to construct that experience for themselves rather than seeing them [students] as passive receivers" (Senior Lecturer).

This is more of a holistic view of student engagement with a university and the impact that such engagement might have on student self-identity. The respondent uses the phrase 'growth of their identity', which lacks precision in conceptual terms, as one's identity is seen as everyday attempts of individuals to develop an ongoing sense of the 'self' and the 'other(s)' in interaction with their social environment (Ybema *et al*, 2009). Yet, in their view, students experience is a unique journey and such a journey is about shaping individual/student identity. The Senior Lecturer expresses a view that for university experience to be meaningful to an individual student, students have to take part in such an experience rather that to be passive receivers of 'student experience'. There is a reference to the role and responsibility of the university staff in 'seeing' students 'as passive receivers' of the student experience and in doing so contributing to the co-creation of 'passive' or 'in-active/disengaged' student identity (Nygaard *et al*, 2013; Solomonides & Reid, 2009).

One of the academic colleagues interviewed makes an assertion that the culture of the university and, in particular, occupational culture 'of the place' has a role to play in the experience of being a university student:

"It's, broadly speaking, how students experience their three years at university in relation to the teaching that they receive, in relation to how they develop as people, in relation to some of the more sort of straightforward services we provide in terms of accommodation, in terms of campus facilities. All that kind of stuff and a large part of it is sort of the culture of the place, the occupational culture in a way, the sort of student culture of a place and how students experience that. Do they experience the place as a caring place, a supportive place, a friendly place, an exciting

place as well, a place that opens up new possibilities for them" (Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader).

Referencing back to the notion of occupational landscape explored earlier in Chapter Seven, the relational dynamics among the occupational groupings are seen as important in relation to the university student experience. The interactions and the relational specifics amongst the university occupational groupings are seen as part of the 'felt' university student experience, i.e. they contribute to university being seen as a 'caring', 'supportive' 'friendly' place and a place which 'opens new possibilities'. This aspect of student experience thus far attracted little attention in the literature and is often omitted from the sector-wide and university conversations about the student experience (Clark, 1973; Terenzini & Reason, 2006; Sastry & Bekhradnia, 2007). This study asserts the importance of understanding the specifics of occupational landscape in universities and the relational dynamics amongst the university occupations as these are seen to be of significance to the quality of the higher education student experience.

8.1.2. Student experience defined: manager-academics

The manager-academics interviewed emphasised different aspects of the student experience when compared to the academic respondents. For some, it was all about the classroom experience:

"For me it's mostly about their classroom experience. So I think, yes there is the whole envelope of the student accommodation and the shop and if the food is acceptable, whether they can park. So all of those things are around the edges and are important, but I think students will put up with a lot around those aspects, if their experience in the classroom is really engaging and inspiring and it feels like they are really getting something

special there. So there it is, the heart of student experience is classroom for me" (Head of Programme Scheme).

A Dean of a Faculty spoke about two contrasting aspects of the student experience initiative: an importance of 'felt' student experience and the 'data driven' aspect of the initiative at the sector and the university levels. They described the 'felt' aspect as:

"The experience that people have when they are getting what we do: it might be the education in the classroom, but it might be, the research that we are working with them on. It might be a day's training, it might be the interaction they have with a member of staff at a conference, or an event, or at a dinner. That's the experience. How do people experience us? Are they impressed? Are they not? Do they like it or not? Do they get what they thought they were going to get? Or does it meet and or exceed their expectations? So you've got the immediacy of the interaction that gives the experience".

Here, the connotations of market pressures and the market institutional logic (Freidland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) are heard. Phrases like "Are they impressed? Do they get what they thought they were going to get? Or does it meet and or exceed their expectations?" are illustrative of a customer-focused orientation.

The 'data-driven' aspect of the student experience lacks immediacy, yet increasingly, as a result of regulatory demands on universities to publish KIS data. It becomes a prominent part of university practices and growing responsibilities of the university management associated with the student experience institutional initiatives (Guardian, 2015). And further. :

"Then you've got the data driven part of the experience as well. So how is the experience measured, or should we say judged, gauged, whatever you want to say? And that's through data. So on the one hand for students particularly, we have not just the NSS but we have the Feedback campaign. So we get feedback at module level, we get feedback at programme level, we get feedback at stage level through the different feedback surveys. We've got surveys. We get feedback through programme committees. You

get student representation. You get feedback just by meeting students and talking to them, one to one or one to many, which is great. I think it's really important. You've got many different ways in which you can get feedback. Part of that is qualitative, part of that is quantitative, but what's getting pre-eminence, I suppose is the quantitative element of that feedback, particularly through the NSS, which drives rankings in particular. There are different forms of, I suppose, gauging that feedback and understanding that experience and seeing what that experience is like" (Dean of a Faculty).

This aspect of the dean's role, which involves working with the NSS data as well as using the data to manage the faculty staff, is becoming a significant element of university management. Organisational and sector-wide pressures to ensure positive NSS outcomes are seen as trends associated with the marketisation of HE (Brown & Carasso, 2013; Gibbs, 2012; Lowrie & Hemsley-Brown, 2011; Sonnenberg & Fitzpatrick, 2012). Manager-academics at various levels, from Deans, Assistance Deans, and Heads of Schools to Programme Leaders, are tasked to ensure positive NSS performance. These roles are increasingly 'performance managed' and are asked to use the student satisfaction data to 'performance manage' the teams. Academics interviewed have expressed their frustration with such practices: "let's not forget in all this there's a need for a kind of balance and a measure here, and I'm not trying to be evasive. I think, yes, students are important, and the student experience is important, but what is also important for me is the professional view" (Reader and School Head of Research).

In the interview with an Assistant Dean of a Faculty, a market-led side of student experience initiatives is becoming apparent. They narrow the notion of student experience to a delivery of a university 'offer':

"The term 'student experience' has to start with 'what is it that we offer?' and what are the students' expectations. And there is something about student expectation that has to be managed from the outset. We set out what we're going to offer a student, so we offer a set of expectations of what they're going to experience when they come to us. So for us, for example, we talk about being a value-based university, we talk about offering a personal touch, we talk about welcoming people that might have come from untraditional backgrounds in terms of age or academic attainment, so we're embracing people who come with Access Courses rather than A Levels. We are embracing people who are more mature. So there's an expectation set up before the student arrives. So for me the student experience once they have arrived is to make sure that we meet the expectations that we've set up. And that we are true to that all the way through their experience. And that will include things like the personal touch, like the class sizes. Like the experience of their surroundings down in the atrium through to the delivery of teaching, through to the quality of the feedback that they get, should be at a standard that a student has been set up to expect" (Assistant Dean of a Faculty).

This view is illustrative of the duality of a manager–academic position. On one hand they are supportive of the traditional view of university experience which is rooted in their academic background. Yet, on another hand, as a by-product of the marketisation pressures, they are increasingly attuned to market institutional logic (Freidland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). There is an increasing use of the market/customer discourse in relation to students and their experiences and the broadening of a very notion of student experience outside the supremacy of the academic student experience. The signs that such a trajectory is not without tensions are revealed in this extract from the interview with a Senior Member of University Executive Team:

"It [student experience] is the academic experience, the academic challenge, the critique that was in the academic work as well as the quality of the hall of residence that I lived in. The fact that the food was more than acceptable, etcetera, etcetera, and I think about the totality, therefore, of the student experience. Thinking about the student experience and forcing us to see things through the lens of the student is no bad thing. I think it's

particularly pertinent for universities like ours, which are student centred and learning lead, that I don't think it would do a lot of harm to other universities to think a little bit more about their endeavour to see through the lens of the student" (Senior Member of University Executive Team).

The use of a phrase 'forcing us to see things through the lens of the student' gives an impression that such a perspective is somehow forced. They argue that such a perspective is particularly important to the University of Middleworth, regional, post-92, teaching-focused university. In the sector, the quality of the student experience is increasingly viewed as a source of differentiation, particularly for universities that lack strong research credentials and reputation. The recent introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (White Paper, 2016) supports regulatory agenda to re-emphasise the teaching quality as one of the key aspects of the university student experience.

8.1.3. Student experience defined: non-academics

The non-academic members of staff talked predominantly about the totality of student experience and the importance of understanding a broad picture of the university student life. This is atypical definition of student experience by the non-academic staff interviewed:

"For me, it's every element of the experience that student has with the university. So, their academic experience, their personal development, their living accommodation, if they're in the university halls, their catering on campus. It's every aspect of student experience. And it runs right through the student life-cycle as well, so right from making an initial enquiry with the university through to being an alumni, that whole experience is really what we're looking at" (Senior Member of University Management Team).

Managerial and operational terminology is often used in the interview accounts about the university student experience. The illustrative wording include: 'transition'; 'student lifecycle'; 'ensuring appropriate

communication'; 'supporting transition through the phases '. A view of student experience as "a whole package to help students make that transition as a new starter, doing well on that programme, to the final bit, when you then walk out the other side, hopefully an improved person that's then moving forward in the right direction" (Team Leader, Faculty Administrative Team) was often echoed in many interviews with non-academic colleagues. Such a mechanistic and a processual view of the student experience contrasts strongly with the views expressed by the academics and manager-academics interviewed.

The complexity and the wide scope of the student experience agenda is seen as presenting difficulties to setting managerial and strategic priorities, as highlighted in the interview with a Senior Administrator and a Member of University Management Team:

"It's everything. I can remember in applying for my ... well, the first version of my current post, being asked the question [managing the student experience]and my answer was I need to understand what you're aiming for from this brief. Because the student experience is everything and so where are you drawing the boundaries and the parameters for this post because otherwise any post-holder would be run ragged. That's why I go back to the tag and the label as both helpful and unhelpful. Because if I said to you that in my role sometimes people want to take ownership of something which is about the student experience because it's personally very important for them to do so. That could be about their particular service or their particular course delivery or whatever it might be. Sometimes it's very easy for somebody to say "Oh that's to do with the student experience, so you need to do something about that" or "You need to take an initiative about that forward", which means that it, well it's just unhelpful. So it's vast, it's absolutely vast. If we strip it down to: what are the components parts of what a university does, should do, and ought to do. Package it together in a way that makes sense for this university, for the people who not just come but are involved with the university. Then delivering the best we can in those different component parts of what we do, for me then it becomes what it is about" (Senior Administrator and Member of University Management Team).

The complexity of tackling student experience issues and initiatives at various levels in the university is discussed in the interview. The challenges of working with such a broad agenda as student experience are associated with the difficulty to observe the boundaries between academic and, a broader, university experience. The respondent describes the situation, where because of the title of their role, they are often asked to deal with a wide range of matters often perceived to be associated with the student experience. They feel that such an approach is not helpful, as their remit is outside of the academic domain. Therefore, there is a need, they comment, for a sharper focus in defining responsibility for the student experience at a central and local university levels, and across the academic and non-academic domains.

A Team Leader in a Student Experience Team (a central university function overseeing administration and analysis of student feedback mechanisms, including NSS and PTES surveys) talks about a more 'personal' dimension of student experience.

"I take it to a human level, I think there are loads of strategies and surveys and words and phrases that you can throw around student experience. For me those are helpful and they drive us.What's important is "THE STUDENT's EXPERIENCE" be that Barvy, John, Kathrine, Gurpreet: whoever it is. It is their experience. That to me is the phrase. I think we miss the point and unless we think of those people and their experiences and the baggage that they bring. And if we know and understand our students we then design and create with them in mind. We need strategies and meetings and approaches to help that, but when you hear ministers talking about having a great student experience - they have no idea what they're talking about. They genuinely have no idea and it's about how we can interpret that for individual people, that is what the student experience is" (Student Experience Team Leader).

Such a, more 'personal', view of the student experience, signifies appreciation for the individual differences in understanding and 'feel' of the university student experience. It is affected by nationality, ethnic background, previous education and life experiences i.e. 'the baggage that they [students] bring'. Such a perspective is different to the 'students-as-customers' associations and signifies the focus on individual students in understanding the 'felt' student experience. It does not, however, declare the supremacy of the academic experience over other aspects of the university experience. All of the respondents from non-academic occupational grouping expressed the holistic view in defining the student experience with little differentiation between the academic and a wider university student experience.

8.1.4. Currency and priority issues

All interviewees commented on the currency of the student experience initiatives across the sector and at the university (Table E1, Appendix E). The representatives from all three occupational groupings associated the currency of such a focus with the marketisation of higher education (Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013). A range of such associations include: "I think it's unavoidable in some senses given the marketization and the cost of degrees" (Senior Lecturer); "I completely approve of it. Well because I think otherwise there's a tendency to overlook that still. … I think there've always been reasons for that and nowadays it's partly because of the marketisation" (Head of the Joint Honours Scheme); "We've talked about marketisation, and a lot of that is about student choice … . So

no, I'm very happy to give that student focus" (Senior Member of Career and Employability Centre).

A number of academic colleagues expressed concerns and 'warned' about the potential dangers associated with the focus on student experience: "In a way we could, if we're not careful, we could be tyrannised by students who say look I'm a customer. I'm paying this is what I want you to give me" (Senior Lecturer*).* Another quote expressing similar concerns about how focus on student experience might impact on academic occupation and how it might 'limit' the role of a lecturer/teacher:

"I think a lot of people are worried that improving the student experience for people it seems to mean giving the students what they want. That's maybe not always the case, maybe that's actually a bit unambitious and doesn't actually really improve the student experience because it limits our role as lecturers and as teacher. Those who can provide some sort of life changing process for the students" (Programme Leader).

The concerns were expressed as to how the focus on 'student experience' is translated across the university. From the point of view of a Programme Leader and a Subject Head:

"If student experience becomes more realised within the academic mind to make the programme better, yes, that's good. But if it's being brought in as a negative the whole time of what can you do additionally to what you are doing already to improve student experience, then I feel it's becoming perceived as a negative from the academics. Which means that it's starting to get maybe a little bit of backs up as in: well, we are doing what we feel a good job but actually we're still being asked to do more. ....Because it is being used as a bit of a stick I think at times, you know again when you have to go and talk about your programme health-check and your NSS scores and why, why, well there're some elements of well as we always come back to look at things like our student-to-staff ratios and more" *(*Programme Leader and a Subject Head).

The interviewee describes their frustration with the university practices of 'managing student experience' at a programme and module levels. It is

described to be used as a 'stick' to manage the performance of the teams and individuals, for instance programme 'health-checks' with a focus on student participation in NSS, PTES and other university feedback surveys. These approaches are increasingly becoming part of the management practices at universities, which are seen as being influenced by the strategic focus on NSS performance as one of the determinants of a university position in a various sector league table. Management demands are on the increase towards the focus on managing and attaining high NSS scores at a programme and a module levels. For the academic occupation, where the quality of student experience has always been a priority, such demands are having negative connotations. In the above quote, there are connotations of resistance and frustration. The interviewee further describes their position: "that's why I think academic staff starts to get cross with student experience, because it's like well no we have to be there to be supportive. Well there's an element that it's gone too far and it comes under that student experience umbrella".

A manager, reflecting on the currency of the student experience agenda, states that the student experience has always been a priority for an academic occupation. In her view, the current emphases are associated with de-professionalisation (McKinlay & Archers, 1985; Haug, 1993; Reed,1996) of the academic roles and in particular a role of Programme Leader.

"I would say we've always done it, but we've called it lots of other things. And this is just the terminology we use now. If I think back to when I was a Programme Leader, I would say that most of my time was spent working out and developing ways to enhance the student experience. That's what my role was about. So I don't think it's changed as such, but what has changed, though, potentially, is where the focus or the locus of

responsibility lies. And that's been a result of, particularly in this university, the de-professionalisation of Programme Leaders. I'm going to be open about it; I think that's what's happened. And the fact that the fact that the student experience has been taken out of their hands and is being done to them by a centralised unit that seems to know more about it than anybody else, but actually sort of … well, I won't say any more" (Non-academic Manager)

The insights into 'centralised' approaches to management of the student experience initiative are shared. There is a frustration that the very position that bears the prime responsibility for student experience (Programme Leadership) has been de-valued and de-professionalised (McKinlay & Archers, 1985; Haug, 1993; Reed, 1996). There is an indication that the centralised units are seen as being more interested in responding to the marketisation pressures in the ways they administer sector and university surveys; monitor, report and 'target' NSS performance; develop and report on KIS statistics, rather than in championing deeper, university-wide, conversations about the nature and the meaning of the student experience in the university context.

This view of a rather 'centralised', bureaucratic and a target-driven approach to student experience at the university were expressed by a number of non-academic members of staff:

"There is transference of responsibility around student experience, which says that people perhaps don't own as much of it as they can or should because there is an agenda round student experience. Therefore, it's legitimate for other folk to do some of those things. It's both helpful to provide focus, but unhelpful because of that transference of responsibility issue. And if it's not woven through what you do, then we have got a problem and therein lie some of the issues that we have. We have this issue around the hit list of programmes who have a lower student satisfaction. Well that's not about NSS, that's not about a survey result, that's about what are you doing which is genuinely thinking about the experience that your student on your course have and how it is that they

feel and you feel it ought to be different. Let's get on with those things and the satisfaction will come as a result. And so the conversation shouldn't be about the university student experience, it's got to be more locally owned than that" (Manager, Student Centre).

A lack of ownership for the student experience agenda at a local (module, programme, school) level is seen as tension. Such a tension is around the university approach where the central university non-academic departments and the cross-university project teams 'drive the student experience agenda' with little connection to the work practices at local levels:

"I approve of it if it's going the right way. And if it's focussing on the right things, things that are meaningful and make a difference, because I think it's the sort of thing… who decides it's a good student experience. It should be students who decide that and I'm not sure that they are always given the opportunity to do that. We have groups around the university that are labelled student experience, project groups labelled student experience, who's decided that experience needs to be changed? And why and what the benefits are? Because have students been involved with that and sometimes they're not necessarily" (Manager, Student Support Services).

Such an approach is associated with the lack of connection between the university's increasingly competitive and 'business-like' behaviour and the 'localised' approaches to student experience. According to one of the manager-academics interviewed:

"The university can get so enthralled with their development and their strategies for maintaining their position, that they forget the highly individual nature of student experience. The other thing that concerns me is, and has for a long time, is the student experience of the majority. What I see is universities investing tremendous resources at the edges of student experience and not all students benefit from, what I think, is the majority of investment. I think the quiet majority who just go quietly about their business and do okay, don't get the most of the resources and I think there's something not quite right there. I'd like to simplify at the edges and put more into the student experience for the minority" (Head of a Programme Scheme).

This is seen as an illustration of the market institutional logic (Freidland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) dominating the central university departments' approach to 'managing' student experience. In doing so, the central departments are seen as trying 'to take ownership' of the issues which are seen as traditionally being 'owned' at the local levels. The tensions between the administrative and the academic departments, and the occupational groupings, arise as a result. Such a situation contributes further to the de-professionalisation of an academic occupation (McKinlay & Archers, 1985; Haug, 1993; Reed, 1996) as the traditional responsibility of academics for student experience is increasingly becoming everybody's concern and 'everybody's business'.

The frustration with the centralised initiatives towards the student experience is expressed in relation to a university-wide initiative towards employability and continuous professional development (CPD), as part of the 'package' of initiatives aiming to enhance student experience:

"I had a good degree experience, but my god it was nowhere near as hand holding and supportive and student experience and employability led and PDP as it is now. I've done pretty well with my academic career and I think students are perhaps bamboozled with it a bit as well. They get it forced down their throats. That's it, but then you never would have gone back and questioned your academic grades and that's where I'm starting" (Programme Leader and Head of Subject).

The situation described above, where the central, non-academic departments are seen as being 'in control' and 'driving the agendas' of employability, career development, survey performance management, communication with students, illustrates a more powerful position of these departments, when compared to the academic departments. This position is reinforced by the considerable resourcing to support various projects

under the umbrella of student experience. Thus, in the ever increasing uncertainty in the higher education sector, the central non-academic departments occupy a much stronger and a more powerful position as they seem to be in a better position to deal with the uncertainty. According to contingency theory (Hickson *et al*., 1971), a more powerful position is gained and is reinforced when a group demonstrates ability to deal with strategically important uncertainties. Such demonstrations are often associated with a range of activities performed by non-academic staff: management of student complaints; performance management at NSS and PTES, which is increasingly used to manage academic performance; development and management of KIS data; oversight of the student charter and others. Thus, the study asserts the growing power of the non-academic occupational groupings when compared to the academic and manager-academic occupational groupings.

The accounts about the priority issues associated with the student experience provide further insights into occupational interests of the three occupational groupings studied. The issues around learning, student progression and preparation for a 'professional' career, for instance 'becoming a scientist', were mentioned as key priority issues by the academics. In the same vein, the comments about ensuring high quality of teaching in class and a broader academic practice, including the availability of "module handbooks, stuff up on blackboard, three-week marking turnaround and making sure the quality of feedback is good so that they can actively use it from one assignment to the next" (Senior Lecturer) were mentioned as a priority. A number of Programme Leaders interviewed said that for them issues around student wellbeing and mental

health take priority: "I think mental health is actually probably the biggest one for me in terms of sort of what I end up dealing with on a day to day basis through emails, through people coming into my office" (Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader). Student wellbeing is seen as a significant factor in student progression and achievement in higher education (HEPI-HEA, 2015). An increasing attention to student wellbeing, and in particular to student mental health, in the sector is supported by the view that collective wellbeing is an essential component of student success, confidence and satisfaction (Grant, 2006, 2009; Havergal, 2016; RCPsych, 2011; Universities UK, 2015e).

Throughout the interviews with the manager-academics the following student experience priority areas were mentioned:

- Ensuring that poor experience at a programme and a module level is addressed: "The absolute priority for me is if they as an individual are not experiencing in their module, something of satisfactory quality, that at least meets, but preferably exceeds their expectations. If what's happening in the programme is just poor, or is sub-standard, that is not happening, that's a key priority" (Dean of a Faculty).
- Ensuring appropriate class-sizes: "I think maintaining class sizes that are conducive to learning is quite important to me. I feel where there's the capacity for students to feel like they're properly engaging in a smaller class size, then that works better. …The other thing that's important to me is the right facilities around you" (Assistant Dean).
- Students being an integral part of the university community: "Having the joint honours students feel that they are integral members of the university and integral members of both their subjects" (Head of Programme Scheme).
- Appropriateness of the university resources, including learning resources, estates, staff and communication technologies: "the student experience

issues that are high on my profile currently are all about the academic side: people, spaces, and places" (Senior Member of University Executive Team).

The use of managerial terminology is evident throughout the interviews with manager-academics, for instance: "ensuring minimum dead space", "to make sure that we drive students' achievement as high as it possibly can go", "they are a big part of the university, a big income generator, but they are not treated or seen in that way". The analysis of the interview materials supports the view of the duality of the manager-academic position discussed in Chapters Six and Seven of the thesis. Such a duality is seen as where the manager-academics are compelled to stay loyal to their academic interests, yet increasingly they are adopting 'business-like' approaches to managing the areas they oversee: schools, colleges, university-wide programmes, partnership and collaborative provision, a university. This position becomes an important feature of manager-academics personal identity work.

The responses of non-academic staff about the priority of student experience issues are centred on approaches to 'managing the students'. For some, the priority issues depend on the position in the academic calendar and the phase of the student lifecycle: "It's very much determined by whereabouts we are in the academic calendar. This time of the year for me it's making sure that students whose marks aren't what they thought they were get appropriate advice" (Student Liaison Officer, Faculty*);* "I'm particularly focusing in on that first year student experience so it's the pre-arrival transition through their first year" (Project Manager, Student Experience Team); "The issues are around assessment and awards and

especially because it's highlighted at the moment. I really do think it is providing them with their grades as soon as possible and speeding that whole process up. … I do appreciate that there's markings got to go in and they've got to go through the boards and one thing and another but I still think there's quite a time delay for them reaching the students and I think that is a pressure" (Manager, International Centre). These quotes illustrate the flavour of pressures around the student experience initiatives: issues around the academic calendar; first-year student experience; assessment and awards; ensuring quick marking turn-around, which is centrally set as a three-week assessment marking turn-around across the university.

The answers from non-academic respondents suggest a process-based view of student experience associated with a notion of 'student lifecycle', which is traditionally referred to the entirety of the higher education experience for students (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2014). This approach signifies the importance of the university systems and processes to manage the key stages of the student lifecycle: access; retention and progression; progression to further study or to/within employment. The illustrative responses to support this view are: "I think the priority for me is some system things. I think students being able to easily access information that is coming from one source of truth for students is really important. The timetable system would be really important." *(*Manager, Student Support Centre)*;* "I think if we don't get it right at the design stage, then we've got a problem, yes? So, if what we're planning to deliver to students isn't going to work, then you will always have a problem with your student experience. End of. So for me that is the priority, it's getting it right, it's the design" (Non-academic Manager).

There is a sense of a mechanistic approach to 'seeing' and 'dealing' with students as a type of resource to be used in the university operations. As such, there are emphases on the value for money (VfM) generation and accountability: "It is value for money. We need to understand what that looks like and why it looks like that and then there'll be a whole series of things that we need to do in order to affect that. I mean there was a perfect storm which is what we created what we had a couple of months ago. That really showed how if we look at one thing at a time we're going to be screwed and we need to look at how that feels from a student perspective" (Team Leader, Student Experience Team). The VfM sector discourse (HEFCE, 2015, Universities UK, 2015d) is linked to the regulatory pressures aimed at ensuring that universities fulfil their duty in delivering 'value for money' in accordance with the HEFCE's Audit Code of Practice and Financial Memorandum with the HEFCE. This duty requires regulatory compliance for transparency and accountability to evidence 'the delivery of value for money from public funds' (HEFCE, 2004/27). Such a regulatory agenda translates into policies and practices to ensure the accountability and audit of value for money at the institutional level. According to the Team Leader at the central university Student Experience Team, student perspective is seen as an important determinant of value for money generation in a university context. Subsequently, the university student experience initiatives become often associated with the VfM initiatives and the accountability practices at the university.

In discussions about the student experience priority issues with non-academic staff, the importance of relationships with academic staff was mentioned on a number of occasions: "Their [students] relationship with

academic staff, I think is critical at the start of each semester. It is all the time, but at the start of each semester as well" (Manager, Student Support Centre*).* The impact of the relationships between academic and non-academic staff on students experience was also discussed:

"I think because of the work we do with the academics, so we're not directly coming up against the student experience, it's the communication with the academics that we have. So that they have the right information in terms of helping resolving any kind of student issue, query, whatever it might be. … Staff might feel on programme teams that they have to deliver certain things when actually there's an expert in another department that could help take that pressure off, so that that student experience is then more spread out, students aren't overloaded within the_first weeks. I think there's that communication aspect that we're a middle man, but that we can help get the right information to them at the time that they will need it. I think there's also about sharing information so that we know what communication has gone out to students so, again, we can help reinforce that, we can share that with academics and they're aware of what's ... been told where to look for information, that kind of thing" (Team Leader, Faculty Administration Team).

A rather mechanistic view of student experience is of notice here, where it is narrowed down to communication with students over a number of weeks. The awareness that the poor relationships/communication with academics could impact adversely student experience is expressed. Communication matters are brought to the attention as a source of potential tensions between the academic and non-academic staff.

8.2. 'Students as …'

8.2.1. Academic views

The interview materials reveal different positions of the members of university occupations towards an emerging sector-wide discourse of students as customers. The academic colleagues interviewed contested to

a various degree a view of students as customers. From a strong rejection of such a view: "Students can never be customers because education is a peculiar thing. When you go to university as an abstract concept you don't know what is going to happen to you. You will have your views challenged, you could change in an infinite number of ways, probably will, you could end up having your life turned upside down" (Professor). To an admission of hesitation and uncertainty on the matter:

"I'm splits with that one; if you ask the students they don't see themselves as customers, however, from our perspective they are paying a significant amount of money to be here and they should be entitled to the best education they can get. Although the students say they don't feel that they're customers, they're also aware that they're getting a large amount of debt from being here and therefore maybe expectations have raised accordingly" (Senior Lecturer and Subject Head).

And a more affirming, yet a contradictory view, highlighting a degree of uncertainty as to how the university students are to be seen:

"Practically, clearly, they are [customers]. At a purely pragmatic level, they are making a commitment to take on the financial implications of the cost of their study and in that from a purely technical perspective, that is what they are. They have an option as to where they buy into for their higher education experience in which case they are making a consumable choice. …. Underneath that, and again this is a personal perspective, there is an instinctive aversion to the term. I don't think I'm alone but, personally speaking, I prefer and I see tutor-student as being a more virtuous relationship than educational provider and customer because a student, by definition, matters at a personal level and a customer is a number, so to speak. But then at the same time, you know, customer service, customer service design, there are lots of positive things that we can gain from that, but personally I find the term student to be of a higher status than customer" (Senior Lead in Learning Enhancement and Senior Lecturer).

To a complete confirmation that for some parts of the university provision, particularly in the delivery of professionally accredited programmes, students are comfortably viewed as customers:

"I think it might be slightly different for my area, but my students are definitely customers because we are going into their centres to deliver something. And if we don't deliver what it says on the tin when we go in and sell it. So I think it's, I think it's you know, whether or not the same criteria should apply to eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty one year olds traditional students then I'm not sure. But in our area where we are actually seeking the contracts, absolutely they are the customers. If my Senior Leadership Team that I'm dealing with in a school or the HR Director turns round and says we don't want you to deliver that module next term as we previously agreed, we want you to deliver this module because these are the issues we've got in our school. Absolutely we'd change to what they want and so we are very responsive in that way and that we are very market lead" (Senior Lecturer).

Despite this rare admission to students-as-customers view, the majority of the academics colleagues said that they did not view students as customers and for some: "it was a really unambitious view of students, it sounds like they're going to Tesco to buy some cheese which I think is, I think university is probably a much more, much more life changing event for the last majority of students" (Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader). As for alternative associations, the majority of academics stated that they accord with the view of students as students. Some have warned that an increasing trend of using 'business-like' discourse presents a real danger and de-values the role of higher education:

"Different students on different courses have a different identity and we have a different role. We might find words like 'corporate' and 'employability' and 'customer' distasteful but they might all be relevant. They are most relevant when they are held alongside the descriptors like 'learner', 'person', 'developer', 'contributor'. You know all these other things, these human things that are important. So it's not the words themselves that frighten me or that I find distasteful, it's the fact that they may be dominating something else that is also important to do with being and learning and growing and development and challenging and all that" (Senior Lecturer).

There is an expression of concern that the market and the business oriented discourse, which is associated with the marketisation pressures and managerialism in higher education, could narrow down the role of higher education. These trends and associated discourse are seen as 'simplifying' the role of higher education and thus the experience of it to commodity consumption. The complexities around 'being and becoming', 'learning and growing; 'developing and challenging' could be viewed as unnecessary complications in the 'higher education training programme' (Collini, 2012).

8.2.2. Manager-Academic views

Students-as-customers associations of the manager-academics provide a contrasting set of insights from this occupational grouping. According to a Dean of a Faculty:

"Yeah. It doesn't really bother me really. They're students, we call them students but I think of them as customers. I'm not going to say, if a student walks through the door, I'm not going to say, hello customer, nice to meet you. I would say, you're a student of ours, great, nice to meet you but I'm thinking of them as a customer. So I think, I don't think of them as a customer in terms of they're coming into a shop to buy a pen and the pen is 50p and they go again. They're coming in, and whether we like it, they are buying a service and a product".

And then further to illustrate the pressures to deliver on VfM agenda and to ensure that students are 'satisfied' and the university is 'giving them the right experience'. These are reflective of the increasing marketisation pressures and the sector prevailing 'customer-satisfaction-to-succeed-at-the-market' discourse:

"……It's about education fundamentally, going back to the core purpose, it's about education and they are here to be educated, but equally for me,

I think of them as a customer. What have they bought? Are they satisfied? What's the experience like for them? Are we giving them the right experience or is education great? Are they getting value for money? So a lot of the things I have to deal with is people complaining about not getting value for money and increasingly the complaints that one gets are directly about money" (Dean of a Faculty).

This Senior Member of the University Executive Team said that, although they do not see students as customers, they acknowledge the need for universities to provide 'seamless' student experience:

"They're not customers, because they don't engage in an asymmetric transaction like most customers do. However, they do enter into a contract with us, legally and psychologically, where they have forged an expectation of what we will do just as we will forge an expectation of what they, what we can expect from them. And so I think it's entirely natural that students exhibit the same characteristics in understanding that contractual exchange, as they were if they were a customer for a restaurant meal, a mortgage, a car loan, or whatever. When you're a customer, there's an expectation that the other party packages something which you choose to buy or not. When you're a student, you enter into a contract with an intellectual organisation that is going to support you in creating what it is that you have the power to become and so it's a joint endeavour, it's a co-creation. But that joint endeavour and co-creation requires exchange and it's at that interface when that exchange takes place, that I think the concepts of customer and customer service are thrown into sharp relief" (Member of University Executive Team).

This quote illustrates the tensions between the traditional position of a student as a learner and the acknowledgement of the changing behaviour of students towards consumer-like decision-making and consumer behaviour. A Member of University Executive Team explains the position where the market institutional logic (Froiedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) is becoming increasingly prominent in the university setting.

The manager-academics at a lower level of the management hierarchy (Assistant Dean and Head of JH Scheme) express the disagreement with the students-as-customers associations:

"They're really not customers. If we see them as customers we really, we will fail. They're a customer in the shop and they're in some parts of the university services, they are definitely customers. But in the teaching, learning and assessment aspects, we need to be very cautious about using the word 'customer' because we will fail to establish a good and successful relationship with the students ,if we see them like that and they feel like that" (Head a Programme Scheme).

In fact, in order to 'repair' the damage done by the sector regulators and universities in supporting market and customer discourse in higher education, some of the respondents emphasised the need for universities to engage in dialogue about student expectations and to 'shape' such expectations: "I think students are increasingly see themselves as customers who are paying for a product. Part of our role is actually to engage with them and explain that's not how this is going to work and for your benefit" (Head of a Programme Scheme).

The overarching theme from the interviews with the manager-academics is that of a duality of their position on the matter: on one hand, desire to preserve the core values of university for learning, personal achievements, academic rigour and challenge; and on another hand the need to be accountable for quality of students experience to the taxpayers, the government and the sector regulators:

"Some people will say, they're not customers, you know. Yeah, there's a lot of semantics around customer or student. I think stepping back from the semantics, is that core set of expectations and exchange and the fulfilment or otherwise of those expectations. And when a student hands over their fee or even before when the government taxed people in order to create money to educate people. Then I think, there is a real need to be

quite explicit about what it is that exchanges between the two parties" (Senior Member of University Executive Team).

8.2.3. Non-academic views

The non-academic staff provided a wide array of responses in the discussions about students-as-customers associations. Intriguingly, they varied from a confident confirmation to a complete rejection of that view of students. Those who have agreed with a view of students as customers articulated it in a number of ways: "In terms of them being called customers? Well, I think already the term 'customer' is out of date. I would call them a consumer. They consume Higher Education. They eat it. Digest it, though some of them don't" (Manager, Quality).

A 'production' metaphor is used by a Senior Member of University Management Team to describe their position:

"I stand quite firmly that they are customers because, dare I say it, they are a commodity so we bring them in as a raw piece of material, we charge them a lot of money for that raw piece of material with the understanding that at the end we will give them a valuable experience and we'll give them the skills and the knowledge to take into the workplace. So if you see it, I hate to call it a production line, but a production line you've got, the raw material and at the output is the degree." (Senior Member of University Management Team).

A number of non-academic colleagues said that students can be viewed as customers only for some of the university departments:

"I think there are some things where they are customers. Where it is a transaction that needs to take place and that has a start and a finish. They can be a customer to the library…. As for university degree - they're buying the opportunity to work towards a degree, because if they were really a customer, they would give us £27,000. And take away a 2:1 in English. That's the customer. What we're doing is giving them an opportunity to invest. They've got to invest in it, which is why I don't think it is a customer relationship, because they've got much more stake in it. Because of all the

connotations that come with things, people use the term 'stakeholder' - I just think that's what they are. It's the term that I'm more comfortable in using" (Senior Manager, Student Centre).

Here is another view, highlighting the complexity of university-student interactions and the diverse view of students in various parts of the university:

"I think that the relationship that the student has with the university is multi-dimensional, multi-faceted and there will be a lot of interactions that the student or anybody has with the university systems and processes where they can be and will be defined directly as a customer because they are at the receiving end of a service that they may or may not have paid directly for. So are they going to get a car parking ticket, you know from N-Pas, or are they going through even admissions processes, they are a user of a service. …Where it gets trickier is this whole, you know, idea where you hand over your nine thousand pounds times three, twenty seven thousand pounds, and at the end of it you get your degree. Now, this is not what it's about, what it's about is about engagement with the opportunities and the learning opportunities the university provides when you come in as a student" (Project Manager, Central Student Services).

Further, there is an admission that even in teaching and learning domain of the university, a view of students as customers is relevant. There is a careful reference to the fact that some of the academic colleagues are in need of such a reminder:

"Having said that I think sometimes we do our students a dis-service in some of the ways that we treat them even within the learning, teaching environment. I think sort of making sure that we give them the best possible opportunity and the best value for money that they're getting is really important. But at the same time, there are some difficulties where you particularly want to describe a student as a customer within learning and teaching environment, outside the classroom absolutely" (Project Manager, Central Student Services).

According to a number of authors (Brown 2013; Collini, 2011), the increasing use of customer/consumer terminology in relation to students

has been associated with the increasing marketisation of higher education.

One of our respondents supports this position:

"I think it is a tricky word [students as customers] and I know it is a word that I use and we use within the team. I think that's because it does change the perspective of how you view the students. So as things have shifted over a period of time in relation to how much students are paying for their experience at the university, perhaps their expectations change as a result of that, that there is more of a direct transaction taking place between the student and the institution" (Team Leader-Faculty Administration).

A number of non-academic colleagues have disagreed with students-as-customers associations:

"They're not customers. I don't see them as customers. I think once you start looking at them as customers I just, I think in the job I do if I look at them as a customer. I don't think that's the right thing to do. They're an individual person. To me customers are people that come in and buy something you give it them and then they walk away. Well that's not the business that we're in." (Student Liaison Officer, Faculty).

Another point of view that rejects students-as-customers view, but introduces a term 'clients' in relation to how students are viewed and 'managed':

"I don't really like to talk about students as customers. Sometimes we talk about them as clients, to our service, because we are offering one to one service, and to that extent they are our clients. I think that being at university is one of the times when you can call yourself a student. You're not a customer, you are a student, and that's something quite different, and I think a lot of students are really proud of that identity as a student. I think it's only really when things go wrong, or they think they're not being the right quality of service that they then revert to calling themselves customers. I don't think there's any initial desire on a student's behalf to think about themselves as a customer" (Manager, Career and Employability Centre).

In one of the interviews, a Senior Administrator and a Member of University Executive Team, elaborates on the use of 'labels' and power of discourse at the sector and the university levels:

"I don't think that the analogy of the customer is helpful. I hear the debate, i.e., hear our own assertion within the university that, whether we like it or not, in some respects customers they are. I think that and I actually don't want to attach a label, so I have used the word consumers up to now. Consumer, consumption can be taken in many definitions and ways and phrases, but attaching a label almost drives us to the wrong place intrinsically….I do worry sometimes about the fact that we categorise students in such a homogeneous way, when actually they're learners, they're individuals, they're people, like we would all like to be thought of as and there as diverse a bunch as the staff group, as the group of people that live down the road in the city centre are. And if we actually a little more stopped thinking about them as trying to put them in a particular category and worked at the denominator of individual or group with common characteristics or need, we might do a better job. I think the characterisations of customer, consumer, co-producer are almost organisationally and sector important, they're less important to the student" *(*Senior Administrator and a Member of University Executive Team).

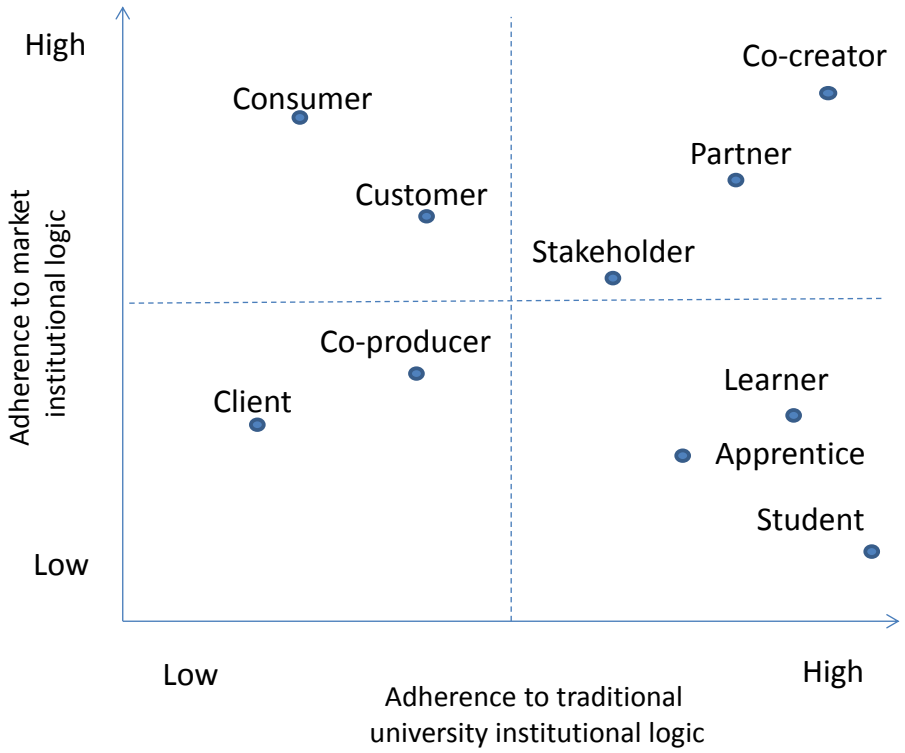
The tensions, between the need to preserve 'students-as-students' view and the need to assure 'the delivery of the high quality customer service' in universities for 'customer satisfaction', surface in this account. The respondent also shares a view about the increasing importance of the customer, consumer, co-produce discourse in the organisational and sector settings and the impact it has on the behaviour and attitudes of the university staff:

"And if we're really serious about the student at the heart of what we do, then if we couch our internal language in customer or co-producer or student or whatever it is, well lo and behold, our organisational behaviours will follow the language that we set. If we talk about people, if we talk about an individual or a course grouping for a particular group of students, then our behaviour may follow that we think in the unit of individual, course group, subject area, as opposed to students homogeneous, so all undergraduates are the same. Or "customers" drives a certain kind of characteristic in behaviours because of our understanding of customer service. So, yes, we need great customer service but not by saying "You're the customer, I'll give you great customer service"" (Senior Administrator and Member of University Executive Team).

The view of students as 'students' and a range of alternative views of students as 'customers', 'clients', 'stakeholders', 'co-producers' are illustrative of the specifics of the occupational groupings' views of students and the changes in these views as a result of the marketisation pressures. The discourse of the market and consumption dominates the views of non-academic members of staff, whilst academics, with some exceptions, view students as 'students', 'learners' and 'apprentices'. As for the manager-academics: students are seen as students, yet with the entitlement which the university needs to fulfil in order to ensure its business continuity.

Such a diversity of statements about the role of students can be understood through the tensions between two institutional logics (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Thornton and Ocasio, 2008): the market institutional logic and the traditional university institutional logic. Figure 8.1 provides a graphic representation of a range of statements about students in higher education depending on the stronger/weaker influences of these institutional logics.

Figure 8.1: Views about students in higher education: institutional logic perspective



In the situations where the market institutional logic is in a strong position and the traditional university institutional logic is in a weak position – students are comfortably seen as 'consumers' and 'customers'. In the reverse situation, where the traditional university institutional logic is strong and the market institutional logic is weak, the preferred view of students is of 'students', 'learners' and 'apprentices'. In the situation where both logics are in a weak position, students are seen as 'clients' and 'co-producers', which is seen as a neutral position. Where the market logic and the traditional university logic are both in a strong position, the terminology such as 'stakeholders', 'partners' and 'co-creators' can be at play. A view of students as stakeholders is also seen as a middle-ground view at a cross section of both logics. There is a growing interest in the

sector to view students as partners (HEA, 2014a, 2014b). And ultimately, a view, where students are seen as co-creators of their own and the university identity as well as their own experiences, has strong connotations with both institutional logics.

Such an array of definitions could signify a trend of re-definition of identities, roles and boundaries that takes place in higher education. For number of authors such a trend is referred to as a reconstruction of higher education 'professional identities' (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2010; Whitchurch 2006, 2008, 2013). It is argued that this trend involves reconstruction of personal identities and with that re-definition of roles, responsibilities and work practices of occupations. With that, there are on-going debates about the role of students in relation to their own university student experience.

8.3. Role of students and university staff

8.3.1. Role of students

There have been little variations amongst the occupational groupings in recognising that students play an important role in their own educational experiences. The palette of significance has varied, but all our interviewees, without an exception, commented about the significance of such a role. The academic staff talked about the student role in the following terms: "they are the ones who drive it. I think that's, they have a critical, fundamental role in shaping it and they can't expect it to be you know, staff lead" (Senior Lecturer); "It's entirely down to an individual learner or to a group, well, to an extent, how they select to engage with opportunities, with basic requirements and any two students can come

from very similar backgrounds, into exactly the same course and can have two profoundly different experiences" (Senior Lecturer and LTE lead). From a manager-academic perspective such a role is described as being: "Fundamental. We create the opportunity. … They freely choose which of those opportunities to take and in so doing, create the experience. But essentially, the student builds their own experience and they build it. It's kind of their own bespoking of the experience from that range of opportunities that are there" (Senior Member of University Executive Team). Non-academic respondents echoed the importance of such a role: "Yes that's very valuable. …. They shouldn't just be reliant on other people they should be active in their own education" (Manager, International Student Centre).

Some members of staff expressed their frustration with the lack of student engagement and students' passive behaviour:

"They have to want to be involved. A lot of students don't want to be involved. They just want to come and they just want to collect modules and that's fine, if that's what they want. They don't even want to do that they don't want to do anything they just want to turn up for three years and then get a degree. They're very frustrating students and I'm sure it must be even more frustrating for the members of staff who's trying to teach" (Student Liaison Officer, Faculty).

The concerns about the customer-like student behaviour and the students-as-customers associations surfaced throughout the discussions about the role of students:

"Again in some ways it's not a problem with the word customer because you can make that same argument for customers but customers don't have to be passive. We provide you with a lot of facilities we're very much there for you when you come here but you've also got to think, you've got to be active, proactive in terms of sort of thinking about what to make use of and how to make use of it" (Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader);

A number of the non-academic staff commented on the need to clarify student roles and responsibilities. Such comments were often linked to the issue of ever-increasing demands from the students and their customer-like behaviour. According to a Manager at Career and Employability Centre:

"…the role of the university is to provide all of the opportunities and to encourage students to take part, explain why. And the rest is all the responsibility of the student. So Higher Education is about you coming to your subject. And coming to your experience and making the most of it that you possibly can. And we can work really hard to encourage people to take part or encourage people to take the best advantage of it, but at the end of the day it's up to them to do it. So I think it's really important for us to be explicit about what our responsibilities are, but also what the students' responsibilities are, so not just what their rights are, but what their responsibilities are as well".

Representatives from each of the occupational groupings said that students can be more involved in student representation at the university:

- "They're probably not as engaged as perhaps they could be. I think there's a lot that they can do to help shape that experience for themselves and for other students. I know we're just beginning to dip our toe in the water here around things like not just putting the quality in at the end through the student experience and having students on validation panels but actually trying to get students involved at the outset in programme development groups" (Project Manager, student Experience Team).

- "I don't think the experience of students engaging in that process [student representation] is always the same. They're elected to it, not always engaging in it but we have other feedback mechanisms" (Head of Student Support Centre).

- "So students do have an important role to play. But unfortunately, I think, if you go to quality committees, where they have student representatives, quite often their concerns are limited to: we don't like this assessment there's too much of that assessment. We should actually be saying to them well actually you've done that, if you were redesigning the course what other things would you put in or what have you found out from your placement. So we could involve them more in the curriculum design, programme design but in a way it's almost like we don't trust them" (Senior Lecturer).

The role of students is seen as significant in relation to their student experience. Despite a wide range of views as to how students are seen (Figure 8.1), their role in shaping their own education is seen as critical. The discussions about the role of students lie at the cross-section of the market and the traditional university institutional logics. As a result, the university staff at various levels is increasingly engaged in discussions about the university 'offer' and the university student charter. In turn, the questions are asked about students' rights and responsibilities. Although in a rather reactive way, the marketisation pressures have forced universities to define their relationships with students in contractual terms. The discussions about student 'minimum entitlement', class sizes, number of taught hours, complaints and appeal procedures are influenced by the market institutional logic, which is strengthening its influence as further marketisation of higher education takes place. Some of the university staff interviewed see the initiatives to better understand the role of students and the university, including the rights and responsibilities of both parties, as an opportunity to 'improve student achievement', 'contribute to personal and professional growth', 'improve learning spaces and places'. Some academic colleagues are more apprehensive in engaging in these initiatives and conversations, whilst manager-academics and non-academic members of staff see them as a necessity, not the least due to the need to 'protect' the university.

8.3.2. Role of university staff

In the discussions about the role of the academic staff in relation to the student experience, there is an overarching theme that such a role needs

to be considered more carefully across the institution. Some of our respondents talked about the role of university staff in "constructing" student identity:

"…their [staff] role is to reflect on what, how their interventions, interactions with students are constructing the student identity. And if we are constructing a student identity that is passive, switched off, bored. You know, then we have got to change what we are doing, haven't we? And sometimes it may actually mean doing less and designing more for them to do" (Senior Lecturer).

The role of staff in constructing student identity is an emerging area of research in education studies (Macrander & Winkler-Wagner, 2016; Nygaard *et al*, 2013; Scanlon, Rowling & Weber, 2007; Solomonides & Reid, 2009; Tomer & Mishra, 2016). This view of relationships between a student and staff, a student and a university signifies the role of staff and university in 'constructing' identities of their students – 'passive', 'dependent', 'bored' and 'dissatisfied' at one end of the spectrum to 'engaged'; 'enthused', 'independent', 'motivated' at the opposite end of the spectrum and any variations in between those two polar positions. At the latter end of the spectrum, there is little need to talk about 'satisfied' students, as many commented that the role of higher education is much more ambitious than that as per section 6.3 of the thesis.

The manager-academics elaborated on the importance of the student-academic staff relationship in student identity construction. In particular, they have signalled the importance of such a relationship to student confidence, learning and development:

"Yes, well I think it [role of the university staff] is to maintain the kindly disposition towards students. It sounds very facile and I can see that but I think it's much overlooked. I think academics very much underestimate

the influence and impact they have on individual students, which a kind word and a negative word would also have. So they can be very, very damaged and bruised by any sort of negative words or dismissiveness. I've seen too much evidence for that but also the impact of just a little bit of kindness, which again I've also seen, the wall of gratitude or relief that comes back when you just help" (Programme Leader).

In the interview with a non-academic colleague, the importance of relationships between academic and administrative staff was discussed:

"Academic staff, personal tutors, module leaders, you have a connection with students that can be sometimes nudging against the boundaries of what I'm sure academic staff feel comfortable with. And yeah, that knowledge of where the boundaries are between what you need to do with the student and when you need to call in specialist help and for academic staff knowing that specialist help is reactive for them. I think that must be difficult. I've heard academic staff say that that's difficult" (Manager, Student Support Centre).

In the quote, the issues of definition of 'boundaries' and working with colleagues 'across the boundaries' are seen to be important aspects of working with students. There is an acknowledgement of the difficulty of this 'cross-boundary working' due to the fact that there a lot of academic roles (academic staff, personal tutors, module leaders) have elements of pastoral care and student support. Working together, sometimes in a reactive manner, creates difficulties. The relational aspect of working practices amongst the occupational groupings is seen as an important dimension, where the management and maintenance of the occupational boundaries (Gieryn, 1983; Kerr *et al*, 1997) becomes part of the university working life.

A Senior Member of University Executive Team expressed their opinion about the inferiority of their, rather senior role, in relation to the 'felt'

student experience and the importance of immediacy in 'constructing' the student experience:

"It is the people that do it. Nobody else. Everything is. It's interesting. I'm a university overhead and I'm part of the superstructure. And I'm a total irrelevance to the life of the student for the most part because what matters to them is their felt experience at every point of interaction that they have with the university. And all those points of interaction with people. They're not with the university as some philosophical construct or a set of non-sentient beings or physical spaces, it's people to people and therefore everything that student gets is about the interaction with people. So having the right people with the right behaviours, skills, attitudes, is absolutely vital" (Senior Member of University Executive Team).

They reflect on the importance of 'people-to-people' relationships in creating experiences in universities without emphasising the role of any particular university occupational grouping. He used a generic term 'people' when talking about the staff at the university. He concludes with saying that "So having the right people with the right behaviours, skills, attitudes, is absolutely vital". This seems to be an important aspect in relation to the student experience initiatives at a university and sector levels. In the recent articles in Times Education Higher and Guardian/Education, the role of university staff in the university student experience is widely debated (Ashwin, 2016; Campbell, 2016; Furedi, 2106; Vernon, 2016). The recently introduced of the Teaching Excellence Framework (White Paper, 2016) signals the regulatory pressures for universities to strengthen their focus on quality of teaching and learning in universities, and with that comes the agenda of the university staff's skills, competences and values.

8.4. Student experience initiative through the prism of occupational connectivity

The analysis of the interview materials reveals diverse views of the occupational groupings studied about the notion of student experience; the currency of the student experience initiatives and the role of students and the university staff in university student experience.

These views are treated as representative of the occupational interests of the relevant occupational groupings studied. The summary of the representative views is presented in Table 8.1.

Based on the above analysis of the representative views, the following tensions amongst the occupational groupings are identified:

Scope of student experience: For the majority of the academics interviewed, the primacy of the student experience in universities lies in the academic student experience. As for non-academics and manager-academics: they assign more to a holistic view of the university student experience. This view includes the whole array of experiences associated with a particular university: from the experience in halls to the experience of interfaces with a university through virtual learning environment (VLE) and social media channels.

Table 8.1: Representative views of higher education occupational groupings

Views in relation to:	**Academics**	**Manager-academics**	**Non-academics**
Student experience	Supremacy of academic experience	Importance of 'felt' and 'data' /'reporting' side of student experience	Every aspect of student university experience
Student experience initiative	Centrally driven, 'stick' approach, undermining trust in academic colleagues	Focus on feedback mechanisms and NSS performance management. Student experience as university 'offer'	Difficulty in identifying 'ownership' of the student experience agenda. Boundary setting and relationship management
Currency of student experience initiative	Limits role of the teacher/lecturer to 'satisfying' customers. Customer-like student behaviour is a challenge.	Misalignment between centralised and localised initiatives around student experience.	De-professionalisation of a Programme Leader role.
Priority issues	Teaching, learning; Students' personal and professional growth	Trouble-shooting; People, places and spaces	Managing transition through the student life-cycle effectively; Value for money agenda
Students as	Students; Learners; Apprentices; Customers	Customers; Co-creators; Shareholders; Co-producers; Partners; Students	Consumers; Customers; Students; Clients; Individuals; Partners
Role of students	Customer-like behaviour and attitudes as a hinder of student-staff relationships	Bespoking student experience from a range of opportunities	Need to clarify student rights and responsibilities and university student charter
Role of staff	Construction' of student identity	Immediacy of student experience; Importance of staff skills, attitudes, behaviour and values	Boundary setting and relationship management with academics

As manager-academics and non-academics did not assign to the supremacy of the academic student experience, this could lead to the tensions in the university strategising and the operationalisation of the student experience initiatives.

Student experience initiative: At an organisational level, this initiative is seen as being 'owned' by the central, non-academic, university departments with a focus on student satisfaction surveys e.g. NSS, PTES and the university's own feedback surveys. This view is supported by non-academic staff to some degree. Academics expressed frustration and opposition to such an approach as it was seen as undermining the

credibility of the academic occupation. Manager–academics expressed concerns about the increasing pressures from 'the centre' to manage the NSS performance across the modules and programmes. Non-academic colleagues appeared to be concerned with managing of the occupational boundaries (Gieryn, 1983; Kerr *et al*, 1997) and the relationships with academic and manager-academic colleagues in a day-to-day university working.

Currency of the student experience initiative: There are concerns from a number of academic colleagues that the current approach to student experience at the sector and university levels is limiting the academic occupation. In their views, customer-like student behaviour and students-as-customers sector and university discourse impact negatively on academic-student relationships. Non-academic representatives noted the trend towards the de-professionalisation of academic roles (McKinlay & Archers, 1985; Haug, 1993; Reed, 1996). Non-academics and manager-academics commented on misalignment between the centralised and localised approaches to the student experience initiative at the university.

Priority issues around student experience: The potential tensions surface from the misalignment of the priority issues associated with the student experience. For academics these are issues around learning, teaching and assessment (LTA), pastoral care and students' personal and professional growth on the programmes. For non-academic staff, the priories issues lie with supporting students through the various stages in the student lifecycle and the successful transition from one stage to another, i.e. from a prospective applicant to a student, through the stages of their degree

programme, and then from a student to alumni. Manager-academics are mostly concerned with trouble-shooting and addressing the underperformance as well as ensuring university's infrastructure is fit for purpose.

View of students: A view of students as customers was echoed across all three occupational groupings, however, less so from academics and manager-academics. Some academics saw such associations as a major threat to the academic occupation; some were "referring to students, but thinking of them as customers"; some were categorically against the notion of students as customers. In the majority of cases, non-academics were comfortable with a view of students as customers/consumers. A wide array of the opinions expressed suggests a sector-wide trend towards the re-definition of the role of students in higher education and their relationship with a university. At the time of the interviews, there was no university stance taken in relation to how the university views its students. This often has been seen as an area of tensions amongst the university staff.

Role of students: Although the role of students in student experience of higher education is seen as critical by all occupational groupings, the academics commented negatively on customer-like student behaviours and attitudes. These are often seen as hindering education and learning. There is a degree of acceptance of such behaviour from manager-academics and non-academic colleagues. Their concerns lie mainly with clarifying student's rights and responsibilities, setting the university charter and accommodating customer-like student behaviour by offering a

wide range of opportunities for the students to choose from and to 'bespoke' their university experience.

Role of university staff: Tensions arise in viewing the role of university staff in relation to student experience. The academics emphasised the impact of the learning experience on the 'construction' of student identity i.e. the very essence of what does it mean to be a student. The non-academic staff emphasised the importance of boundary setting and relationship management with other university occupations in order to ensure 'seamless', 'failure-free' delivery of students experience mainly for student satisfaction. The manager-academics paid attention to the immediacy and the 'people-to-people' aspect of student experience and the importance of having staff with the "right set of values, behaviours and attitudes". Although, this is viewed as being not without challenges, particularly in managing academic staff:

"…we have to accept some people will struggle [to adapt to the current changes in the sector and to the demands towards their occupation]. Some people just won't fit at all. There are some people that won't be able to do it, and there will be those people that will be able to do it but just don't want to. And it's part of the dynamic that we always have, what is part of the ultimate people's business. And you've not asked me this question. So I'll ask myself this question and then answer it for you. "Do you ever have any frustrations in the management of people in a community such as this?" And the frustration I do have is how extraordinarily difficult it is to get, often a little, small group of our colleagues to truly embrace the pace of change in our pedagogy, in their disciplines etcetera. And in the current environment, it doesn't take terribly long to get off the pace and if you're off the pace. It can be very hard to get back on it. And that's true whether it's in technology and platforms, whether it's in the evolution of knowledge in our discipline and keeping track of where it's going or whether it's in learning and pedagogy, in teaching methodologies. It's a lot to get your head around" (Senior Members of University Executive Team).

As a result of these tensions set in the context of the increasing marketisation and uncertainty in higher education, out of the three occupational groupings studied, the academics appear to be most concerned about the position of their occupation in the sector. There is a sense of uncertainty and frustration with the sector and the university approaches to student experience. From an academic perspective: the academics were traditionally trusted to look after student experience, now student experience becomes 'everybody's business'. Amongst the academics, there are feelings of being undermined. On another hand, there is a greater degree of confidence and certainty projected by manager-academic and non-academic staff. There have been substantial investments in infrastructure, systems and processes to 'manage' student experience centrally in the university. There is a clear strategic focus on performance management of NSS, PTES and the other surveys; value for money; employability and other agendas associated with 'providing opportunities for students' as part of the university 'offer'. There is a sense of shifting power dynamics towards non-academic occupational grouping as they are seen to be in a better position to manage the uncertainty (Hickson *et al*., 1971) when compared to other occupational groupings working at the university: manager-academics (to a lesser degree) and academics (to a greater degree). Despite a strong perceived position of the manager-academics, they are increasingly becoming influenced by the central university, non-academic departments, such as Finance Department, Estates, Information Services, Corporate Intelligence Unit, Student Records and fees, which control the attainment and movement of the university resources; gather, process and report on sector strategic

initiatives such as value for money; graduate employment; university offer and other. Such shifting power patterns become an important dimension in understanding the relational dynamics amongst the occupational groupings at the university.

The next chapter will explore the strategising practices associated with the student experience initiative at the University of Middleworth in light of the tensions and shifting power patterns amongst the occupational groupings discussed in Chapters Six-Eight of the thesis.

Chapter 9: Strategy-making and occupations in a university setting

A concern with strategy-making in a higher education setting has been maintained throughout this study through the exploration of the strategically important pressures of student experience and the university responses to it. The university strategy-making practices were investigated through the interviews with the university staff and a range of participant observations of the Student Experience Strategy Committee (SESC), a university-level sub-committee tasked with overseeing the student experience agenda across the university. This chapter presents analysis of the materials collected as part of the interview schedule and the participant observations of the committee work.

9.1. University strategy-making

The interview respondents commented widely on the notion of strategy and the use of the adjective 'strategic' in relation to an issue or a matter. The majority of the respondents associated the notion of strategy with a long-term perspective, a plan, and a holistic approach to understanding university work as 'a framework for doing a job' (Senior Lecturer). A view of strategy as being both liberating and constraining was expressed by one of the academic respondents:

"…if we take teaching and learning, I think that some of the work I've been involved in is good from the point of view of strategy in saying: 'you know we need to look at strategies of encouraging teachers, lecturers to look at the range of teaching and learning activities to try and extend them'. So I think that's a good strategy, but then sometimes when that turns into something called, for example, 'Teaching and Learning Strategy'. It's good to have that document, but it can be constraining saying this is our strategy and this is how we do it. I think it's a good strategy to say to people we

think it's good if you research your own practice as a teacher, you experiment and develop and try and do different things, but then you know that's a desirable thing to do. The problem is that once you sort of start making this is the teaching and learning strategy then there's a danger that they became a straightjacket and many managers kind of made things up that weren't in there. So strategy has a kind of dual nature in that it can be a sort of liberating thing so you know we need to develop a strategy, but other times it can be a constraint and say right this is the strategy and by the way it's the only one. I think strategy can be both a kind of liberating and a constraining thing" (Senior Lecturer and LTE lead).

This dual side of university strategy, both constraining and liberating, is linked to university management practices. A number of academics interviewed said that they view strategy and strategising practices as management tools used to ensure compliance and performance management at the university:

"Whenever we get told this is the strategy: it's a case of yes we kind of are expected to address it and to account for how we've addressed it and if we haven't why. It is not always the case, but I'd say a good ninety percent of the time, if somebody told me this is the strategy you need to be adhering to it and we will want to see accountability for it…. It's been set at the top and then obviously it changes slightly the focus, but overall the same drivers are there to make sure that you are addressing the strategies laid down by your senior management" *(*Senior Lecturer and Subject Lead*).*

To some, strategy is "meaningless and sometimes it might be used as a buzz word" (Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader) and, at the extreme end, strategy is seen as "an example of management speak" (Professor). A sense of frustration with the institutional practices of strategy-making is expressed in this quote:

"Strategy means purpose. Often, I sit through the meetings thinking, you know there is that game where you can get 20 words and just put them in any order and it sort of makes sense, and that basically is the position you are in. If you take here, people don't even know the distinction between a name and an objective and what about goals? …It is just entirely sloppy

speak, so you get words just used without any real meaning. So if somebody said that to me, what is your agenda or what does it mean to me? I would say you are about to manipulate me to stop me being an academic. That's what I would say and I am not going to engage in a debate with you about this, I will find ways of consciously manipulating against you" (Professor).

The sense of manipulation that attached to this view of strategy is detected in another quote in relation to the use of the term 'strategic' as an adjective: "people might mean this is strategic so they might mean you know this is of key importance. Or they might say you know this fits into the bigger picture the strategy, but quite often it's used as a kind of a bad word, you're just being strategic which is a different thing" (Senior Lecturer). The sense of frustration and even open resistance to the corporate/management 'strategic speak' has been echoed in a number of interviews with the academic colleagues. It supports the earlier findings in the study about the negative position of the academic staff towards the increasing trends of managerialism and performance management in higher education (Deem *et al*, 2007; Deem & Johnson, 2000; Collini, 2012).

The manager-academics interviewed associated the term 'strategy' and 'strategic' primarily with a long-term orientation and the implementation aspect of strategy was often referred to as 'operationalisation'. A range of manager-academic responses included:

- "Strategy, to me, means a sort of higher-level plan, if you like. It needs to be realistic so it can be – I'm going to use jargon – operationalised. So you have your strategy that sets out the vision that sets out the direction, but then you have to put that into practise by operationalising it, that's what strategy usually means to me" (Assistant Dean, Faculty).

- "It's looking at the bigger picture over a longer timescale, so it's at that end of the spectrum compared with day to day operational activity. So it involves the vision for the institution and setting aims that are sufficiently stretching and sufficiently all encompassing. Everyone within the organisation can have clarity in terms of the big picture and feel for what sort of institution we are and where we're heading to. So no matter which role you play, the strategy will mean something to you, the institution's strategy" (Head of Programme Scheme).
- "For it to be strategic for me, it has to be something fundamentally affecting the core of our activity for the longer term as an institution. So for example, I was on a tour of part of our estate yesterday afternoon, and I think we were thinking strategically about what is the estate need? What could that be used for the next sort of five, to ten, to fifteen years? We were also talking tactically about what we would use it for next month. So if someone says to me, it's a strategic matter, then I'm thinking okay, this is big, this is affecting us over the next five, ten, 15, 20 years or whatever. If it's not, then it's not strategic. It's affecting our core business, it's affecting about what we do fundamentally over a reasonable time frame" (Dean of a Faculty).
- "It's having a sense of direction. A clear sense of direction for the longer term and a clear sense of how you're going to get there, for me is strategy" (Dean of a Faculty).

A senior member of the University Executive Team expanded on what makes a 'good' strategy. In his view, the characteristics of 'good' strategy are:

"Clarity, simplicity, resonance with the competences, capabilities and values of the people that it covers. And capable of being seen in delivery, because the client never sees strategy. They only ever see delivery. And I think the crucial thing about any strategy is, is it owned and shared by people. Do they say, yeah, this fits with the kind of organisation, and do you know, because of that, what I will do is this and when we've all done what we can do, it'll add up to that. So, simplicity, clarity, capability of being delivered" (Senior Member of University Executive Team).

Here, the emphasis is placed on the expression of strategy and visible, tangible signs of the strategy 'delivery'. Although, a strategy is seen as a management tool to 'deliver' to clients, it has to strike a chord with hearts

and minds of the university staff, it has to be relevant and owned by the staff to be delivered. Thus, a bad strategy, in his view is:

"Overblown verbiage. Long mission statements with loads of motherhood and apple pie that have no resonance with the lived experience. Things that are beyond the tangible reach of people in their own understanding and perception of what they're trying to do. So if I set out that our strategy is to be better than Cambridge by 2020, people just… So the shorthand of all that, therefore, is what is bad strategy and bad strategic practice is having overblown strategies that are not rooted in reality and honest self-awareness and that's as true of corporate entities, of course, as it is of every university" (A Senior Member of University Executive Team).

Strategy is talked about as a vehicle to communicate aspirations about the purpose of the university. For it to yield the results, it needs to be 'rooted' in the 'lived experience' and connected with the people who are tasked to work with the strategy. The importance of self-awareness and the relevance of the university position in the sector are seen as important aspects of strategy-making in both - corporate and university contexts. Similar to businesses, for universities to be successful, "they have to be chosen. They have to have qualities that those who look to universities would actively choose. Foremost among those, for us, are students. To have qualities that students would choose. The right programmes, contemporary, up to date, taught well, taught sensitively, meeting their need. There's a research council. You have to have the intellectual capital that says if we invest in you, the research outcomes will add to the values in the academy, but it's a business. If I come to you, your intellectual property, placed into the context of my business will enable me to do better. If you train my staff, I will be a better business. So you've got to give people reasons to choose, whoever they are" (A Senior Member of University Executive Team). The complexity of 'being chosen' as a

university is associated with a challenge of being relevant to multiple parties: students, research council, businesses and others. In the context of the increasing marketisation of higher education, a need for such a relevance is seen as a strategic priority across the sector.

The responses of the non-academic colleagues indicated associations of strategy with a top-down approach to managing the university, where the strategy is viewed as "something that is, from a high level generally, imposed on people rather than driven by staff" (Manager, Student Services). It is often seen as being "thrown about by, you know, higher members of the executive team at whatever kind of organisation. It does make it sound like it's this big, huge, thing but actually it's just a plan, and just how are we going to get there?" (Team Leader, Faculty Administration). At the same time, strategy is seen as being impersonal and directional: "Strategic for me means somebody's thought about it, there's a reason behind doing it, it's been discussed in multiple locations predominantly senior management, class them as you will, and that there has been a direction of travel agreed that the majority are going to follow" (Team Leader, Student Experience Team).

To some of the non-academic respondents, strategy is not only impersonal and hierarchical, it is "decided somewhere within the governance structure, so you would imagine the strategy is set by the executive corporate management team, academic board, you know the council those, you know those people who have the ultimate responsibility for running and managing the university" (Project Manager, Student Experience Team). It is seen as 'often comes with a little minion down in the registry' assigned

to monitor the 'delivery' of the strategy. The derogatory term 'minion' is used here to illustrate the role of university administrators in relation to university strategising.

According to a manager from the Student Services, they would not use a term 'strategy' in conversations with their teams as it is seen as having negative and overly generic connotations: "I wouldn't use the word strategy necessarily with them [staff] as I would be wanting them to go along that journey with me and they would be helping me shape how we got to that point. I think a lot of people don't really understand why we're doing that. We're going through a whole load of confusion to get to that place and we do not understand why it's going to make a difference and that's not what I'd want for my staff. So I think the word strategy is a bit of a switch off for people" (Manager, Student Services). The reference to 'going through confusion' is illustrative of the situation many UK universities find themselves in, where the increasing marketisation of higher education prompts the initiation of various change programmes aimed at realigning processes and systems to cope better with the sector changes (Hussey & Smith, 2010; CHERI, 2011). Numerous changes and tighter accountability to respond to the increasing management demands for more 'business-like' work practices adds to the frustration of the university staff (Ball, 2012; Count, 2004; Brown, 2014).

The use of the business-like terminology in relation to university strategising is evident from the frequent connections made between the university strategy and the corporate plan: "it's [strategy] also about what are the key priorities for the university corporate plan or the plan on the

page is just sort of being announced. … It's what input do we have as individuals into what the corporate plan looks like but then how does that impact back on the work that we do in setting our own priorities" (Project Manager, Student Experience Team).

The connections between the university strategy and the 'business' of the university were frequently made throughout the interviews with non-academic staff. Some of the respondents have spoken that the risks of getting the strategy wrong "means money. That means we will lose income if we get this wrong that's how I see university strategy. The thing driving it is money. I don't necessarily think that the thing that drives our strategy is making things better for students. I think it's about making money" (Student Liaison Officer, Faculty). A notable observation, that the university strategy is concerned with the survival in the context of the increasing marketisation of HE sector. One of the 'survival tactics' is concerned with securing the access to a multiple sources of funding:

"One of the issues around marketisation of higher education and changes to university funding means that universities do not want to put all of their eggs in one basket, so they're diversifying income generation. I think a big strategic challenge is how do you take advantage of offers that are out there externally, whether it's through Government funding, HEFCE funding, Higher Education Academy, through the local economic partnerships, whatever it is. … And I think that's a big part of strategic decision making. There might be a pot of money over there, but if it doesn't add value and it's a distraction. Or is there actually a value in changing a bit, because we can see that this is an emerging new area and is really important to us. I think that's a big challenge in terms of, yes, just how effective universities can be at that" (Senior Manager, Career and Employability Services).

The challenges of the university strategy are seen to be two-fold: first, it is about accessing various funding opportunities, providing they 'add value'

and they are not a distraction from a university strategic ambition; second it is about developing capabilities (Barney, 1993; Hamel & Prahalad, 1990; Teece *et al*, 1997) to access funding in 'new and emerging' areas. The merits of university strategic success lie in how effective universities are in deploying and developing their capabilities to access various 'pots of money'. This 'internal' view of the successes of university strategy can be linked to the well-established perspective on strategy - Resource-Based View (RBV) (Wernerfelt, 1984; Barney, 1991; Hoopes *et al*, 2003). The prevalence of such a perspective on strategy was often observed in the interviews with the senior administrators, where they frequently emphasised the importance of resources and the university resource allocation practices to the success of a various university strategies:

"Resources, I would say, are crucial. There are resources which are brought to bear on the student experience, which are distributed in a variety of ways. We'll work on the estate, we'll work on teaching and learning development and so on and so forth and you could argue that that is the right way to do it. Interestingly, what has been missing has been the same degree of investment as has previously been around direct initiative to impact on the student experience, it has been wrapped up in a little more red tape, it has been guarded a little more than it otherwise was. It's also progressively been reduced in size. If that translated into great embedding of funding streams with the culture that said "We know why we've got that and we're doing things with that money" to support it, as opposed to "We need to build Building X or Building Y or we need to run Project A" what happens is it becomes siloed. So we do that and it wraps up, job done, we've finished that project, in isolation of the broader agenda that we might be pursuing. So without specific resource associated with a specific strategy which is being tested against producing contributions to those big outcomes, then the direction of travel and the momentum is not as significant as it should be. I think that's about how the organisation works. Put a specific, dedicated, pot of money, which is significant against a particular strategy, and people will come because there are resources which they can tap into to do things that they feel energised and able to do. Give it then a layer of requirement attached to resources to produce outcomes that hit at big ones and you might have a different degree of

momentum. So, culture and resources perhaps go hand in hand in that respect" (Senior University Administrator and Member of Senior Management Team).

This view encapsulates the non-academic position on how the university strategy works and thus 'how the organisation works'. Resources, meaning budgets, which are allocated to a specific 'university strategy' and are 'significant', attract people as they are seen to be 'energised to do things'. It is seen to be important to assign a 'layer of requirements' and then to produce outcomes 'that hit at big ones' with a reference to the university KPIs, including the performance in NSS. That, according to the senior administrator 'have a different degree of momentum' and it works. They, however, recognise the importance of the culture and the politics in the university strategising, where the resources committed are often 'divorced' from a bigger picture. The links between university strategy, allocation of university resources and university culture are seen to be important features of the university strategising.

9.2. Strategy-making practices

As part of the interview schedule, the respondents were asked to comment about the university strategy-making practices. A range of academic responses ranged from broad definitions of strategy-making activities as 'any practices with the agenda around long-term, planning for the future of the university' (Reader and School Head of Research) to a numerous associations of university strategising with a variety of university committees. Often, the work of the university committees is seen as practices 'where people more concerned about getting through agendas and producing minutes and those kinds of things' (Senior Lecturer). A

Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader talked about the team meetings as practices associated with the strategy-making and 'then, going up the ramp, we'll have school level meetings, we'll have sort of school quality committees, programme committees which may, actually programme committees don't always necessarily involve strategy-making that much'. Commenting about the Students Experience Strategy Committee (SESC), he mentions that although the committee 'claims to be strategy-making more than it actually is. It seems to be quite reactive sometimes. Then, I suppose informal meetings with staff/colleagues/line managers basically. …. one of the other things was again sort of ideas that we've come up with in a smaller team informally over a coffee, in a pub is basically about new approaches to the degree programme/new degree programmes to launch and then discussing those in sort of a semi-formal meeting with the pro-vice-chancellor'. He then, goes on commenting that often strategy-making practices are associated with activities taking place in summer, when the main work of academic occupation is done: 'time constraints mean that we've not actually pursued it very much, so that's a sort of thing for the summer' (Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader).

Responses of the manager-academics illustrate associations of the strategy-making activities with the development of documents titled 'strategy', which are often produced at the university and faculty/college levels: "I as an Assistant Dean, I was given the responsibility for learning teaching and assessment across the faculty and had to develop a strategy for what our priorities would be across the year for learning, teaching and assessment" (Assistant Dean, Faculty). Similarly, at the university level,

the strategy-making is driven by the production of the documents, for instance:

'[Name of the Vice-Chancellor] at the moment is putting together a business continuity strategy, which means that should something befall, how do we cope with that. We've obviously already got one in place but it's obviously renewing that, and so we sit on a strategy group and he has representatives from all across the university that can represent the different delivery sites and the different areas, and make sure that we've got a plan including everybody, IT, estates whatever. So that strategy's being put together, that is again, collaborative. And that's the key with any of the strategies I think, is making sure that all of the people that it's going to impact on are round the table' *(*Assistant Dean, Faculty).

Another document that attracted a lot of associations with the strategy-making activities is the University Corporate Plan. Here the respondent reflects on the 'visioning' activity attended to 'refresh' the corporate plan:

"I'm a member of Academic Board and so attended the [name of the location] visioning activity. That was over a couple of days in December and so I felt I was able to make a contribution at that stage to the refreshed corporate plan. Yes, I feel, because I'm part of Academic Board and other committees. And I suppose, just because of reporting into senior academics in the university that gives me an opportunity to feel that I can influence the strategic direction of the university" (Head of Programme Scheme).

This quote illustrates a position where the university committees are viewed as important practices for university strategy-making. Being a member of a number of important university committees gives access to thought-after 'off-site 'university activities. Reflecting further on the 'visioning' activity, the respondent comments positively on the attempts to invite collaboration from academic and non-academic communities: "I liked the way that brought together the senior academic community, but also professional services, also the Governing Council. So that mix was helpful I think because it kept, there was lots of reality checking

opportunities [laugh] which I found powerful…" (Head of Programme Scheme). Despite the attempts to connect the occupational groupings, the academic hierarchy is seen as a barrier to effective strategy development and implementation in the university: "There is something about academic hierarchies that make strategy making, dissemination and implementation a bit problematic compared with other professional segments, you know like the Estates Division. They're really good at strategy settings, they seem to be really good at managing a small budget and delivering. ... All universities I've worked at have had excellent estates in models of professional working practices and they must look at the academics, I think, and think, "God", you know. How hard we seem to find it to be managed and to have strategy developed and then disseminated and implemented" (Head of Programme Scheme).

The difference between academic and non-academic, 'professional', strategy-making practices is highlighted, where the academic hierarchy makes strategy-making 'problematic', whilst 'professional' services are seen to be more efficient in strategy-development and implementation. This is linked to academics' 'intolerance' to be managed (Alberst & Wetten, 1985; Winter & Henkel, 1997; Winter & Starros, 2002, Winter 2009) and activities associated with the strategy development, dissemination and implementation. From an academic perspective, the words 'strategy' and 'management' are strongly linked with each other and are often seen as having negative connotations with the performance management practices and the bureaucratisation of higher education (Ball, 2012; Deem *et al*, 2007; Deem & Johnson, 2000).

Reflecting on the types of the university practices associated with strategy-making, a Dean of a Faculty comments that such a practices can be seen as 'deliberately constructed' practices and practices that are seen as such as a result of 'post-hoc realisation'. In his view, the 'deliberately constructed' strategy-making practices are activities that "are flagged as such in advance of the creation of what you might think of as strategy". They share the experience of these practices:

"So for example, last year, we rewrote the university's strategic plan, the corporate strategy if you like. That involved a group of senior managers as a core group then reviewing what we had, working with colleagues at multiple levels across the university and thinking about where we should be, then how we should get there, and then bringing together a form of words, which helped articulate that. That, for me, was strategy making and that was quite a deliberate process where there were a series of events that happened, some were diarised and some informal as well where people came together to, if you like, think about, talk about strategy and then come up with a document at the end of it all, which articulates that as well, which could be used as something which could help in the communication process" (Dean of a Faculty)

The other type of strategy-making practices is referred to as 'post-hoc rationalisation' of strategy development:

"So for example, we have executive meetings as a faculty, we have executive meetings, as a university as well, with senior managers where you're picking up on themes over a period of time which in advance. You could say there is going to be a treaty conversation we're about to have but actually when you look back over the last few months what you've been discussing is changing your approach to the way we found ourselves, or finance things or whatever. Actually that's got a much longer term consequence and therefore I would say that's strategy making, but it was never flagged as such. It's a sort of post-hoc rationalisation of strategy being developed incrementally, or as a strategic position being developed incrementally and then some action being constructed as well" (Dean of a Faculty).

In this view of the university strategy-making, there are deliberate one-off activities, which are associated with strategy-making, and there are practices which are not directly associated with strategy-making, but from where strategies emerge in an incremental fashion (Mintzberg & Waters, 1985).

A more processual view of strategy development is expressed by a Senior Member of University Executive Team. He argued that the purpose of the university strategising is: "about bringing clarity and simplicity out of what might otherwise be confusion and complexity". The first step of this process is horizon scanning which "has got to be comprehensive, complete and well informed. Who's doing what, where's the market going, what sub-markets and sub-sectors are there, what are the overall dynamics, the demography, etcetera, so that you understand the world". Then "you've got to understand what your competencies are, what the context you want to be in requires and then, you get them, grow them or get out". He remarks that "there's no substitute whatsoever in that process for talking and listening. Listen intently, think deeply, speak sparingly. And so through our last process, we did a lot of looking, listening, little groups coming together, brown bag lunch, whatever, just to get that touch and feel, because any strategy has to be owned and believed in" (Senior Member of University Executive Team).

The importance of the university strategy to be reflective of the governmental policy and the funding regime in higher education is emphasised: "you have to be on the page with the government policy, because there's no use setting a strategic direction on which 2,700

colleagues rely for their employment, their security, their stability and their sense of wellbeing, only to find it's contrary to government policy, so they shut you down. You've got to be mindful of the funding regime. It's no use having a strategy to do 93 new courses that nobody will study. So you have to be formally able to engage with those constituencies of policy makers, funders, research supports, development agencies, ministries, etcetera. And a goodly part of my time is making sure that we as an institution are well understood, have an ambassadorial role with them, well informed. I learn and glean what I can". University representation, lobbying and networking with significant parties in the sector and beyond is commented on as being an important aspect of strategy-making in universities.

Unlike academics, the majority of non-academic colleagues interviewed have readily indicated that they have been involved in strategy-making and emphasised their own role in these practices:

- "Because I work closely with the deputy vice-chancellor who's leading on my two particular projects, you know, I'm not saying that I sort of have his ear but it does mean if I've got a particular view about something, you know, I have got a voice to be able to say it. Whether he listens to me or not is a completely different issue". (Project Manager, Student Experience Team)

- "My role as a Staff Governor is to represent Academic Board at the Governing Body. So essentially I attend Academic Board and I challenge Academic Board on behalf of the Governors. How does it work? Well, to be very truthful it took me about 18 months to work out how it worked, because it was so complex. And because it wasn't clear what people were expecting from that role. But essentially, I suppose, it's a listening role, it's listening out for what Academic Board is talking about, taking note of the things that Academic Board have had problems with or difficulties with, things that they are promoting or are interested in. And to occasionally say, well, hang on a minute, you know, I think from a strategic point of

view maybe Academic Board could consider x, y and z. And that's then talking with the voice of Governing Council" (Quality Enhancement Manager).

Despite associations of the university strategy-making practices with the work of the university committees, a number of non-academic respondents reveal that a lot of strategy work goes on behind the scenes: "as at all committees, the work gets done outside the committee and so sub-groups of that committee are engaged in committee business. Why they get on with and do outside the committee. And then report into the committee by papers or updates or oral updates, so that's pretty you know, standard approach of getting a work of a committee done" (Manager, Programme Scheme). In the case of SESC, its work is largely seen as "reactive in the sense that often it's just discusses things that have already more or less have been decided. It may be offered a little bit of feedback which may or may not get fed on somewhere and sort of I feel in terms of actually impact it's not done all that much" (Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader). Personal lobbying is said to be an effective approach to influence the SESC's work as well as other university committees:

"I like to, what's the word, lobby, so I will have a lot of quality conversations which is why I've done a lot of it just recently with the corporate management team, at an individual level it's much easier to have a sensible conversation in the language that they use that they can connect with it than necessarily meetings. … If you've talked to the individuals before you have the meeting the meeting's going to go a lot better. That makes me sound really coercive doesn't it, I know where to influence" (Student Experience Team Leader).

These materials reveal that, although the university strategy-making is associated with the work of formal university committees, the majority of the decisions and work is done outside of the committee structures. In fact,

the non-academic respondents confirmed that this is how things work in the university and they are rather good at it. Academics rarely commented on these practices, but often commented on the lack of focus and the tangible outcomes from the work of the committees.

The data-driven aspect of the university strategy-making was commented on by the representatives from all three occupational groupings:

- "In collaboration with the other Deans and the learning and teaching advisors that come from the three schools, we put together a learning and teaching and assessment strategy. So that's one example of a strategy which comes from, what are the drivers from the university, and those drivers come out of things like the NSS, and student feedback you know, what is it that we've got to improve in terms of learning and teaching" (Assistant Dean, Faculty).
- "For me all of the strategic development that I've taken part in has been very much a shared activity. As I was describing at the start with the DLHE - whilst I might be expected … what we're doing about the DLHE statistic, it's not just my job to do all of that" (Head of Carer and Development Centre).
- "Many of the measures that we use [in relation to strategy-making] are on the tick list. Student satisfaction, retention, recruitment they are the figures that the university look to as shorthand for results and so Managers then, your Managers are under pressure to produce that data" (Senior Lecturer).

What is taken by many as the data-driven and document-producing nature of strategy-making in universities is seen as a response to the marketisation pressures. It further translates in the increasing attention to the student satisfaction data, league table position(s) and an increasing use of data to performance manage in universities (Ball, 2012; Deem *et al*, 2007; Deem & Johnson, 2000).

As a result of analysing the interview materials, a number of similarities and differences can be drawn as to how different occupational groupings view strategy and university strategy-making. The similarities identified

amongst academics, manager-academics and non-academics are as follows:

- University strategy-making practices are often associated with the development of various documents titled 'strategy', for ex: learning, teaching and assessment strategy; employability and career strategy; retention strategy; student experience strategy; estates strategy.
- University strategy-making is often associated with the development/refreshment of the University Corporate Plan.
- University strategy-making is associated with the work of university committees, although all of the three occupational groupings acknowledged that the majority of work and decisions are taken outside the committee structures.
- Negative view of the university hierarchy (often referred to as academic hierarchy) as a hinder to 'inclusive' and 'feed-forward' strategising.
- Data-driven side of strategy-making targeting NSS, recruitment and student numbers figures, amongst others.

The differences in the positions of the occupational groupings studied are presented in Table 9.1. The position of academics, where strategy is seen as a management tool used to performance manage at worst and as 'a buzz word' at best, echoes concerns about the rise of managerialism in higher education (Deem *et al*, 2007; Deem & Johnson, 2000; Collini, 2012). Strategy is seen as being both liberating and constraining: whilst it could be liberating to 'produce a strategy' (i.e. a central university-level document outlining principles and approaches in a range of university domains), it could become a 'straightjacket' when applied. Many academics interviewed expressed views about strategy-making being associated with considerations for programme design; learning, teaching and assessment as well as concerns for student numbers.

Strategy-making is often seen by academics as a 'summer activity' taking place outside teaching and research activities. Many academics commented that they often find these activities outside their main remit

Table 9.1: Differences in views on university strategy and strategy-making amongst the occupational groupings

Academics	**Manager-academics**	**Non-academics**
Dual nature of strategy: liberating as well as constraining.	Strategy is a high-level plan.	Strategy is something that is from a high level; generally imposed on people, rather than driven by staff.
Strategy is a tool to ensure compliance and performance management.	It provides a sense of direction.	Impersonal view of strategy: *"somebody's thought about it, there's a reason behind doing it, it's been discussed in multiple locations predominantly senior management, class them as you will, and that there has been a direction of travel agreed that the majority are going to follow"*.
'Strategy' is a buzz word.	Strategy provides clarity and simplicity out of what might otherwise be confusion and complexity.	Every strategy has an *'assigned minion down at the registry office*' to look after it.
Strategy mainly involves programme design; teaching, learning and assessment 'strategy'; planning for student numbers.	Strategy needs to align with governmental policy and funding regime to ensure the business of the university.	Resource allocation is an important part of strategy: "*Put a specific dedicated pot of money which is significant against a particular strategy and people will come"*
Strategy-making is for the summer. "*I'm a bit busy really for that kind of thing"*	Deliberate and 'accidental' strategy-making.	Importance of being good at influencing people in strategy-making.

and they are often reluctant to 'waste' their valuable research and scholarly time on activities they associate with university strategy-making.

The manager-academics interviewed commented on the importance for the university strategy to align with the governmental policy and the funding regime in higher education. The marketisation of higher education was discussed as the key trend universities have to respond to. The role of the

strategy is seen as to 'provide clarity and simplicity out of confusion and complexity' It echoes a view of strategic problems that are often complex, ill-defined and referred to as 'wicked' by Mason and Mitroff (1981). Thus, strategy is seen as a tool to achieve clarity/focus in determining and communicating the university's strategic ambition. A few manager-academics commented on the links between formal and informal strategy-making practices, emphasising the value of both to the university strategising.

As for the non-academic colleagues, although readily admitting that they take part in a various strategy-making practices, they often spoke about that they see strategy as often being imposed from the top and being decided somewhere in the management hierarchy of the university. The term 'strategy' is associated with the top university management 'speak' and is seen as "not necessarily connected to the real life or day-to-day. It's something to aim towards. It generally has some sort of targets or something behind it that maybe I don't understand and don't necessarily agree with. I think it's something that staff, if I'm talking about my staff, would feel disconnected from, depending where it's coming from" (Manager, Student Support Centre).

A senior administrator in the university commented on the importance of the resource allocation to support various university strategies. They commented on the 'red-tape' culture that prevents allocation of the university resources to the 'risky' projects, return on investment on which is difficult to ensure in the short-term. Thus, investment in the 'student experience' projects is seen as being 'risky', when compared to the

development of the university estate, which has seen a large influx of funding over the past few years. There is a sense that the resource allocation practices and the staff responsible for allocating the university resources occupy a powerful position in the university hierarchy. This scenario echoes with a view of power positions in organisations based on control, acquisition and distribution of resources (Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1981). These practices are not only seen as an expression of power, but are also seen as means to protect and advance the interests of the university occupational groupings:

"It [decided direction of travel/strategy] has had a conversation in a very narrow group of people and becomes the diktat, rather than the thing which has had any level of to-ing and fro-ing. So you end up in a position where it is "Are we sure that's sensible?" "Do we really want to do it in that way?" "Do you understand what it would mean to be able to implement what it is that you're talking about in the expressed direction of travel here?" which means that actually it is mired as strategy in whether it's political or resource-led argument before it's even got off the ground" (Senior University Administrator and Member of Senior Management Team).

Political and resource-led arguments, often associated with investments in the university estate, are seen as significant aspects of the university strategising by the non-academic colleagues interviewed. A view of strategy as a central-university-resource-allocation initiative was often echoed throughout the interviews with non-academic staff. In such a view, every strategy has an 'assigned minion down at the registry office' to look after it. Resource allocation, accountability and monitoring by the university registry are seen as the features of the university strategising.

9.3. Strategy-making associated with the student experience initiative

In the study of university strategy-making, the attention is drawn to the practices associated with the student experience initiative. In the context of the University of Middleworth, the university-level sub-committee titled 'Student Experience Strategy Committee' (SESC) is tasked with the overseeing of what is titled a 'University Students Experience Strategy'. The committee was established in 2010. Prior to that it was titled Student Experience Strategy Group and it was tasked to oversee various university-level initiatives with an aim to ensure high levels of student retention across the university. In recent years, the SESC's remit was broadened from a narrow retention focus to an oversight of a broad range issues associated with the student experience (Browne Report, 2010; White Paper 2011; Green Paper 2015, White Paper 2016) and 'value for money' (VfM) initiatives (HESA, 2013; HEFCE 2014; Universities UK, 2015).

The university student experience strategy is seen as "a little too reactive" and "a little too consigned with the notion of "you said it, we did it" (Reader and School Head of Research). It is understood as largely driven by non-academics which is seen as problematic from an academic perspective: "…the problem with having too many administrators involved in that process and not understanding the professional – or not seeking the professional view [academic view] – thinking that as long as the student wants it, they get it. Yes, I think that's a big miss. And I don't try and knock the administrators too much, because I think we need them, and I see them as another partner, customer, collaborator, but you know they

also have to give value to the professional [academic] view" (Reader and School Head of Research). These concerns are echoed in another interview where the student experience initiatives are viewed as being separated from the teaching and learning domain:

"…There's this kind of weird split between teaching and learning and student experience. It's a bit like there's a whole set of people, who don't actually teach and they're responsible for student experience and it's a separate thing from learning and teaching. I think, you know, if I'm accurate in that, I think it's a real problem, because the main reason you come here is to experience learning" (Senior Lecturer and LTE lead).

A separation between the student experience initiatives and the teaching and learning domain is seen as being problematic by the academics. This contributes to the view that the student experience agenda is being owned by other, than academic, occupational groupings across the university. This situation creates tensions among the groupings around the 'supremacy' of their roles in relation to the university student experience and around various approaches to managing student experience initiatives at the central and local university levels.

Many academics interviewed associated the student experience sector-wide pressures with the increasing marketisation of higher education (Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013): "I think in terms of positioning ourselves and where we do need to think of student experience as something very important. I think it's something that in the same way is to do with what we said earlier to do with marketing, marketisation" (Programme Leader). These initiatives have been strongly associated with the university performance in the sector league tables, where the university performance is seen as "puzzling" i.e. "In the Guardian league

table, which puts quite an emphasis on student experience, we were in the twenties. In the Good University Guide, which puts emphasis on other factors we were in the nineties. They are very extreme cases and are very extreme differences" (Senior Lecturer and Subject Head).

These positions illustrate the 'academic' view of the student experience initiative, where it is seen as a university response to the increasing marketisation of higher education, often accompanied by the various approaches to performance target setting to achieve 'tangible' and 'positive' impact on the university league table position in order to attract the potential students. According to academics, this response is driven by non-academic colleagues as these are viewed to be a separate set of initiatives from those associated with teaching and learning. These initiatives are seen to be in conflict, as the former are aimed at 'satisfying' students to generate a positive view of the university whilst the latter are concerned with 'academic challenge', 'personal and professional growth' and 'ensuring academic standards'. These two polar positions are in tension and are at the heart of the debates about the student experience at the University of Middleworth. Some of these debates are about the focus of the student experience initiatives. The manager-academics interviewed discussed the primarily undergraduate focus of the student experience university strategy:

"A lot of the way that the student experience is set up is for an undergraduate who's going to spend a couple of days in lectures. Mine are not doing that, they're doing full-time work, they're here all year round, and the student experience for them, they often feel left out. So they feel like they're at university, studying for their degree, which will give them a profession, but they're often excluded from the university experience" (Assistant Dean, Faculty).

According to the Assistant Dean, the student experience strategy needs to reflect the diversity of the student body and to ensure the variety of the student experience rather than its standardisation across the university:

"We always need to be cognisant of the fact that students are not a homogenous body. We have part-time, a lot of mature, a lot of people that live locally. Many of my students have got families or are single parents. It's remembering that they're not just one group, and if we're going to get the student experience right we have to be accommodating the diversity of the student body and not focussed on the young undergraduate. So, it is differentiation, rather than standardisation, everybody is not the same" (Assistant Dean, Faculty).

The focus on the full-time undergraduate students is not surprising as they are seen as the key market for student recruitment. Despite the slow growth rate of 1.3 per cent per year, undergraduate full-time students accounted for 64% of all the students in English universities in 2014-15 academic year (HEFCE, 2015). Other student groups, for instance vocational training, Foundation degrees and part-time students, have a significantly lower proportion in the university student body and they are often misrepresented in the discussions about the university strategy and the student experience initiatives. A range of such initiatives was discussed throughout the interviews, and according to some of the respondents these were seen as 'steady and safe ground' wins:

"There's definitely a strong theme emerging around student engagement and particularly seeing students as co-producers in research and scholar activity endeavour. I've seen a strong emphasis in terms of employability. I've seen a strong push around either placements or developing work-ready graduates. I'm seeing that as a strongly emerging focus. To sum up, we're still in the world of personal touch, employability, co-producers, the kind of steady safe ground" (Head of JH Scheme).

Some of the senior university administrators echoed concerns about the 'quick-wins' approach to the university student experience strategy:

"Over a period of years I think it's had some significant successes. So it has massively impacted on the way in which the university resourced things like the Student Experience Team, Student Liaison Officers and been able to understand and make decisions through some review and reform of significant processes and system for students. And there were a lot of early wins by tackling systemic annual problems that were not just poor but were potentially damaging to students' experiences: withdrawal, enrolment, some of the attendance monitoring stuff, all things which were picked up as issues through what was the old Student Experience Strategy Group. We're now in an arena where actually it's not as obvious and it's not as simple so we're talking about multiple connected initiatives that have to join up for a greater purpose and tackle at a much lower level. The common denominator which is the individual interaction which cashes up - we're talking culture and ethos as much as we are a system or a process which needs to change" (Senior University Administrator and Member of Senior Management Team).

The respondent alludes to the initial focus of the student experience strategy on addressing the issues with systems and processes across the university, which generated 'quick wins' in addressing 'perennial' student experience issues. They call for the student experience strategy to tackle a more complex and 'interconnecting' issues which are seen to be connected to the culture and the ethos of the university, where occupational cultures play a significant role (Leidner, 2006).

Many of the non-academic colleagues acknowledged the significance of the Student Experience Project Team (SEPT) in 'driving' the student experience strategy at the university. It is observed that a great deal of the activities carried out by SEPT was concerned with ensuring student participation in NSS (and the other sector and university surveys), and supporting programme and college teams towards a better NSS performance, which

is seen as a main indicator for measuring student experience in the sector (HEFCE, 2014; Times Higher Education, March 2016).

"It [student experience strategy] is driven by the student experience team which is [name of the team leader]'s team and a lot of it is driven through the data, that they collect from the different surveys. I understand that you have to be driven by data because it's all you've got, but I also think there's a lot of anecdotal evidence and knowledge that goes on within the university between the students, through the communications, through the conversations that is lost and it really needs much more work done on capturing those anecdotal conversations to actually develop the strategy fully" (Senior Manager, International Centre).

"The fact that the NSS and feedback surveys carry a lot of weight is one of the major achievements. I got the impression that staff were very sceptical that it was just box ticking and I think that's one of its achievements that that's actually something that staff do care about now. I know it's been a little bit 'carrot and stick', but I think that works" (Student Liaison Officer).

The senior management focus on participation in NSS and NSS performance at a programme level is associated with the university strategic ambition to perform well in the sector league tables. There is a degree of concern expressed by non-academics that such a focus is seen as the main priorities for the university student experience strategy:

"One of the things that bothers me a little about the whole student experience thing is that when I talk to staff from other universities their student experience focus is different to ours. I talk to other places and their student experience is about helping the students. Our strategy seems to be about league tables and whilst I think that the league tables are a good thing because they're making us reflect. I just wonder if we're not ready for a rebrand and maybe we need to rethink: Is student experience, when you talk to members of staff, all about the surveys? That's one thing that I would question, so if I say to somebody about the student experience they go oh bloody student experience team them chuffing surveys, you know. If you say to members of staff what's student experience, it's about making them fill in the NSS, you know. So I just wonder whether we need to refresh" (Student Liaison Officer).

The views of the university staff about the student experience initiative, which is predominately occupied with 'filling in NSS' and performance in the league tables, are revealing. Traditionally seen as an academic priority, the student experience initiatives serve to accommodate the sector pressures for student satisfaction and performance in the league tables. The university emphasis on student experience has moved from traditional academic grounds to becoming a priority for other occupational groupings. As earlier discussed, academics find this situation frustrating and express concerns about such a shift in the focus. It is seen as a threat to academic occupational interests and the traditional dominant position of academics in the sector is undermined. Some non-academic respondents question such a shift in the focus of the student experience strategy and appear to be dissatisfied with a 'carrot and stick' university-wide approach to ensuring the successful NSS and league tables performance.

As part of the discussions about the student experience strategy at the University of Middleworth, the importance of 'influencing' through the university management structures was brought to attention:

"I think the only thing that we've not touched on is strategy sort of communication and impact that goes on through line management. With my line manager I mean we have one to ones on a regular basis but I'm also on a small management group. I will get from her sort of trickle down from her management group, which comes from that executive management group, I'll get information about things that are happening within the university and also she uses her management group as a sounding board. We bring things to that group that she then takes back and takes back up through the channels having infuence where she needs to have influence, but at the same time I'm finding out about it from her. We've talked about sort of the more sort of formal and informal committee structure things, but I think there's also this individual line management responsibility up and down" (Project Manager).

The issue of influencing individuals and groups to advance the interests of individuals and the university groups with an assigned responsibility for student experience is often a feature of the interviews with non-academic colleagues. Using the dominant sector discourse of student experience, they are seen as being influential by other university staff. With the student experience agenda being perceived as being 'driven by administrators', there are evidence of resistance and negativity associated with the work of individuals and groups associated with the student experience initiatives. To overcome this, a great degree of influence seems to be necessary to ensure staff's 'buy-in' and 'engagement' with the university student experience initiative. The challenge of ensuring staff's 'buy-in' is sharpen by the fact that at the time of the study, there was no written document titled 'Students Experience Strategy'. As a Manager at Career and Employability Services explains:

"I think what's happened with it [students experience strategy] is we used to have a dedicated retention strategy and a dedicated student experience strategy. That has changed over time. So instead we have the new corporate plan and some other supporting and enabling strategies that incorporate the student experience within it. It is one of those things that affects every element of the university and everybody makes a contribution to. So separating it off in a different strategy is perhaps not the right way to go as it's matured. As a result, the work of the student experience group has become perhaps less focussed on it. Some of the things like personal tutoring for example, supporting students in particular … who have particular needs … so I think that perhaps has changed the way the student experience in itself operates, but I think that's because the issues permeate the other committees more effectively" (Manager, Career and Employability Centre)

The respondent reflects on the development of the university strategic approach towards the student experience: at first, the student experience strategy was associated with the university 'retention strategy', which was

developed and implemented to ensure a low turnaround of students on the university programmes. Then, a dedicated student experience university-level strategy set priorities for a student voice, participation in surveys and development of the learning spaces up to 2012. After that, there was no university-level document dedicated to the student experience strategy. Instead it was seen as an integral part of the other university strategies, for instance teaching and learning strategy, and as a part of the University Corporate Plan. For some, this situation has led to confusion and some degree of frustration:

"That's a bit hard because I think sometimes it's rather too fluid. I think it changes too quickly and very often when it changes it flips on its head. I can spend one year trying to retain students no matter what, then the following year you're only retaining the good students and you're getting rid of the ones that aren't going to be successful as quickly as possible, then the following year the strategy is to improve the number of two-ones, you know and it can get quite confusing. I think it's dotting about, I think it lacks conviction. I think we mess about with it too much and I don't think we see particular things all the way through to the end and I think we get part benefit. I think we dance around a lot at this university because I have seen the focus of the strategy change and change really quickly sometimes even within six months: you'll be working on something and then all of a sudden you're working on the opposite. Very often, I find that certain thing about the student experience they completely, they're at odds with each other they're opposites and they're sort of cancelling each other out sometimes" (Student Liaison Officer, Faculty).

Thus, conflicting priorities, a rapidly changing focus of the student experience university strategy and the strong associations of the student experience initiatives with NSS and the sector league tables performance are seen as the main features of the students experience strategy at the University of Middleworth. This initiative encapsulates the shifting patterns of power and interests of the university occupations groupings with non-academics being in a strong and 'influential' position; academics being

frustrated and marginalised; and manager-academics being in a position of compliance and increasing demands for performance management to cater for the rapidly changing priorities of the university responses to the sector-wide student experience pressures.

9.3.1. Student Experience Strategy Committee: practices and occupational interests

A total number of 32 participant observations of the SESC meetings were carried out over the course of this study from 2011-12 to 2015-16 academic year. A range of the issues featured at the committee meetings throughout the period of observations is presented in Table 9.2. The most frequently discussed items are associated with NSS response rates, NSS results and the feedback across the university; sector league tables position and performance; VfM reporting and student perceptions about the university offer; employability and career services offer; academic calendar and post-Easter activities for students. Often, a particular university policy was brought to the committee meetings for comments and reviews, for instance Policy Student Pregnancy and Maternity Policy; Student Parent Policy, Fitness to Participate in University Life Procedure. The committee considered the changes in its Terms of References and the

membership of the committee at least twice, in September 2012 (shortly after move from SESG to SESC) and in September 2014 (prior to the university reconfiguration).

The analysis of the observations of the SESG/SESC meetings illustrates numerous scenarios where the committee members observed their occupational interests and often acted to protect and advance those. As

Table 9.2: SESG/SESC: agenda items overview 2011/12 to 2015/16

Academic Year	High frequency agenda items	Other agenda items
2011-12	NSS response rate and results; HESA performance indicators; Student Experience projects (JISC funded) update; Communication to students strategy; DLHE statistics; League table position progress and updates; SESG performance indicators; EEC policy.	Attendance Monitoring; Experience of Disabled students; BME performance; student pregnancy and maternity policy; IS survey results.
2012-13	SESC performance Indicators; re-design of the Academic Calendar; EEC policy; NSS response, results and feedback; SESC membership and terms of reference; International student experience; Student induction, orientation and enrolment.	PTES response rate and results; policy, guidance and procedures for transgender students; personal tutoring; 'career centre offer for the students; BME performance.
2013-14	NSS response, results and feedback; DLHE feedback and statistics; Value for Money - student concerns and university response; Student withdrawal policy; Students Reps conference; Student induction, orientation and enrolment; League table position progress and updates	Impact of forthcoming university reconfiguration on student experience; concerns over the lack of examination space; student engagement analytics
2014-15	NSS response, results and feedback; PTES feedback and statistics; First Year Student Experience Project (scoping and updates); Value for Money and Academic Calendar; SESC membership and terms of reference; Post-Easter university activities for students.	Annual Monitoring - evaluation of the process; Employability; Student Experience framework; Soft-ware developments on student engagement analytics; Digitalisation of Programme Handbooks.
2015-2016	NSS response, results and feedback; PTES feedback and statistics; Student Experience framework; Student Representation - Student Charter; Post-Easter Activities; Updates on the development of the three university strategies: Teaching and Learning, Employability and Research.	University- level review of the use of support plans; Student parent policy; ISB survey results; Student screens in People-soft; Career and Employability university services – a service offer.

earlier analysis indicates, the majority of the committee members are from non-academic and manager-academics occupational groupings, whilst the

academic representation is in the minority. The work practices, discussions and decision-making taking place during the committee meetings are reflective of the occupational positions and the interests of these occupational groupings. The following extracts from the observation records are illustrative of the scenarios where occupational interests play a significant role in the work of the committee.

Extract 9.1 illustrates the scenario where the changes in the university academic calendar in response to the pressures for internal efficiency and student demands for faster turnaround of assessments are initiated by the Pro-VC. These changes are debated at the committee where academic and non-academic colleagues express concerns over compressing the post-Christmas period for marking and exams, having Graduation Ceremony mid-January and starting a new semester at the end of January. Despite the considerable resistance from the academic staff towards these changes, they are approved by the Academic Board. The effect of these changes is felt a year later with a sharp rise in the students' and parents' complaints over the 'Value for Money' claims. The university programmes were claimed to be 'poor value for money' due to perceived 'short' academic year when compared to other universities, i.e. spring semester teaching would usually finish at the end of May in other regional universities rather than in mid-April as per 'new' academic calendar proposed. The university finances suffered as a result of these changes to the academic calendar as students left early from the halls and managed to find the system 'loops' not to pay 100% of the tuition fees. In this scenario, the institutional logic of bureaucracy (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008) and the pressures to accommodate for student

demands for faster marking and feedback prevailed over the concerns over the quality of the student learning experience and the academic workload.

Extract 9.1: Re-design of the Academic Calendar

SESC meeting, 01.02.13

As part of the discussions about the SESC work plans items, the Chair notified the committee of the potential changes in the university Academic Calendar 2013-14. These changes are to do with the pressures for internal efficiencies and student demands for faster assessment turnaround during Christmas period and return to study after exam period in January. He said that discussions are taking place at the Academic Board as to feasibility of such changes and a new design of the Academic Calendar. The changes are to be communicated as soon as decisions have been reached. The Senior Administrator said that he intends to discuss the impact of such changes in the central university function he oversees.

SESC meeting, 06.09.13

The Secretary of the committee (Student Experience Coordinator) informed that the changes to the academic calendar have been approved by the Academic Board. She is to report back on findings of the subcommittee examining the period following the Christmas break. These changes included a shortening of the post-Christmas, so called non-teaching period in January. Traditionally, the teaching in the spring semester would start in early February. As a result of the changes in the academic calendar the teaching started last week of January, thus shifting the spring semester forward with teaching 12 weeks teaching period finishing late April.

SESC meeting, 16.10.13

The Secretary of the committee (Student Experience Coordinator) discussed how a group of staff, recommended by SESC members, met in June 2013 to discuss and examine the activities that could take place between 6-17 January 2014 for students that have arrived early, stayed in halls, are local, are not involved in the Graduation Ceremony and/or do not have exams. Activities were examined that would enhance the learning journey for the students and also at what already occurs that could be coordinated centrally. It was discussed as key that activities are supported at a programme level by programme team, Student Experience Coordinator is to liaise with members to produce suggested activities for the period between 6-17 January and to advise faculties of activities to ensure that they are focussed at a programme level.

SESC meeting, 14.05.14

A Senior Administrator delivered a paper summarising the recent trend in student feedback about their perception of value for money. This perception is seen as currently comprised of two elements; the Academic Calendar and the amount of contact time students are receiving. A discussion took place about an investigation into contact time. Academic members raised the difficulty in availability of teaching rooms and the timetable as factors that affect the delivered contact time. The discussion moved to the Academic Calendar and the challenges that have been faced this year as a result. It was highlighted that as there is a similar Academic Calendar for 2014/15 that where possible lessons learnt from 2013/14 should be applied to 2014/15. The effect of the Academic Calendar on the University Student Residences Ltd wa raised by the student living manager, who stated that there has been a sharp increase in the number of complaints and that this has a direct correlation to an increase in student debtors. It was also stated that parents of students were also questioning University staff about the end of term and that comparisons were starting to occur between UoD and other universities based on the amount of perceived contact time.

Extract 9.1: Re-design of the Academic Calendar (Continues)

Members stated that the number of teaching weeks has not decreased but the removal of a two week Easter holiday and a further block study week has led students to feel the year has decreased. A Senior Lecturer suggested that the first week of January should be allocated as a week where students could prepare for exams, thereby moving exams by a week and pushing the end of the Spring term into late May. Academic members stated that they are having to create a third exam period for resit exams. A memebr of the Career and Employability division stated that a student award could be delivered in a condensed period after examination periods allowing students to work upon their employability and this would present an increased calendar. Space and time would be required to achieve this. The Chair, Senior Administrator and Student Experience Coordinator are comprise views of SESC and present a paper to academic quality committee. All members were encouraged to email the examples of feedback that they have received relating to value for money, the academic calendar and student contact hours.

Extract 9.2 illustrates the situation arisen in spring 2014, where Deputy Registrar reported to the SESC about the shortage of the rooms for examination at the university as a result of the recent investment in the learning spaces initiative. As a result of the redesign of the learning spaces at a various university sites, the rooms traditionally used to hold examinations were either redesigned to fit to a different purpose, or refurbished, including the changes in the layout and furniture making them unsuitable to hold the formal examinations. Here the pressures to create 'flexible and exciting' learning spaces to entice the students and the perspective applicants took charge over academic rationale. As the scenario unfolded, the academics expressed concerns about the major investments in the university infrastructure with little considerations for teaching, learning and assessment needs.

Manager-academics expressed concerns over the quality of the student experience, impact on the performance at NSS and the consequence for the university league table positions. The reaction to the 'enterprising' suggestion on hiring a city conference hall for exams, as an alternative

solution, seemed to be inappropriate for many SESC members: for the academics it would cause more stress for students; for the manager-academics – it would drain money from the already tight budgets; for the

Extract 9.2: Examination Rooms VS Learning Spaces investment

SESC meeting, 14.05.14

A member of the registry team presented a paper which outlined the recent reduction in suitable space and furniture to host student examinations with on campus. In his presentation he was brief stating that following recent changes in furniture provided in teaching spaces a significant number of rooms can no longer be used for Examinations. It is also likely that this will be reduced further due to changes of use for some of the larger spaces (e.g. the gym).

They commented that this is partly due to the size of the tables or constrictions on the layout of the room due to the type of furniture installed. During academic year 2012/13 the University had 18 rooms that were available for examinations, by AY2013/14 there were only 10 remaining and on completion of room refurbishments throughout the summer this will be further reduced leaving only 4 rooms available. In terms of available seating the university, it is planned to change from 676 seats to 326 following the summer refurbishments, this is a loss of 52% or seats and 78% of available rooms. Should change of use submissions be accepted for the gym this will result in the further loss of our largest examination space (200 Capacity) resulting in only 126 seats being available for exams. The largest space available will seat a maximum of 80 students.

They reassured the committee that the Learning Spaces Project Steering Group is working with Estates to bring furniture in or began to explore suitable external venues (a local conference hall in the city centre) to host exams.

This presentation attracted a number of 'outbursts' from academic members of staff asking why the demand for examinations was not considered when designing 'new' learning spaces and replacing the furniture. They felt that academic considerations are at the bottom of the Estates and the university priority lists to provide students with 'flash new' learning spaces. One of the responses was "We were never asked what learning spaces we need. What are the requirements for teaching, lab space, and examinations. Next thing we know – we will be asked to scrap exams from the curriculum, because there is no space to run them" (Senior Lecturer and Programme Leader).

When discussing a possibility of hiring a large conference hall in the centre for the exams – academics felt that it would adversely impact on student experience and increase in levels of stress associated with unfamiliar environment and logistics of getting to the external value including parking. As discussion took place and members felt that exams should be a priority as it is core University business and there was a strong desire to avoid the use of external venues. Additionally the requirement to increase the amount of exam rooms with PCs was raised.

non-academics – extra resources had to be 'pulled' off site to prepare, process and invigilate the exams. The polarity of the occupational interests expressed during these discussions is illustrative of the interplay of the

occupational interests when discussing complex, 'wicked' (Marson & Mitroff, 1981) strategic problems at the university committee meetings.

The sensitivities around the position of academia are evident from the discussions about the recently launched university-wide initiative of 'investigation' into the role of Programme Leader. Extract 9.3 illustrates the discussion at one of the SESC meeting about the initiation of such an initiative. As one of the academic representatives challenges the negative connotations of the word 'investigation' on relation to the role of a programme leader, the committee secretary defends the use of the word 'investigation' suggesting that it would draw a stronger attention from the academic colleagues to the project. Such a position is supported by the chair of the committee, as he emphasises the importance of a programme leader role in relation to student recruitment, progression and satisfaction. The project goes ahead as a cross-university initiative titled as "SESC Investigation into the role of a Programme Leader" headed by the chair of the committee (Dean of a College). Thus far, little academic engagement with this initiative has been observed across the university.

Extract 9.3: Investigation into the Role of a Programme Leader

SESC meeting, 06.01.16

The committee chair started the meeting by reviewing the minutes from the previous SESC meeting (9.11.15) in order to confirm the accuracy. A Deputy Head of a Department (LL) raised the query about one of the action points stating 'SESC Chair to initiate an SESC investigation into the role of programme leader'. He asked what was the investigation about?

The SESC secretary (SS) explained that at the previous meeting the committee discussed the report produced by Professor Way (an external consultant) on the Student Experience Strategy and its implementation at the University of Middleworth. One of the findings of the reports suggested strengthening the role of Programme Leader as being critical to student university experience. Thus the committee wants to start working in this direction. Then:

LL:' Why do we use word 'investigation' here?'

SS: 'It is a correct use as that is what committee does – investigates! We'll have a stronger buy-in'.

LL: 'But it can be wrongly interpreted. It sounds as we have done something wrong to be investigated'.

SS: 'The term is correct and that is the one we are going to use. It is not for a debate'.

Committee Member (Academic): Three years ago I have produced a 60-page document, which looked into this. I am not sure if anything has been done as a result of it - we still do not have a proper role description for Programme Leaders.

Chair: Can you circulate this document, please. We'll start with it. This is an important initiative and in line with the university corporate plan. Any volunteers to start 'task-and-finish' group on this? (No response)

Chair: Ok. I'll take it outside the committee to discuss with Pro V-C.

9.4. University strategy-making, occupations and occupational connectivity

The relational dynamics between the university occupational groupings is the major area of enquiry in this study of the higher education occupations and strategy-making. The analysis of the interview and observation materials reveals the potential tensions between academics and non-academics ('professional' and support staff). Such tensions are seen by some academics as conflicts which are linked to the status and pay of occupations: "I think at times there is conflict, inevitable, but I think you

talk to each other as equals to resolve that. It isn't about equal pay or equal status in a sort of socio-economic way, but this is about equal partners getting towards a common goal" (Head of Research, A Faculty). The recognition of the importance of status and pay in the relationship between academics and non-academics confirms the significance of the occupational dimension and the concept of occupational connectivity developed in the Chapter Six of the thesis. Occupational connectivity emphasises the relational dimension of occupations by acknowledging the differences between the interests of occupational groupings as well as the need to work together to serve various occupation strategies, including: strategies to ensure job security and position of an occupation in a sector/industry; to observe and protect pay conditions and the social status. In the context of the increasing pressures to 'deliver a high quality student experience', the need to work together is apparent:

"Our job is to work, well ideally our job is to work together to make sure that students are having a positive experience, that Lecturers are having a positive experience, that administrators are having a positive experience. We are all joined together to make good things work and I think our admin staff do that, I think they do really well. I just don't think, as an academic, I'm engaged enough with them" (Programme Leader).

Commenting on the need to work together, the academics interviewed acknowledged that some of the non-academic colleagues have a substantial influence in the university: "…regardless of whether they're in a pecking order, hierarchy if you would: development one, lower or higher. The fact is that there are people, who have administrative positions, who have far more influence and importance than me in the university, but actually in a meeting I'd be wanting to be treated with respect and treat them with a similar respect" (Head of Research, Faculty).

A number of academics expressed frustration with the ways they are treated by non-academic colleagues:

-"from an academic point of view it's damn difficult to find out the support staff you actually need, particularly when they all sit in [name of administrative block] block and you kind of walk into the block and you're like, and everybody kind of ignores you because they know, and you're like I just need some help. And they think - that's an academic I can tell by the way she's looking lost".

-"I'll cite a colleague who made a point some time ago which I thought was quite interesting. It was mentioned by a senior administrator that getting academics coordinated was like trying to herd cats and my unnamed colleague said if you've got ... if you know anything at all about cats, the last thing you'd try and do is herd them. That's a failed endeavour".

To some academics, non-academic colleagues are increasingly becoming withdrawn from the direct contact with the students due to the increasing use of technology in academic and administrative processes and systems: "You know, they'd all go into the school office, they'd troop in. Now everything's e-marked it's a fascinating thing because I don't think they [non-academic staff] come across them very much at all" (Senior Lecturer). Yet, the quality of the administrative support is critical in the context of the rising student expectations and the sector-wide student experience pressures.

The trends towards centralisation of the university administration were discussed throughout the interviews with the academic colleagues. Such trends are seen as being linked to the changing relational dynamics between academics and administrators:

"There has been a progressive move towards centralising administration and a focus on that being a specialist function within the university, compared with how it might have been here ten years ago, when it was much more academically focused. But the numbers and the processes and the systems are the way they are, there's been a loss of ... to an extent a

loss of academic control to one extent and a specialisation of the processing of information within the centre. I think every university and every organisation can do better on integrating administration and academia" (Senior Lead in Learning Enhancement and Senior Lecturer).

The reference to 'a loss of academic control' is illustrative of the shifting power balance from academic occupation to 'administrators', a generic term used in reference to non-academic occupations. Such a shift is attributed to the centralisation of the university systems, process and 'information processing' functions, for instance: Student Records and Fees, Corporate Intelligence Unit, Timetabling and other. The university drive for efficiency resulting in the centralised service provision to academic departments is viewed as a contributory factor to strengthening of the positions of non-academics when compared to academics. In fact, according to some of our respondents, the academic occupation is in danger of being significantly marginalised:

"You can hear comments where some people in support staff don't like what the academics are doing. In other universities, I do research in other places so I do hear accounts, and I know that they work on the assumption they have got to sort out the staff because they don't teach in the right way. They don't have the right approach. So, the normal certificate in teaching higher education from every university is run from the central university trying to get staff to behave in the ways they think they should, so there is disappearance of lectures in most universities" (Professor).

Standardisation of approaches in teaching and learning is seen to be leading to the 'disappearance of lecturers' as the values of academic occupation towards originality, free speech and academic rigour are under pressure to be standardised and centralised. As one of the academics points out: "there is a sort of silent war going on between the departments. I think professionals are great when they do their job professionally but

keep out of the academic job. It is a sort of silent war. And sometimes they are consciously set up against, by management" (Professor). Similar concerns about the deepening occupational divide between academic and non-academic staff are echoed in the recent University Workplace Survey 2016 (Times Education Higher, February 2016). According to the survey, UK academics and non-academic staff inhibit "two parallel universes that have little point of contact". Academics are reported to be dissatisfied with university management and leadership and when asked if their university leadership is performing well, only 28 per cent of academics surveyed agree compared with 61 per cent of administrators (Times Education Higher, 2016).

The manager-academics interviewed were satisfied with their relationships with non-academic colleagues, often generically referred to as 'administrators'. A Head of Programme Scheme, commented that "honesty and transparency is the best policy" in managing relationships between academics and non-academics. They, then, went on: "I think it would be well received by academic colleagues. This is the reality of our situation and just saying we want to protect the academic role and we are the important characteristics of that, but we also need to work together and move together institutionally". This is an illustration of a position where manager-academics are compelled to protect academic roles, as often manager-academics have career routes in academia before 'progressing up' the management ladder. Whilst in management positions, they are tasked to work more intensely with non-academic departments and contribute to 'moving together institutionally'. This position echoes the finding outlined in Chapter Seven on occupations and occupational

connectivity of this thesis with regards to the duality of the manager-academics' position towards academic and non-academic occupational groupings.

The role of the university leadership in shaping the relationships between academic and non-academic occupational groupings has been discussed a number of times in the interviews with the manager-academics:

"I take for granted mostly that people have that competence to deliver professionally in whatever role, whether it's an academic role or an administrative role. We employ people because they hit certain competencies, display certain attitudes and have the requisite skill levels, knowledge levels. So you say we've got that. But then, it's about the leadership again in setting the framework, the attitude, expectation, expected outcomes that people can then work towards and contribute" (Dean of Faculty).

Leadership that has "a personal touch, but also comes fully at you with facts: here's the sector, here's what we are doing and the master of the detail of his brief. A very impressive leader [with reference to the Vice Chancellor of the university], because all of that, the knowledge which makes him an argumentative force to be reckoned with but also has the personal touch" was said to be admired by one of the manager-academics interviewed. As opposed to "bullying kind of management style … very autocratic, you know embedded a whole raft of senior managers in his own image and morale just went down the tubes and the university ratings [a former polytechnic in the North East] went plummeting, you know it was horrendous. So that demonstrated that it didn't work, so I'm confident that that style of management will not work in a university. It just doesn't work because you, you've already isolated. The nature of academics is they're not going to bow down to that sort of management style, it's just not going

to work". There is recognition of the importance of the university leadership in creating work conditions that positively impact on the staff morale and has a subsequent impact on the university performance in the sector league tables.

At the operational level a number of manager-academics expressed a view that academic and administrative colleagues should be working more closely together: "I think students get a better experience as a consequence of academics and administrative staff working really, really tightly together in shaping and delivering the learning and the programmes we offer. It's integration, fundamentally, and good communication that makes a difference to what the student experience is" (Dean of a Faculty). Such integration is seen as particularly important at a programme level, where administrative colleagues have a better opportunity of working directly with the students and in playing a significant role in programme management: "So the tighter you can couple those two groups, the greater effect you'll have. And that's about the way you organise them, as well as the number of people that you have. If you only have one administrator, they're going to be flogged to death and not going to give a great experience for the student. If you've got 20 people, that obviously gives you greater capacity, but that's about managing that capacity. That's easy. But the way you organise, I think, is the other big thing as well as sort of setting that framework of attitudes, expectations, culture, etcetera" (Dean of a Faculty).

A reference to 'them and us' divide was made in the interview with a Senior Member of the University Executive Team, as they explain: "This 'them and

us' – just get rid of it. We're all one team, we all should be responsible for the student experience, but then we've got to actually enable people to be able to do that. Linked into that, I do think that the academic roles in this university need a much higher status than they have. Higher recognition and the role of Programme Leader really desperately needs an overhaul". Despite being against the emphases on the occupational divide in relation to the university staff, they admit that "it will be an important exploration to see whether there are any conceptual and value differences, different perspectives and different lenses" (Senior Member of the University Executive Team).

A number of non-academic colleagues referred to academics as customers: "Our closest customer, if you like, are the academics in the programme teams. Although even within the faculty office as a whole, we do have some contact with students but ultimately our main customer is the academic members of staff and certainly within programme support, because of the activities that we do such as induction, class scheduling, programme handbooks, assessment board, it's the academics that we're liaising with in terms of getting that information, processing that information, whatever it might be. They're our key customer" (Team Leader of the Faculty Administration Team). This, rather impersonal view of academic colleagues, is in line with the AUA CPD Framework (AUA, 2009), which advocates viewing and treating university staff as customers/clients to ensure the internal efficiencies. This business-like discourse in relation to work colleagues is driven by the adaptation of the business practices to signal to staff and the external parties the increasing use of business-like approaches in running the university, which contributes further to the

increasing trend of 'corporatisation' of universities (Chomsky *et al*; 1997, Chomsky 2011; Collini, 2012)

A Senior University Administrator and Member of Senior Management Team highlights the importance of the university culture and the role it plays in the university student experience. In his view:

"Our student experience is enabled by staff and culture. The experience of our staff is intrinsically linked to that of our students and the well-being of our staff is intrinsically linked to that of our students. We directly inspire or not them to take opportunities and develop in whatever way we come into contact with them, it can be the cleaner or it can be the professor. Each can have an impact and we ignore that at our peril, so unless there is focus on the way in which staff is enabled to support the student experience, we will do less well than we otherwise could".

The university culture, expressed through the attitudes and behaviours of the university staff, is seen to be important in shaping the university student experience. There is an acknowledgement of the inevitable occupational differences 'it could be the cleaner or it could be the professor', yet the experience and the wellbeing of university staff have a direct impact on the student experience at the university. It is acknowledged that considerations for the university staff is not at the forefront of the university's approach to student experience: "we ignore that at our peril, so unless there is focus on the way in which staff are enabled to support the student experience" and as a result "we will do less well than we otherwise could" (Senior University Administrator and Member of Senior Management Team).

Drawing on the concept of occupational connectivity introduced in Chapter Seven of the thesis, the results of the analysis indicate that despite obvious occupational differences and, often, conflicting interests amongst the

occupational groupings, there is a need for the groupings to work together to maintain and to strengthen their occupational status and privileges. Not least it is important to work together to ensure the continuity and often 'survival' of the organisation they work for, thus, ensuring the security of their employment and future career. The study confirms various tensions amongst the university occupational groupings which are linked to the increasing marketisation of higher education, the rise of managerialism and the 'de-professionalisation' trends in academia (McKinlay & Archers, 1985; Haug, 1993; Reed, 1996; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004). The complexity of changes in higher education sector and the increasing adaptation of the business-like approaches in university working and strategising are sharpening the tensions amongst the occupational groupings. Not the least, this is due to the major changes in the roles and responsibilities of the academics, manager-academics and non-academics studied. Yet, it is through working together, the occupational interests are observed and occupation strategies are evolved. From the strategic management perspective, successful working relationships amongst the occupational groupings are of the importance to the success of the university long-term. Such a success is dependent upon the major sectorial changes in terms of funding, regulatory regime and the performance of other HEIs in the sector, but also upon the university's capabilities to respond to such changes and in that - the occupational connectivity becomes an important imperative.

Chapter 10: Conclusions, Implications and Reflections

This study is set out to explore the occupational dimension of strategy making in the context of the higher-education 'initiative' of student experience. In this final chapter of the thesis, a review of the findings is offered together with considerations for the contribution of the study. The implications for management practice, limitations of the study, reflective commentary examining the researcher's own role in the study and recommendations for future research are also drawn out.

10.1. Occupations and occupational aspect of self-identity

This research into the three higher education occupational groupings, namely academics, manager-academics and non-academics, reveals three dimensions used by the respondents in constructing the occupational aspect of their self-identities (Alvesson *et al*, 2008; Watson, 2008). Analysis of the study materials confirms that our respondents talked about the content, context and boundary definition/setting in the personal identity work about their occupation. All of our respondents, when asked to define their occupation, elaborated on what they do, in what settings or circumstances and how they relate/or differ from the other occupations inside and outside the university.

As a result of the close examination of the relationship between self-identity and the occupational aspect of self-identity, such a relationship is seen as one where occupational aspect is informing and informed by self-identity and at the same time it is shaped by the social contexts where the personal identity work takes place. The latter is consistent with Hewitt's

view (2007) of the significance of the contextual setting in the identity construction. This finding is presented in Figure 6.1.

The occupational aspect of self-identity is seen as a continuous negotiation of the representation of who an individual is as a member of an occupational grouping in various contexts. Such representation is a subject to societal expectations towards one's role and 'performance' as a member of a specific occupational grouping. Societal expectations influence self-definition of one's occupation as observed in the study.

Despite the significant influence of the societal expectations in personal identity work, deep personal beliefs about the nature and the role of the occupation in society are intertwined in the construction of self-identity. The study confirms the *fluidity* of the occupational aspect of personal identity work amongst the various contexts and *anchoring* to an individual's self-identity. As such, the relationship between self and occupational aspect of self-identity is an ever-evolving project of negotiation between the notion of self and societal expectations of one's occupation. The analysis of the interview materials is consistent with the view that such negotiation involves a three-way tension between the notion of 'who am I', 'what do I do and how' and the societal expectations of an occupation including the expectations for behaviour associated with a particular occupational grouping. As societal expectations change dramatically, as in the case of the increasing marketisation of higher educations (Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown and Carasso, 2013), these tensions become sharper and more pronounced in personal identity work.

These tensions are particularly noticeable when the research participants were asked to self-define their occupation and then elaborate on the role of a university in society. In defining one's occupation, the negotiation of one's relationship with a university, as a key higher education sector institution and the place where the majority of work associated with a particular occupation takes place, has emerged as part of the findings.

In the study of the occupational aspect of self-identity, the identification with a key organisation, often associated with where the occupation takes place, provide valuable insights into personal identity work of the university occupations. The interview analysis reveals the tensions between a view of a university's role as educator in a society and as a 'value-for-money' machine; designed for 'fulfilment' and designed for 'student satisfaction and accountability'. The tensions between the inevitable connection of a university with the state and the need to keep a critical distance and be autonomous have been mentioned throughout the interviews. Another important set of tensions include: between the need for reproducing an existing occupational structure and renewing it by promoting social mobility; between societal expectations to 'deliver' qualifications and skills for employment and academic endeavour to encourage open and critical debates in the environment free from immediate utilitarian pressures. These tensions present a number of dilemmas for members of the higher education occupations studied:

- Between the preservation of traditions of academic occupation, such as academic freedom, criticality, collegiality, and adherence to the emerging agenda of 'professionalism' in higher education;

- Between the supremacy of academic occupation in the higher education sector and a view that encourages weakening of the academic occupational dominance in the sector;
- Between a view of university student experience that is challenging, exciting and 'life transforming' and a view of the experience that is concerned with accountability for a student lifecycle with measures around 'progression, attainment and achievement' and sector league tables performance.

These dilemmas are seen as important areas around which the occupational aspect of university employees' identity work occurs in the context of the increasing marketisation of higher education (Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013). The same could be said of the prevailing adoption of a 'new managerialism' ideology to managing universities and sector occupations (Enteman, 1993; Clarke & Newman, 1997; Exworthy & Halford, 1999, Cutler & Waine, 2000; Reed, 2002; Deem & Brehony, 2005).

'Professionalisation' talk was heard from people across all three occupational groupings studied. Academic respondents used it to draw a distinction between academic and non-academic, i.e. 'professional' work. They emphasised the associations of 'professional' work with well-defined roles and responsibilities, set contract hours and clearly assigned tasks. The notion of 'becoming an academic' is associated with flexibility in tasks and projects, work hours outside conventional work patterns, high levels of autonomy and freedom of expression, and continuous personal drive for finding and developing new knowledge. Manager-academics frequently

used the term 'professional' services in relation to non-academic departments at the university often associated with various 'corporate' central university departments, i.e. finance, marketing, HR, and various student service departments i.e. student wellbeing, counselling, student finance and others. The acknowledgement of the 'tribal' tensions amongst the occupational groupings was balanced with a view that 'managing' such tensions is an important aspect of university management. Non-academic respondents frequently used the word 'professional' to describe their occupation. This is seen as side-effects of professionalisation projects aimed at re-establishing and re-emphasising the status of one occupational grouping in relation to others (Currie, Finn & Martin, 2010; Bishop, Waring, 2011, 2012; Watson 2012). Thus, the professionalisation projects are seen as features of the occupational aspect of personal identity work in higher education. University occupational groupings engage with this work in a pursuit of different occupation strategies: academics to protect the occupational dominance and widen the gap between 'others' in the sector; manager-academics to 'equalise' positions of academics and non-academics to ensure the compliance to the management pressures; non-academics to re-assert and to re-emphasise their status in the sector.

10.2. Occupational Connectivity

The concept of 'occupational connectivity' is developed during the course of this study to recognise the diverse and fluid positions amongst the occupational groupings towards each other and the sector changes. Occupational connectivity emphasises the relational dimension of occupations by acknowledging the differences between the interests of

occupational groupings as well as the need to work collaboratively to serve various occupation strategies, including strategies to ensure job security and position of an occupation in a sector/industry; to observe and to protect pay conditions and the social status, amongst others. On the one hand, occupational groupings have their own interests to advance and to protect. Occupational interests involve what Weber (1978) called 'the closure of social and economic opportunities to outsiders'. On the other hand, it is through working alongside other occupational groupings that occupation strategies are enacted.

The increasing marketisation of higher education (Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013) is seen as one of the major trends in the sector by all of the research participants. The representatives from all three occupational groupings reflected on the impact of such a trend on occupations. For many academics, the marketisation of higher education is associated with the increasing demands for standardisation, accountability, achievement of KPIs and the rise of managerialism in higher education (Deem et al, 2007; Deem & Johnson, 2000). The academic respondents spoke negatively about such trends, often expressing a sense of frustration and unrest: 'I feel redundant' is one of the illustrative statements made to describe the position of academics.

The manager-academics interviewed echoed some of the concerns expressed by academics, in particular, about the pressures to recruit students and the supremacy of the 'business case' to attract internal financing and executive support. They commented on the university processes, systems and management practices are becoming more

business–like; rising tensions between academics and 'administrators'; increasing work with data and the frequent discussions about the future of the university at the university executive committees. They talked about the great opportunities that exist in the sector as well as the turbulent changes that are taking place and are foreseen in the near future. Despite the numerous changes in working and operational challenges associated with universities becoming more business-like, the marketisation has provided opportunities for career progression, greater responsibilities and personal growth for many non-academic research participants.

The following insights into the relational dynamics between the occupational groupings studied are revealed when the concept of occupational connectivity is applied:

- *Academics:* The marketisation of higher education presents major challenges to the interests of this dominant occupation grouping in the sector. This is due to the increasing attempts of standardisation and accountability in academia, pressures to achieve high student satisfaction scores, bureaucratisation of academic work and the rise of managerialist ideology (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Exworthy & Halford, 1999; Farrell & Morris, 2003). This manifests in feelings of negativity, tension and threat toward the sector strategic pressures of 'high quality student experience' and the university's responses to align with the pressures of the higher education quasi-market.
- *Manager-academics:* the analysis of the research materials confirms the duality of the manager-academic's position: they have firm roots in academia, yet, they have management responsibilities at a various levels

in the university. They are trying to align the interests of academics and non-academics as they are tasked to ensure the delivery of the university strategic priorities. There is a duality in the nature of interests of this grouping: to be a part of the academic community and to 'protect ' the interests of their 'home' occupational grouping, on the one hand; and the need to deliver on targets, key performance indicators and the university strategy, on the other hand.

- *Non-academics:* this occupational grouping, despite expressing uncertainty for their roles and the direction of changes in the sector, at large, they embrace the sector changes. The respondents interviewed commented on the recent career growth they have experienced and opening of opportunities for career development and progression in the university and across the sector. Their views on university strategy and leadership are mostly positive. There is a sense of growing importance of this grouping as a result of customer and market focused initiatives in the university.

As a result of the analyses, the following tensions amongst the university occupational groupings are observed:

- There are growing tensions between the interests of academics and managers-academics around the nature of the academic work, the role of academics and the rise of managerialism in higher education.
- There are tensions between manager-academics and non-academics around the increasing complexity and diversity in the university working across a variety of university provision modes (on-campus, on-line, collaborative, other), around the fast shifting strategic priorities and the emphasis on cost efficiencies in the university day-to-day working.

- There are tensions between academic and non-academic occupational groupings around the lines of responsibility for the university student experience and the shifting boundaries of academic and administrative work.

  Such an array of tensions amongst the occupational groupings paints a complex picture of occupational relational dynamics. Very important here is the relationship between power and uncertainty as in the strategic contingency theory of power Hickson *et al* (1971). The analysis of the accounts about the perceived impact of the marketisation on occupational groupings shows academics expressing a great degree of uncertainty about the future of the academic occupation and Higher Education in the UK. These are supported by the accounts of worries about the increasing accountability, managerialism and possibility of sector contractions accompanied by redundancies in the near future. Manager-academics and non-academics expressed less of a concern and more of a caution of what might be the next governmental move to regulate the sector in England: removal of the student recruitment cap and a full liberalisation of tuition fees. According to the strategic contingency theory of power (Hickson *et al*, 1971; Hinings *et al*, 1974; Saunders, 1990) the group that can actively demonstrate an ability to manage uncertainty is in a stronger, more powerful, position when compared to others. The present study indicates that there is a shifting power patterns from the dominant academic occupation to manager-academic and non-academic occupations as these two groupings appear to respond better to the uncertainty in the sector. Despite a strong perceived position of the manager-academics, they are increasingly becoming influenced by the central university, non-academic,

departments that control university resources' attainment, processing and allocation (Finance Department, Estates, Information Services, Central Intelligence Unit, Student Records and Fees, Timetabling and others). These shifting power patterns become an important dimension in understanding the relational dynamics amongst the occupational groupings in the university setting.

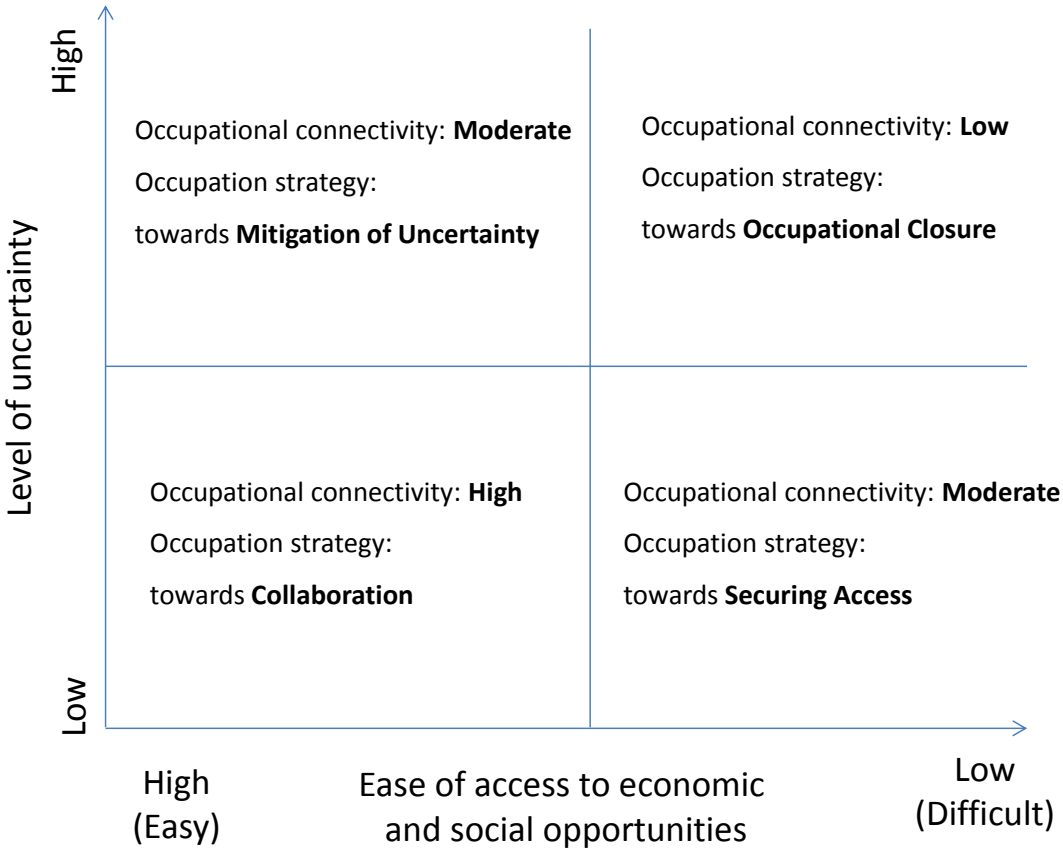
The concept of occupational connectivity, as a key 'product' of the present study, allows to surface and map occupational interests, to identify tensions and to explore occupation strategies, whether in the HE field or elsewhere. As we see in this thesis, there are two dimensions that are closely linked to the relational dynamics amongst occupations and their occupation strategies: level of uncertainty and ease of the access to economic and social opportunities (Weber, 1978). The typology of occupation strategies is proposed depending on the significance of each of these two dimensions (Figure 10.1).

The four types of occupation strategies are mapped in accordance with the level of uncertainty and the ease of the access to economic and social opportunities:

- An occupation strategy towards Collaboration: in this position the level of uncertainty is low and the ease of access is high. In this situation, there is a 'pull' towards occupation strategies amongst occupations to advance their occupational interests collaboratively. Although, the tendency for occupational closure (Weber 1978; Murphy 1988) is observed in any of these positions, the overall

relational dynamics would be towards collaboration, when compared to other positions.

Figure 10.1: Occupational Connectivity and Occupation Strategy



- An occupation strategy towards Occupational Closure: this position illustrates the situation where the level of uncertainty is high and the ease of the access to economic and social opportunities is difficult. In this situation, the occupation strategy is strongly driven by securing the occupational dominance and power over others to ensure/preserve the occupational closure in the situation of increasing/high uncertainty alongside the increasing difficulty of access to the opportunities.
- An occupation strategy towards Mitigation of Uncertainty: this position is characterised by the increase in the level of uncertainty

whilst the ease of the access to the opportunities remains the same or growing due to, for instance, growth of the sector and increasing recruitment to sector occupations. In these circumstances, the occupations could pursue the strategies to mitigate the uncertainty, for instance lobbying of interests to the government and sector regulator; introducing secure contractual arrangements (move from zero-hours contracts); industrial actions to negotiate pay and employment conditions.

- An occupation strategy towards Securing Access: this position is characterised by the situation where the ease of the access to opportunities is narrowing whilst the uncertainty level remains the same or declining. The occupational connectivity is moderate. The occupation strategies for securing the access could include: 'professionalisation' strategies to emphasise the position in the sector; introduction of 'occupational' standards to legitimise the occupational status, pay and employment conditions; developing clear progression routes to gain management positions/status in the workplace.

The study illustrates the scenario where the uncertainty increases due to the changes in the regulatory and funding regime in higher education, whilst the ease of the access remains as number of staff employed in the UK HE is still growing (Universities UK, 2015). As the uncertainty level increases, the tensions amongst the occupational groupings grow. The occupation strategies towards collaboration are becoming less prevalent with more occupational groupings are becoming increasingly concerned with the approaches to mitigate the uncertainty. The occupational

connectivity has a 'from high to moderate' trajectory, where the occupational groupings are becoming more concerned with observing their occupational interests rather than collaboration. These tendencies are becoming a feature of the relational dynamics in the sector as illustrated in this study and the recent observations of the sector workforce trends (Grove, 2016; University Workforce survey, 2016).

10.3. Student experience higher education initiative

The study of the university occupational groupings and their relational dynamics is carried out in the context of the increasing sector-wide emphases on the delivery of the high quality student experience (Browne Report, 2010). Although all of the research participants commented on the strategic importance of ensuring the high quality university student experience, the challenges associated with its operationalisation are spoken about differently across the university occupations. Some of these challenges are associated with the differences in positions amongst the occupations about the scope of the student experience. The academics argued the primacy of the student learning experience when compared to a wider university experience, whilst non-academic and manager-academics observed the importance of the latter. The analysis of the interviews and observation materials surfaced the tensions around the issue of 'ownership' of the student experience 'strategy' and the initiatives at the university. Whilst academics expressed concerns that the current approach to students experience is limiting their role, non-academics and manager-academics commented on the misalignment between the

centralised and localised approaches to the student experience university initiatives.

The study reveals the polarity in statements about the priority issues around the student experience: non-academic staff seem to prioritise supporting the students through the various stages of a student lifecycle and a successful transition from one stage to another; manager-academics are mostly concerned with the trouble-shooting and addressing the underperformance; academics prioritise the issues around learning, teaching and assessment (LTA), pastoral care, students' personal and professional development.

Reactions to the notion of 'students as customers' existed across all three occupational groupings. Some academics saw such associations as a major threat to the academic occupation. In the majority of cases, non-academics were comfortable with a notion of students as customers/consumers. A wide array of the opinions expressed suggests a sector-wide trend in re-defining the view of students and their relationship with a university. The role of the students was seen to be important in creating their own university experience by all occupational groupings. Although academics commented negatively on students' customer-like attitudes and behaviour, non-academics and manager-academics seemed to have accepted these as a consequence of the marketisation of higher education. Hence, the issues around clarifying students' rights and responsibilities, setting the university charter and accommodating customer-like student behaviour by offering a wide range of opportunities for the students to choose from and

to 'bespoke' their university experience are the frequent agenda items at a various university level committees.

The analysis of the interview materials confirms the increasing diversity of positions regarding the role of students. Such diversity is understood through the tensions between the two institutional logics (Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008): a market institutional logic and traditional university institutional logic as presented in Figure 8.1 in Chapter Eight. Such an array of definitions signifies a trend of re-definition of identities, roles and boundaries that takes place in higher education. A number of authors have commented on the trend (Gordon & Whitchurch, 2010; Whitchurch 2006, 2008, 2013) as a reconstruction of the higher education 'professional identities'. The present study suggests that the personal identity work of the representatives of the university occupational groupings is closely linked with the shifting relational dynamics amongst the occupational groupings associated with a wider re-definition of roles, responsibilities and work practices of the higher-education occupations.

Although the role of university staff in the creation of the high quality university student experience is said to be important by all of our respondents, there have been notable nuanced differences amongst the occupational groupings studied. The academics emphasised the impact of the learning experience in the 'construction' of student identity i.e. the very essence of being a university student. The non-academics emphasised the importance of boundary setting and relationship management with other university colleagues in ensuring a 'seamless' and a 'failure-free' delivery of the students experience. The manager-academics paid attention to the

immediacy, 'people-to-people' aspect of the student experience and the importance of having staff with the 'right set of values, behaviours and attitudes' to 'deliver outstanding student experience'.

As a result of these tensions, academics appear to be concerned with the position of their occupation in the sector. There is a sense of uncertainty and frustration with the sector and the university approaches to student experience where alongside the increasing accountability and managerial pressures to ensure that students are satisfied with their learning experience, student experience is increasingly becoming 'everybody's business'. Academics, having been in a dominant position in holding the responsibility for student experience, observe other university departments 'taking a lead on it'. There is a greater degree of confidence projected by manager-academic and non-academic staff about the student experience being a 'university-wide agenda'. There have been substantial investments in the infrastructure, systems and processes to 'manage' student experience centrally at the university. There is a strategic focus on the performance management of the National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, other surveys; 'Value for Money', employability and other agendas associated with 'providing opportunities for students' as part of the university 'offer'.

Throughout the observations of the university-level committee work, the binary divide of the organisational 'centre' and the academic 'periphery' became apparent in discussions and decision-making about the student experience initiatives. 'Them and us' discourse prevailed in the discussions of the central approach to promoting NSS survey campaign and the lack of

the academic engagement in promoting the survey. Another area of tensions was noted around the 'new' Academic Calendar, where the shortening of the assessment and marking cycle in January was seen as having a negative impact on the students experience from the academic perspective. Contrary to the views of academics, the central departments saw it as an opportunity to increase efficiency of the assessment boards, to ensure fast turnaround of the assessment, and to shorten the January exam period as well as students' return to study after Christmas university vacation period. Other areas of tensions between the centre and the academic periphery were around: the SESC membership and its scope; co-operation between academic and administrative during the enrolment; SESC resources allocation to support central and college-based projects and top-down approaches in communicating information from the centre to the periphery with little attempts to gather information and opinions from the periphery to the centre.

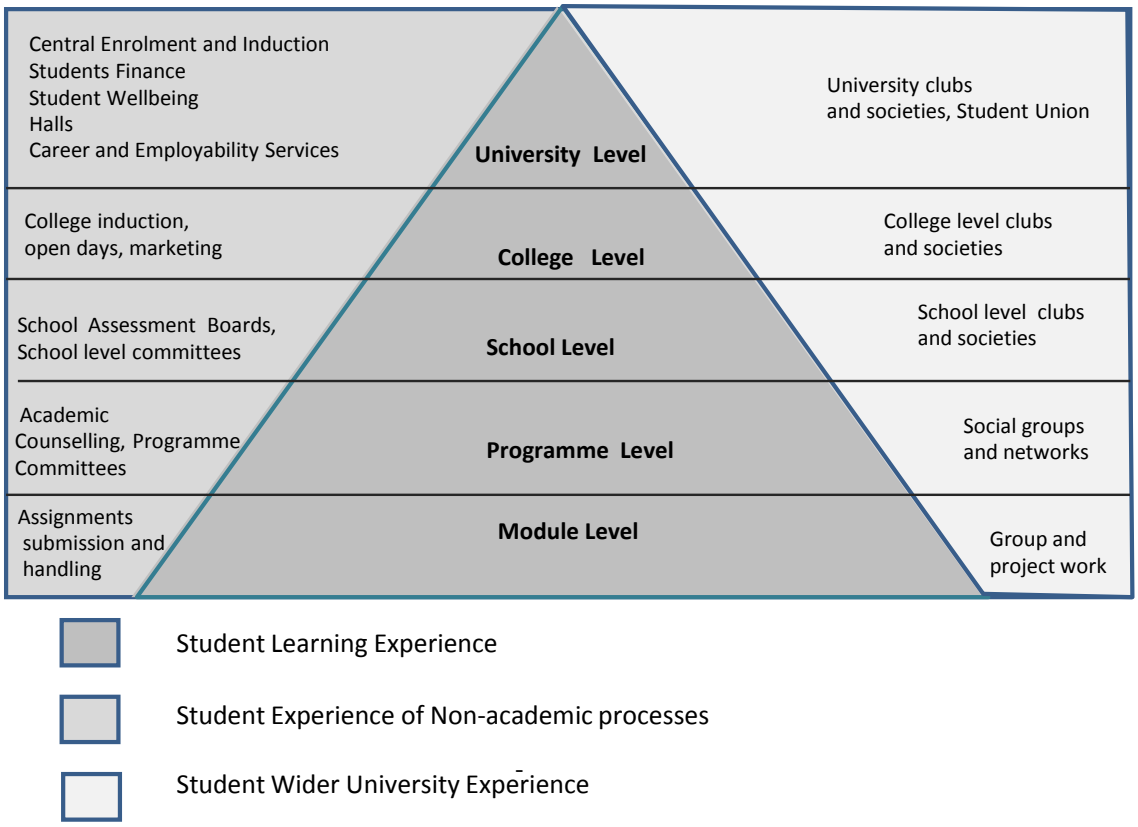
The complexity of the university approaches to address the sector-wide pressures on 'delivering' high quality student experience is understood through the tensions between the organisational approaches in relation to three main areas of the university student experience: student learning experience, student experience of non-academic processes and a wider student experience, such as socialisation and networking outside the main programme of study (Figure 10.2). At the heart of the university student experience lies a student learning experience which is 'felt' at a module, programme, school, college and university levels. The highest impact of the learning experience for an individual student is 'felt' at a module and a programme levels. The intensity of the 'felt' learning experience decreases

the higher the university hierarchy. It is at a module and a programme levels where the academic work and occupation is closely involved in the student learning experience.

Another area of the university student experience is that of non-academic ('professional') processes, services and functions. There is a little engagement with that experience at a module and a programme levels, but as the university hierarchy gets higher, students are exposed to the 'centralised' university services, for instance Student Support and Information Services, International Student Centre, Student Records and Fees, Student Accommodation. As the study reveals, they are becoming increasingly significant in the delivery of the high quality university student experience. Positioned in the university centre, they often do not have a first-hand 'felt' perspective of the student experience and are seen as predominantly influenced by the market institutional logic (Freidland & Alford, 1991; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008).

The third area of the university student experience is associated with a wider university experience. This experience is outside the taught programmes and the university systems and processes. It is often associated with a broader notion of 'being a university student', for instance taking part in volunteering, work experience and employment opportunities; being involved in university clubs and societies; being involved with the student union; being part of the student communities and networks.

Figure 10.2: Three areas of the university student experience: an integrated perspective



This domain is not always directly linked to the academic learning experience at a module and a programme levels. The importance of this domain is well researched (Schroeder & Mable, 1994; Berger, 1997; Cooke & Bowl, 2007; Fleischer & Wilcox, 2007; SWAP, 2008; Wilcox *et al*, 2005).

This view of university student experience captures the tensions between the university centre and the academic periphery in approaching the student experience initiative. It accounts for the diversity of views amongst the occupational groupings with regards to the priority areas for student experience initiatives and role of occupational groupings in these initiatives. It explains why the majority of the student experience initiatives which are championed by the non-academic university departments have a 'central' feel and are managed top-down. On the other hand, the student

learning experience is mostly 'felt' at the level of the academic periphery i.e. at the module and the programme levels. This situation is characterised by the tensions around the issues of ownership and management of the student experience initiatives at the university.

10.4. Occupations and strategy-making

In this study of the university strategising, the differences in the perception and the involvement with the university strategy-making practices across the occupational groupings studied are observed. From an academic perspective, the university strategy is spoken of as a management tool used to ensure the compliance with the university policies in various domains, for instance in teaching and learning, and to performance manage the university the staff. It is also seen as a 'buzz word' often associated with the 'corporate speak'. Many academics commented that they often find strategy-making activities outside their main remit. They are often reluctant to 'waste' their valuable research and scholarly time on activities they associate with the university strategy-making. The issues of programme and module design, planning for scholarly activities and REF submission are often associated with the strategy-making practices by academics. Manager-academics interviewed commented on the role of strategy as to 'provide clarity and simplicity out of confusion and complexity'. The majority of complex, strategic issues are associated with the university responses to the increasing marketisation of the sector (Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013). The strategy is spoken of as a tool to achieve clarity/focus in determining and communicating the university strategic ambition. In that the challenges are

associated with the 'local' responses to the central university initiatives and in ensuring that the academic and non-academic departments work collaboratively. Non-academics, although readily acknowledging that they take part in a various strategy-making practices, often commented that they see strategy as being imposed from the top and decided somewhere in the management hierarchy of the university.

Resource allocation practices are talked about as an important aspect of the university strategy-making and staff responsible for allocating university resources is seen to be occupying a powerful position in the university hierarchy. This echoes a view of the power positions in organisations based on control, acquisition and distribution of resources (Mintzberg, 1983; Pfeffer, 1977, 1981) and the links between power and centrality in higher education (Hackman, 1985). These practices are not only seen as an expression of power, but are also seen as a means to protect and advance the interests of the university occupational groupings involved in resources allocation, distribution and monitoring. The study reveals that the university strategy is often associated with a development of the university-level documents titled 'strategy' which serves as legitimisation for resources allocation and budgetary purposes. The strategy 'execution' is often monitored by the central University departments with a focus on 'Value for Money' reporting to the university Executive Team, the Chair of Governors and HEFCE. Thus, resource allocation, accountability and monitoring by the university registry are seen as important features of the university strategising.

The 'data-driven' aspect of the university strategy-making was commented on by the representatives from all three occupational groupings. Strategy-making activities were associated with gathering information for the development of the university Corporate Plan, Annual Monitoring documentation and the various reports towards the 'Value for Money' reporting. The increasing use of the surveys to measure student satisfaction,(there are five university-wide surveys launched annually at the university, employability statistics and sector benchmarking statistics) are frequently used in the discussions associated with the university strategy.

The university hierarchy is viewed as hindering 'inclusive' and 'feed-forward' strategising by the research participants. A formal, 'Annual Monitoring' process, designed to respond to students' and other significant parties' (external examiners, professional bodies and others) demands, is seen as overly bureaucratic and too lengthy for an effective response to a fast changing higher education sector landscape. 'Task-and-finish' project teams, operating outside of the formal committee structures and the formal university processes, are often established and asked to report either directly to the university executive team or to a nominated formal committee. Although the university strategy-making is associated with the work of the formal university committees, the majority of the decisions and work is done outside of the committee structures. Academic respondents commented on the lack of focus and the tangible outcomes from the work of the committees, whilst non-academic respondents talked about the importance of influencing and lobbing at the committee meetings and outside of the committee meetings.

As a result of participant observations, the strategy making practices are seen as arenas where the interests of the occupational groupings are observed and negotiated. The student experience initiatives are seen as problematic from an academic perspective as the student experience agenda is increasingly being 'owned' by others than academic occupation. This situation threatens the academic occupational dominance and creates tensions amongst the sector occupational groupings. The strategy-making practices around the student experience initiative become arenas where the interests of non-academics and manager-academics are advanced, often at the expense of the academic interests. Tensions and conflicts of occupational interests are features of many current practices associated with the students experience initiative, and the strategy-making practices make no exception.

The concept of occupational connectivity is applied to understand the significance of the shifting relational dynamics of the university occupations for strategy-making. Three occupational groupings studied actively observe, advance and protect their occupational interests as means of legitimising their occupation. It is through the closure of the social and economic opportunities to others (Weber, 1978) they ensure the success of the occupation strategies. The interests of academics are concerned with protecting their dominant position in the sector, which means ensuring control over the teaching, learning, assessment and research domain in the university. Any infringement of the academic control over this domain is met with the negativity and resistance. Non-academics are keen to legitimise their position in the sector and to advance their interests through the student experience initiative. This initiative provides greater social and

economic opportunities through the career development and progression. The increasing power of this occupational grouping is associated with the control over the allocation and the distribution of university resources and the increasing importance of the corporate-centre university functions such as marketing, finance, external relations and other. As the marketisation of higher education prompts adaptation of the business-like models and practices in university working, non-academic functions strengthen their positions. Manager-academics' interests are often concerned with legitimising their position at the university and ensuring the compliance with the demands of the university centre.

Utilising the concept of occupational connectivity, the analysis indicates that despite obvious occupational differences and, often, conflicting interests amongst the occupational groupings, there is a need for collaborative working. Such collaboration is necessary to maintain and to strengthen the status of the occupations and the access to the social and economic privileges when compared to other occupations inside and outside the sector. Despite the various tensions amongst the occupational groupings studied, they acknowledge the importance of 'joined-up' approach when responding to/dealing with strategic issues, such as the student experience initiative. The majority of the respondents have confirmed that the university student experience is 'everybody's responsibility' and that there is a need to ensure 'effective' collaborative working across the university to deliver a high quality student experience. It is observed that by working collaboratively with other higher education occupations, an occupational grouping advance their own occupation strategies to ensure and to further the access to the economic and social

opportunities. Such an approach ensures occupation strategies for job security, career progression and survival of a university as an institution in the fast-changing landscape of higher education.

The research findings inform the following aspects of the conceptual framework of the study presented in Figure 3.1 of the thesis. The research towards four areas of the conceptual framework addresses the calls for multi-level empirical studies of strategy-making (Ravasi, Tripass, Langley, 2017; Seidl & Whittington, 2014).

The focus of the area A of the conceptual framework lies with the participants of the strategy-making practices, often referred to as strategy-making actors (Balogun, 2003; Jarzabkowski, 2004; Johnson, Melin, Whittington, 2003; Regner, 2003), and the ways they engage in identity work as part of the strategy-making practices. As observed in this study, such identity work includes strong occupational aspect, which becomes particularly pronounced when working with the strategy practitioners from different occupational groupings. This study shows that the occupational aspect of personal identity is a continuous negotiation between the notion of self and societal expectations of one's occupation. The findings highlight the occupational aspect of one's identity becomes an important dimension in the studies of strategy-making practices at an individual level due to its significance in the construction of the self-identity of a strategic actor.

A view of strategy-making practices, where a number of strategic actors from diverse occupational groupings come together, as arenas of strategy-making actors' identity work contributes to identity studies in strategy making (Beech & Johnson, 2005; Johnson, Balogun & Beech, 2006; Huy,

2011; Miller, Le Breton-Miller, Lester, 2011; Watson, 2003). The study introduces an occupational angle, which allows for observations of the potential tensions amongst occupations and how the occupation strategies are enacted in the context of strategizing. As such, the occupational dimension, which is understood at an individual level as an occupational aspect of a personal identity of a strategy-making actor, is found to be of significance to the study of strategy-making.

At an inter-personal level, which is represented by the area B of the conceptual framework, the relational dynamics between the representatives of the three university occupational groupings is found to be of significance to university strategy-making practices and the strategic outcomes. The concept of occupational connectivity, which is developed as part of this study in Chapter Seven of the thesis, helps to explain the nature of the relationship amongst the occupational grouping as one where on one hand there are tendencies for occupational closure (Weber, 1978; Murphy, 1988) and on the other hand there is a need for collaborative moves to ensure the success of the long-term occupation strategies. Such dynamics are observed through a number of participant observations of the university committee work as well as confirmed by the analysis of the interviews and the fieldwork materials. The development of the concept of occupational connectivity contributes to the study of inter-occupational relationships (Abbott, 1988, 1991; Bechky, 2003; Freidson, 1986, 2001; Larson, 1977) by extending the scope of the analysis from in-between two occupational groupings, which is often adapted in the studies (Collinson, 2006; Kim, 2013; Parkes *et al*. 2014; Whitchurch, 2006, 2008a), to three occupational groupings (academics, manager-academics and non-

academics). Inclusion of the manager-academics as one of the occupational groupings in the study emphasises the significance of the increasing managerialism trends in higher education (Deem *et al.*, 2007; Deem & Johnson, 2000). The occupational connectivity concept also allows for a more in-depth understanding of occupation strategies through the 'closure-cooperation' nexus.

Area C of the conceptual framework signals a focus on the group level investigations into the strategy-making practices. The concept of occupational connectivity is deployed in order to explain the relational dynamics of the strategy practitioners at the university. Throughout a number of participant observations of the formal committee work with assigned responsibility for the 'student experience university strategy', it has become evident that these practices are arenas where the occupational interest are observed and advances, and where the occupation strategies are enacted. The occupational aspect is a significant feature of group work associated with university strategy-making. It became particularly pronounced in the situations where the occupational interests collide and the tensions are observed. The following areas of tensions are identified as part of the study: priority areas of the university student experience initiatives; view of students and their role in higher education; oversight of the student experience strategy at the university; management of the student experience initiatives by the central non-academic university departments and university responses to the increasing marketisation of the higher education (Collini, 2012; Brown, 2014; Brown & Carasso, 2013). Tensions observed have been a feature of the university strategy-making practices over a period of the study. They are linked to the occupational

positions of the strategy-making practitioners, namely: academic, manager-academic and non-academic. The diversity of these occupational positions, the tensions around them and the enactment of the occupation strategies are found to be features of the university strategy-making practices.

The investigation towards the final area of the conceptual framework, area D, explores the links between strategy-making practice and strategic outcomes (Jarzabkowski & Balogun, 2009; Jeong & Harrison, 2016; Maitlis & Lawrence, 2003; Sillince & Mueller, 2007; Mantere, 2008; Richard, Kirkby, Chadwick, 2013). Strategy-making practices associated with the student experience initiatives at the University of Middleworth are linked to the resource allocation outcomes and the university approach towards how to position in the sector. In relation to the resource allocation outcomes, the study outlines a number of key decisions taken by the Student Experience Strategy Committee about what university-wide initiatives aimed at enhancing university student experience to support and how. Some of these initiatives have significant resource requirements including capital investment, additional staff and external expertise. For instance: learning spaces refurbishment programme; student engagement with NSS and other surveys; KIS data gathering and presentation, value for money reporting. These initiatives are seen to be of a strategic importance to the university due to regulator and league-table sector pressures. The other area of strategic outcomes is concerned with the position of the university in the sector. Specifically, how the university communicates about the nature and the value of the student experience at the University of Middleworth to its current and perspective students,

their parents, other universities and the sector regulators. Such communication is of a strategic significance as it is consequential for attracting students and the sector funding.

The concept of occupational connectivity helps to explore the links between the university strategy-making practices and the strategic outcomes. From the occupational perspective, where the strategy-making practices are viewed as arenas of enactment and negotiation of the occupation strategies, the strategic outcomes for a university are influenced by such enactments and negotiations. How the university allocates resources to what priority areas and with what purpose; how it communicates with the sector and other significant stakeholders is linked to negotiations amongst the strategy-making practitioners, whose occupational positions are at play, as discovered in the investigations towards the area C of the conceptual framework. Thus, occupational connectivity becomes a useful concept at the organisational level of analysis as it reveals the role of the occupational dimension in university strategy-making practices and its significance for the university strategic outcomes. Hence, the contribution to the strategy-as-practice literature lies in showing how the strategy-making practices could be linked to the organisational strategic outcomes by employing the sociological categories of 'occupation' and 'occupation strategy'.

Having outlined the study contributions in relation to the four areas of the conceptual framework developed for this study, the overall contribution to the strategy-as-practice literature lies in a numbers of directions. First, the study contributes to building theoretical and empirical insights into the

significance of the occupational dimension of strategy-making. Second, the study develops and tests the conceptual apparatus for multi-level investigation into the role of occupations in strategy-making. This development contributes to addressing the calls for 'linking strategizing with larger social phenomena' in strategy-as practice studies (Seidl and Whittngton, 2014). Third, the concept of occupational connectivity is proven to be helpful in gaining the empirical insights into strategy-making practices and connecting various levels of analysis: from individual, inter-individual, group and organisational level. This development contributes towards answering the calls for methodological developments towards the multi-level studies exploring the strategy-identity nexus (Ravasi *et al*. 2017).

10.5. Contribution of the research

The study makes four contributions: First, the study helps to advance the understanding of the role of the occupational groupings and the occupational aspect of self-identities in strategy-making generally. Although the literature on strategy-making practices as part of the Strategy-as-Practice (SAP) perspective on strategy is growing (Dameron, Le, LeBaron, 2015, Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2015; Jarzabkowski, Burke and Spee, 2015; Kaplan, 2011; Kreutzer, Walter & Cardinal, 2015; Paroutis & Heracleous, 2013), its direction is mostly occupied with exploring the practices and tools of strategy making. The majority of SAP literature conceptualises the actors of strategy either by their position or the role in an organisation, for instance executive and middle managers. The research capitalises on the significant research opportunity to explore the

occupational dimension of strategy making, where an occupation becomes a significant characteristic due to its connections to the distribution of labour, nature of work and organisations in society. Three higher-education occupational groupings were studied as part of this research: academic, manager-academic and non-academic; and their involvement with university strategising. This study advances SAP literature by introducing an occupational dimension in the study of strategic actors and their practices. It also contributes to the studies of occupations and their engagement with organisational practices aimed at resolving complex, 'wicked' strategic problems (Mason & Mitroff, 1981).

Second, the concept of occupational connectivity is introduced and tested. This conceptual development contributes to our understanding of the relational dynamics between the occupational groupings, specifically the tensions between the interest of occupational groupings for occupational closure (Weber, 1978; Murphy, 1988) and the need for collaborative strategies to advance their occupation strategies. The results of this study indicate that occupational connectivity is linked to two factors – levels of uncertainty and ease of access to economic and social opportunities. In relation to these two factors, the typology of four occupation strategies is developed (Figure 10.1) which further contributes to the state of the art in the study of occupations. This introduces a more 'connective' perspective in understanding the relationships amongst the occupational groupings rather than focusing on understanding a particular occupational grouping and its occupational strategies often seen to be of occupational closure.

Third, the concept of 'occupational aspect of self-identity' is explored as part of the broader considerations for occupational dimension in organisational practices. The occupational aspect is treated as one of many aspects of an individual's self-identity, for instance alongside gender and ethnicity aspect. This study confirms such links and strengthens the importance of the contextual (situational) dimension in the personal identity work. The analysis of the research materials confirm three directions in which the occupational aspect of self-identity is negotiated: *content, context* and *boundary negotiation*. As this study draws attention to the occupational aspect of the personal identity work and explores its 'Whats' and 'Hows', it contributes to both identity studies and studies of occupations.

Fourth, the research provides insights into the nature of the regulatory pressures around the student experience initiative in higher education sector and the ways such pressures are 'felt' and 'responded to' in the context of the University of Middleworth. The complexity of the university approaches in addressing the sector-wide pressures on 'delivering a high quality student experience' is understood through the tensions amongst the occupational groupings in the context of the increasing marketisation of higher education, the rise of managerialism in the sector and the de-professionalisation trends of academic occupation (McKinlay & Archers, 1985; Haug, 1993; Reed, 1996). The study emphasises the importance of the relational dynamics between the university occupations, and the university centre and the academic periphery in 'driving' the university student experience initiatives. A critical view of the university focus on the student experience initiatives is developed, which illuminates the

increasing emphases on accountability, league-table performance, data-driven performance management and the top-down managerial approaches associated with the sector-wide initiative for the 'delivery of a high quality university student experience'.

10.6. Limitations of study

This study has a number of limitations:

First, it is a single-case study of a post-92 university in the Midlands. Although the majority of the UK HEI's have been formed post-92 and are attuned to the specifics of the universities formed in this period, there are a number of 'red-brick' universities where the 'pressures' associated with the student experience agenda might have different connotations. Having said that, the sector reports (Grove, 2016; University Workforce survey, 2016) confirm the findings about the complexity and the tensions around the student experience initiatives across the sector.

Second, in considerations for the university occupational groupings, three broad groupings were used: academics, manager-academics and non-academics. There is a need to acknowledge that there are diverse subgroups in each of these groupings whose interests and occupation strategies were not explored in-depth as part of this study. Such occupational groupings include: nurses, counsellors, accountants, marketing specialists, human resource specialists, IT specialists and others. A more fine-grained research is required to understand the role of these subgroups in university strategising, the relational dynamics with the other occupational groupings and their 'take' on the sector-wide student experience pressures.

10.7. Implications for management practice, reflexivity and future directions of research

There are a number of implications for management practice that can be drawn from the study:

1. This study asserts the importance of understanding the relational dynamics amongst occupational groupings in strategic management practice. Appreciation for occupation strategies, including the considerations for occupational connectivity, as an interplay of occupational interests of a various occupational groupings, should be given a more prominent place in strategic management practice in a various organisational and sectorial contexts. The nature and the degree of occupational connectivity are argued to be important aspects of work and organisation with a potential of having a significant impact on organisational strategies.
2. The diversity of occupations is argued to be an important consideration in organisational strategising. There is a need for inclusion of various occupational groupings in strategy-making practices to ensure the representation and the 'buy-in' in the strategy development and implementation. The possibility for alignment or conflict between the occupation strategies and the strategy of an organisation is viewed to be of an important reference in the practice of strategic management.
3. With respect to the university initiatives and the strategy aimed at the 'delivery of a high quality student experience', the role of university staff below the senior management level is taken here to be critical. University management has to pay their attention to the fact that the quality of university student experience, including student learning experience, is

strongly linked to the performance and the wellbeing of the university staff. Thus, the university strategy for a high quality student experience must include initiatives that develop staff competence, motivation and passion for learning and a wider university experience. Staff wellbeing is a critical aspect of the university success with a significant impact on the quality of the student experience and the graduate prospects of its students.

4. The study emphasises the importance of appreciation for the diversity of the occupational interests in management practice. Such diversity is often associated with the tensions and conflicts amongst the occupational groupings. The effectiveness of the conflict management strategies is linked to the management competences that stimulate collaboration amongst the occupational groupings by: reducing the levels of uncertainty, structuring of work that encourages collaborative working; ensuring fairness and equality of opportunities for career development and progression across the occupations.

   The case study design used in the study provides a template for a case study research in similar settings. It is particularly suitable for exploring relational dynamics amongst various groupings in an organisational setting. The methodological approach exercised in this study illustrates how a significant scope and depth of the study could be achieved by effectively combining semi-strictures interviews, participant observations and the fieldwork. A particular strength of the research design lies in well-structured, yet fluid approach to the fieldwork outlined in Figure 4.1 of the thesis. Such an approach allowed for collection of rich materials within and in-amongst the occupational groupings. These materials were analysed using eight-stages analytical process presented in Table 4.3, which reveal

the relational dynamics amongst the occupational groupings in higher education setting. Therefore, the main features of the case study approach for this study are: focus on exploring relational dynamics amongst the groupings in a bounded system (Yin, 2013) i.e. single-organisation setting; systematic, yet fluid fieldwork; rigorous and staged analytical process in analysing the data and in developing the study findings; reflexivity throughout the study and in reporting the findings of the case in order to acknowledge the researcher's role and identity changes during the study and potential impact on the research process and findings.

The case study findings have implications for theory development in relation to understanding the relational dynamics among the occupations through the concept of 'occupational connectivity' developed in the thesis; and in the subsequent development of the typology of the occupation strategies presented in Figure 10.1. As such these developments contribute to the theory development beyond the scope of the case (George and Bennett, 2005). For such developments to take place, the analytical process and the development of findings were not 'force fit' the conceptual framework developed earlier in the study (Crowe et al., 2011). Instead the developments emerged from the analytical process, working with constructs, shaping the hypothesis, enfolding the literature and reaching the closure (Eisenhardt, 1989).

As earlier explored in the Chapter Four of the thesis, reflexivity is the major part of the case study approach of the study. During the course of the study, there have been changes in my own role at the university resulting in becoming a Programme Leader. I have also secured a role of the academic lead for a EU funded projects. As the study progressed, I have

increasingly become aware of the variety of the university practices associated with the student experience initiative and the role that various university groupings play in the students experience agenda. Often, in my role as a Programme Leader, I have relied on such insights to navigate my team through the complex web of relationships with the non-academic central university departments and professional staff at the university. It allowed me to translate the pressures around the student experience agenda, which were often seen by my team as 'numerous interferences from the university administrative departments', by framing the context in which these pressures were enacted and by re-asserting the significance of the academic role in the student learning experience.

Taking part in the SESC meetings, as part of the participant observations of the committee work, allowed for a deeper understanding of the priority issued around the student experience at the university. The shifts in the priority issues, as well as variations across the occupational groupings studied, became part of the case study. Over the period of study, I have become attuned to the areas of tensions amongst the occupational groupings and used these insights in my day-to-day work. These insights contributed to the analysis of the study materials.

Initially, moving between the role of a practitioner and the role of a researcher was difficult to adhere to. I found routine note-taking and reflective writing at the end of the day, either about an interview, a participant observation or a fieldwork undertaken, being useful. After a year into the project, the movement between the roles became more fluid, progressively becoming a 'second nature' towards the end of the project.

I have grown to spot easier the influence of the competing institutions logics, i.e. market VS traditional university institutional logics, at the committee meetings; in various formal and informal communications at work; in discussions with the colleagues, students and external bodies. These observations informed the analytical process and the theoretical contribution of the study.

The managerialism trends in higher education have been part of the sector working for a number of decades (Deem *et al.*, 2007; Deem & Johnson, 2000). The study begun in 2010/11 -just on the verge of the major changes in the sector including the changes in university funding, increase of the tuition fees up to £9,000 and changes to the student loan system. Stronger than ever, the government signalled that higher education sector is to be treated as market of HEIs, where student satisfaction is a priority (Browne Report, 2011). The universities responded with further advances in managerialism in university working and with adaptation of the increasingly business-like approaches to running of a university. These often resulted in a numerous change programmes. At the University of Middleworth, changes at various levels, including the major university reconfiguration, become a part of day-to-day university life. The impact of these changes has been acknowledged in the study and taken into consideration, when analysing the study materials and developing the study contributions.

Throughout the study, I have been immersed into the university strategy-making practices associated with the student experience initiatives. University strategy-making is understood as arenas of tensions of the

competing institutional logics as well as arenas, where occupation strategies are enacted. I have become attuned to how these strategies were enacted. This informed my own working practice. I became more skilful in 'deciphering' the practices of others from academic, non-academic and manager-academic occupational groupings. It allowed for more sociologically fine-tuned observations of the university everyday life and with that - becoming a more thoughtful and mature colleague.

Considering the future directions of the research, the results of this study and the contribution inform the development of the following potential directions:

1. Further study of the four occupation strategies developed as part of the conceptualisations about the links between occupational connectivity, level of uncertainty and ease of access to economic and social opportunities, presented in Figure 10.1. This research could be undertaken in higher education or other sectorial settings.
2. The concept of occupational connectivity provides an opportunity to explore the personal identity work that individuals engage in to reshape the boundaries with other members of the occupational groupings. As Jenkins (2008) asserts 'identification makes no sense outside the relationship' (2008:158). Thus, in light of the concept of occupational connectivity, the construction of the occupational aspect of self-identity could be seen as an advancement of the occupational interests and the boundary setting, as well as performance of the occupation strategies. Further study is needed to explore the applicability of the concept of occupational connectivity in identity studies.

3. Further exploration of the occupational dimension of strategy-making with the emphasis on the role of occupation strategies in various organisational and sectorial settings is needed. For example, a study of occupation strategies in higher education and/or health sector would explore the relational dynamics amongst the main sector occupations and the significance of such to sector-specific strategy-making practices.

The above directions have a potential for advancing our understanding of occupations, work and organisation. What are the characteristics of occupational connectivity in other organisational and sectorial settings? How meaningful it is for strategy-making and organisational strategic outcomes? How significant it is for the ability of an organisation to deal with the increasing degree of uncertainty? What occupation strategies are deployed to deal with the increasing degree of uncertainty? How successful are they? Occupational control versus the need for collaboration – the cusp of these two categories is explained by a concept of occupational connectivity.

As Higher Education in the UK rises to respond to yet another major regulatory change, the operationalisation of the three-level assessment in accordance with the Teaching Excellence Framework (DfBIS, 2016b) and the economic uncertainties of the Brexit, the sector occupations more than ever deserve a very careful attention to their role and relations. This is critical for not only to preserve, but to champion further arguably the best higher education system in the world. In this endeavour, UK higher education occupations have a vital role to play.

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APPENDIX A

Table A1: Interview Schedule- Spring/Summer 2014

Question Number:	Questions:
	Role/Occupation
1	If you were asked by someone outside the university what your occupation is, what would you say?
2	And what would you say if they then asked you to explain just what your line of work amounts to? (*What to do you do? How would you describe it?)*
3	What other occupational groups do you relate to at work? And can you rank these occupations in terms of importance for your work?
4	I am interested in the distinctiveness of your occupational group. Are there any key values which are especially associated with your occupational group?
5	Is it possible to identify anything one might call an 'occupational culture' of your OG?
6	How would you describe your experience of being an (*academic/administrative/manager*) in higher education nowadays?
7	Have working relationships with other occupations groups in the university been changing? **If yes**- In what way? *(Why do you think that is a case?)* **If no** – *Question 8*
8	From your personal perspective – What is the role of the universities in society?
9	Would you agree or not that: Currently, there is an increasing marketisation of higher education in England taking place?
10	***If agreed,*** For you personally – What are the indicators (clues) of such a trend?
11	Have you seen any changes in your occupation *(role?)* as a result of the marketisation of HE?

12	How would you describe these changes?
	If disagreed, How would you describe the recent changes in the sector?
	Have you seen any changes in your occupation *(role?)* as a result of sector changes?
	How would you describe these changes?
	Students and Student Experience
13	One hears students are referred to as 'customers' sometimes nowadays, where do you stand on this?
14	Do you personally approve or disapprove of increasing emphasis on student experience in HE? And Why?
15	How do you understand the term '*student experience'*?
16	What are the key day-to-day student experience issues you are dealing with? And **how** do you address them? (*could you please give me an example*)
17	What issues around the student experience take priority for you?
	Strategy, strategy-making and student experience
18	When somebody says – it is a strategic (issue, matter, phenomenon) – what does it mean to you?
19	Do you take part in any strategy-making activities in the university? What are they?
20	Could you give me examples of what has been achieved as a result of these activities? **How** were they achieved? *(' tell me more' prompts – emphasis on practice during the conversation*)
21	Would you agree or disagree, that the quality of students experience is of strategic importance to this university?

22	**If agreed**, Why is that the case? **If disagreed**, Why is that the case?
23	How would you describe the student experience strategy at the University?
24	Are you aware of *the* Student Experience Strategy Committee at the University?, if yes - What does it do?; if not (*Question 31*)
25	**If the respondent is SESC member:** Is it important for you to be a member of Student Experience Strategy Committee (SESC)? Why?
26	What are the most significant decisions that have been recently made by SESC? **How** have they been made?
27	What are the key achievements of the SESC activity so far? **How** have they been achieved?
28	In practice, what do you think is really going on in these meetings?
29	What do you think about the balance of the academic and non-academic representation on the committee?
30	How do these two groups work together?
31	**If the respondent is not SESC member:** How, as far as you know, the student experience issues managed in this university?
32	How would you describe the role students play in the quality of their university experience?
	Conclusion
	Have I missed anything around the strategy-making practices and student experience in universities, in this interview?
	Any other comments, reflections?
	How have you experienced this interview? Thank you for taking part in this interview.

APPENDIX B

Table B1: Defining Occupations in HE: academics and manager academics

Defining occupation	Interview Code	Definition	Context setting	Boundary setting
Lecturer	OD5	*(1) 'I'd say I was an academic and that I was a Senior Lecturer ... But if someone was to ask me next year, what's your, what's your profession? I would hope to say I'm a Teacher Educator in Special Needs and Inclusive Practice.'*	*(1) '.....that was working in the Department of Education and that my specialist area was Special Needs'.*	*(1) 'Because my, part of my job is to be a Scholar and to be a knowledge creator. It's not just to be a deliverer, it's not just to be a Teacher and actually that's the part of your job it's hardest to prioritise but the part of your job that is actually most relevant to your credibility, your authority as a Lecturer and to what you are here for. So that would be the first dimension is that I'm here to be a Scholar, a Scholar and a knowledge creator and I will continue to fight to have that identity'.*
	RD5	*(1) 'I am a Senior Lecturer in Postgraduate Education and people pull a funny face, don't know what that means'.*	*(1) 'So the bulk of my teaching is to teachers, so I train teachers to be Level 7 educated. So I'm helping, usually secondary school teachers sometimes primary school teachers but usually secondary school teachers with the off-campus teaching that I do in secondary schools to help them get their Level 7, their Masters qualifications'.*	*(2)' I do is teach and I know lots of other Lecturers don't, you know don't agree with that. They are researchers, they want to be researchers in their areas. I'm very happy to do research in my area but it's very much practitioner based research and its evidence based research to help practitioners in their focus and their professional tasks. So I think, I think yes I can say that but I think my, my focus would be all around teaching'.*
	WC5	*(1) 'I would still say university lecturer probably, it's the default position. That's technically what I am anyway'*	*(1) 'It's primarily a teaching and research role but I've been quite involved through seconded work in other areas of learning and so, yes, I'm involved in learning space design, working groups, aspects of quality and I'm currently the curriculum and development manager in ADT'.*	*(1) '....So curriculum development, enhancement, quality assurance enhancement, staff development, I run the academic practice programme and manage the HEA accreditation process, as you know. So quite wide ranging really but it's very interesting work because then you get to make that connection all the way from the classroom through to university strategy which I think is a good thing'.*
	KG4	*(1)I'm a lecturer in human genetics and then I would go onto explain that I teach students and I also do research into oncology into cervical cancer'.*	*(1) ' ....my job here at the University of X is teaching students, teaching students about DNA, about human diseases and predominantly about cancer'.*	

	NT4	*(1) 'If they asked me what my occupation is I'd say lecturer'.*	*'I would say that for me involves a lot of teaching and some fairly specialised research in my area'.*	
	SP2 (MA)[4]	*'I would describe myself as a lecturer in education'.*	*(2)' .....so helping people's development as teachers but more recently working with in this case first year undergraduate students on education studies programmes'.*	*(2) 'I would say that my line of work is mainly around teaching as opposed to research, so I'm a teacher, I prefer the term teacher to lecturer actually even though I know that's our correct job title and that I've worked with a number of people such as yourself in terms of teacher training....'.*
Academic	WD1	*'So yes, I'm an academic. Yes? OK?'*	*(1) '.....I was a criminologist, but they always think, you know, what does that exactly mean. So I always tend to engage them a little further, if I want to engage them, by saying actually I'm probably the nearest thing you might ever meet to a criminal psychologist.* *I would also say that I'm a criminologist of course, but I'm also an academic researcher, as well as of course other hats: Lead for Programme Management on the MSc, so I might say that, but I'm also Head of Research in the school so I'm actually trying to facilitate and encourage other in a school - which has not been hitherto renowned for its research - to actually engage in the process'.*	*(2) 'So I don't teach individual students, I'm not located myself in one of the departments, mine is a central role and the way the scheme is organised at this university, is that there is a central administration that tries to manage the overall experience but then locally there is other support for the students to deal with their, the subject facing parts of their studies'.*
Academic Management and Leadership	SP2 (MA)	*(1) 'My occupation is what my title is, which Assistant Dean and Head of School of Health and Social Care. But obviously as you're probably aware in the reconfiguration, I'll be the Dean of the College of XXXX'.*	*(1) 'I've got about 220 students, they're my prime concern, around about 100 academic staff, their welfare is incredibly important to me as well. And then a whole range of programmes ..... as well, within that provision that I need to look after. Now, to make sure that we have students and to make sure that we have staff, it's my responsibility to make sure that we have the business'.*	*(1) 'In health terms that's a lot of it is commission programmes from the National Health Service which are paid for by Health Education England, so things like Nursing and Occupational Therapy and Diagnostic Radiography, they're all programmes that are paid for by external contracts. So a large part of my role is external engagement so we can bring in business that allows us to have the students and the staff'.*

[4]MA - manager academic

	PL5 (MA)	*(1) 'I'm an Academic Manager and I lead a large scheme called the Joint Honours Scheme at X…'.*	*(1) '.....which covers the entire university so we have students in all departments and faculties around the whole university'.*	*(2) 'So I don't teach individual students, I'm not located myself in one of the departments, mine is a central role and the way the scheme is organised at this university, is that there is a central administration that tries to manage the overall experience but then locally there is other support for the students to deal with their, the subject facing parts of their studies'.*
	HK5 (MA)	*(1) 'Senior manager in the university running a faculty. Now running a college from this week. Academic, leader. ....I think that is fundamentally what the role is'.*	*(1) 'Academic leadership in terms of what's being offered. In terms of what actually happens, in terms of what the outcomes are as well..... So as well as business, hospitality and tourism etcetera, and corporate. Whereas before it was computing, it was law, it was business. So maybe some of the business specialisms as well to give [them] a sense of context'.*	*(1) 'Academic leadership as opposed to business leadership'.*
Role of a Critic	HD2	*(1) 'I would answer what the occupation should be and I would saying, quoting John Anderson the Australasian philosopher, the role of an academic is criticism is one duty is to be critical and to ensure that every opinion, every view held by the status quo is challenged and that is the job the academic'.*	*(1) 'I would answer what the occupation should be and I would saying, quoting John Anderson the Australasian philosopher, the role of an academic is criticism is one duty is to be critical and to ensure that every opinion, every view held by the status quo is challenged and that is the job the academic'.*	*(2) 'I'd talk to everybody'.*

Table B2: Defining Occupations in HE: non-academic staff

Defining occupation	Interview Code	Definition	Context setting	Boundary setting
Occupation as a job title	RS4	*(1) 'My job title is deputy admin officer.....I'm part of a faculty admin team'.*	*(1) 'It's quite important to say that that's art and design and technology, just to give it a bit of context and also perhaps just so that people don't make assumptions about what administration is'.*	*(2) 'I'm part of the programme support team, so that we then look after things like enrolment, induction, when students come onto the programme, we make sure that they're marks are processed correctly through assessment boards so that somebody externally can understand what that actually means in terms of functions'.*
	ES4	*(1) 'I'm a student liaison officer and then they go what's that, that's the first reaction what's one of those and I usually actually say to them it's quite hard to explain what I do but I say I'm a sort of, I'm a member of staff whose job it is to help remove barriers for students whatever they maybe and that the role's not merely defined because there are as many different problems as there are students'.*	*(1) 'I am looking after the students for the faculty which consists of three schools, sort of nine-ish subject areas so it's quite a big responsibility and I think at the moment I'm at around about three thousand two hundred full time students, I don't even begin to count the part timers'.*	*(1) '....they think it's an academic role and it's quite hard to explain that no it's not about that it's not about the subject, it's not about what they're studying it's about everything else to do with university, take the subject out of it and it's about what's left so that's how I explain. ..... It's a job that sits between all of the other services. '*
	BB4	*..(1) '...my title is Head of the Student Life Programme'.*	*(1)' ....and in many universities would be understood really as student services'.*	*(1) 'So a whole range of support systems, processes and services for students outside of study but increasingly is a combination of "How do we deliver most effectively for students where they are in programme?" as well as outside of the programme when they've got particular individual needs. ..... So, a fairly wide brief and remit, some of which you'd find in a traditional student services brief, so the health, the counselling, the disability etc, some of which you wouldn't necessarily, it's a bit broader'.*
	MB5	*(1) 'I would give them my job title which is Student Centre Manager'.*	*(1) '....what that means is we have student centres at different sites at the university that we see as the first port of call for student queries, because we can help pre-empt queries for other students. In that way, you can sort of get information out to students so that they don't have to come in and ask it'.*	*(1) 'There's a very fine line between what's academic advice and guidance that we can give and knowing those boundaries is very important. (1) The guidance that we would give them would be much more in depth and much more tailored to their needs and being realistic within the regulations of what's possible and what's not possible. So sort of trying to bridge the gap between student and academic, but pastoral. A lot of pastoral stuff around it'.*

Occupation as a management role	LJ4	*(1 ')I manage a team at the University X, which works with international students. I'm the international student team leader'.*	*(1) 'I lead that team is to manage the pastoral services of that student throughout the student journey and to make sure that before they even come to the UK right through till when they've left and even if they've got anything that they need to know to tie up loose ends after they've left'.*	*(1) 'I think international students are distinctive because they have very different needs to home students, one of them being that it's the language ....'.*
	WS4	*(1) 'It depends who asks me; if it's somebody outside of the sector completely I generally just say I'm a manager at the university, if they ask me further questions to that I'll say I make sure that the students have a good time whilst they're here'.*	*(4) 'I think we're learning a lot from lots of different branches of the institution as well so UDC very particular type of students done I a particular way, got to be nuanced, UDOL exactly the same, very different, different learners done in a different way, it needs to be in a slightly different tone'.*	*(19) '[We] need the proper student experience staff. I don't like that it has been side-lined. I don't like that all of a sudden that's about wellbeing and student centres and the bits that students touch that are not academic. I think that utterly misses the point'.*
Occupation as leadership	MS5	*(1) 'I lead the Careers Service at the university and also the Study Skills service and I contribute to the leadership of my overall department. And also draft some of the university's strategic documents like the University Access Agreement'.*	*(1) 'I'm a manager in education , ...in Higher Education specifically'.*	*(3) 'So for a university, careers services are quite interesting, because we're not part of recruitment, and we contribute to in raising the profile of what we do, but we don't steer people's decisions towards here or a particular destination, for example. It's about what the individual student wants'.*
Occupation as specialisation/area of work	MJ2	*(1) 'I am a researcher into the student experience here at the University X'.*	*(1) 'I sit with the student experience team and I work across the whole institution with departments and faculties, academic staff, non-academic staff in faculties to find out what we can learn from the student voice and also what we can do to improve the student experience here at the University X'.*	*(2) 'I work for, well I sit within what is effectively the registry within the university and I work very closely with teams of people who gather student feedback ....,but mainly at the moment is I do horizon scanning research for good practise. So I look here within the university for good practise around two projects I'm focusing on particularly but also around the sector as well but also internationally as well'.*
	RA1	*(1) 'I'm an educator'.*	*(1) 'And at the moment I'm responsible for ensuring quality and standards in relation to the student experience, the student education'.*	*(1) 'Break it down into what I do internally and externally as well, because my role's inward facing and also outward facing'.* *(4) 'The role's a really interesting one, because Quality Managers not only work this way with their peers, we also go down and up and diagonally. And it really depends on the particular project or the particular process that we're involved with, who we actually interface with'.*

APPENDIX C

Table C1: Role of a university in society

Role Identified	Occupational Groupings	
	Non-Academics	Academics and Manager-Academics
Personal Development	*(AS, p. 4) to provide education and opportunity for people. It's to allow people to better themselves to change themselves (WS, p 5) It is an opportunity factory*	*(WC, p 4) Enabling people to realise potential (RD5, p 4) To promote fulfilment (WC, p 4)To support realisation of individual's aspirations (HD2, p 11)Supporting to become liberated and take control over one's own life*
Learning Environment	*(RBA1, p 9-10) Creation of learning environment where: Students are able to challenge themselves; (MB5, p 4-5) Students should be allowed to make mistakes; take risks and become more independent*	
The Role of Critique		*(NT4, p 6)To turn students into critical thinkers, into people who are aware of the world around them, people how have that sense of perspective on the world, people who can sort of therefore criticise and then go on and actually change the world (CJ, p 1-2) We can hold up a mirror to the society of which we're a part. So I think universities are for producing very intelligent, good values, future generation. We're important because we act as that conscience and that critique of the society of which we are part. (MA)*
Knowledge Creation	*(RS4, p 5-6) An opportunity to learn the subject you are passionate about. (BB4, p 4) To make significant contributions to knowledge and social capital (MDS, p 9) It is s about learning, it's about acquiring new knowledge, testing boundaries, extending boundaries.*	*(RD5, p 4) To bring new knowledge (NG, p 2) To extend knowledge and capability Pushing frontiers of academic research only Oxbridge type*
Social Mobility	*(BRA, 4), I think universities' roles are about educating our society, not just young people but anybody at any stage in their life who feels that they want to transform themselves, change themselves.*	*(NG, p 2)To promote social mobility (CP, p 7-8) to me the widening participation part of that at this university is really important. And that I think a job of Higher Education. That it should be accessible by everybody.(MA)*
Aspirational Role	*(JM, 5) It is transforming lives absolutely yes, I mean not, some more than others but it's the, it's how you grow as an individual through your time not just the knowledge that you get it's having your mind opened really to a world of, you know a whole new world.*	*(CJ, p 1-2) Educating next generation to be intelligent and open with set of values that are sound. (MA) (HK5, 4) Contributing to the human fabric of a society, (MA); (HD2, p 11) Ivory tower, Beacon, Enlightenment project (RD53, p 4) The purpose of the universities is to make a better, a better world! (WC, p 4) Improving society and human well-being.*
Pursuit of knowledge and freedom of speech	*(BB, 4) I believe that universities make significant contributions to both knowledge and social capital. (MS, 9) I think university is about learning, it's about acquiring new knowledge, testing boundaries, extending boundaries.*	*(HD2, p 11)We should be looking towards university and seeing them as the embodiment of the pursuit of knowledge without fear or favour, the enlightenment project, they are the embodiment of that project.*
Preparation for work	*(LJ4, p 2) To educate and give transferrable skills*	*(CP, p 7-8) Preparing people for work (MA) (PL, p 4-5) Up-skilling to support economic growth (MA)*
Developing young adults	*(LJ4, p 2) There is not much to do after school*	*(PL, p 4-5) Developing young adults*
Economic impact	*(BB4, p 4)To support local and regional economies and provide jobs*	*(CJ, p 1-2) you cannot underestimate the extent to which the university sector in the UK has been a major contributor to keeping the economy in reasonable shape and on track, notwithstanding the largest recession we've ever suffered.(MA)*

APPENDIX D

Table D1: Marketisation trends: similarities across occupational groupings

Marketisation Themes	Academics	Manager Academics	Non-Academics
Governmental policy to increase competition in the HE sector	"There is that rather unusual dual position of being in competition with other institutions and simultaneously in very open dialogue and collaboration which is kind of unusual. ... We're in a recruitment race with our benchmark group and other competitors and at the same time working very closely on collaborative research projects and other bits ...."	"Under the current government for the past several years, you have this more explicit desire to introduce competition in terms of market pricing of higher education and public and private entrants into a market to deliver higher education. It's purely driven by government. They've made the change and the change has been dramatic".	"I think a lot of it's government driven and there's a change of government coming in so there might be some new policies, there might be some new views and legislation about immigration which could affect universities and international students".
Liberalisation of fees regime	"Structural changes about the way in which funding works, deregulation of higher education means that it's becoming more competitive in which case, universities have no options but to engage in ... well, engage with that process [marketisation]."	"Now, in fact, it's not happened. Well, you could argue it's not happened yet, because while a notional cap was suggested of £9000, what happened, everyone went to £9000 pretty much straightaway. So where's the market there. There is no market as such, in terms of the pricing".	"We need to keep ourselves changing and moving which means we need money, which comes from tuition fees. Tuitions fees was the critical point, really, wasn't it, about marketisation".
Opening of the sector to private providers	"There's more choice in the sector and private providers are becoming more aggressive".	"The fact that we are openly encouraged to compete and that government legitimises competition, by the encouragement of for profit universities by extending the legitimate use of the university title to a broader constituency of individual organisations".	"It is becoming a competitive marketplace, private providers, you know, FE colleges wanting to offer higher education. I think there is a lot of different things out there. The signs are that people like Kaplan have already, and Capita have already started having private universities".
Value for Money agenda	"It's also more costly now that the financial burden is placed on individual learners, in which case the decisions they take are more difficult ones to take, so, you know, the quality that you provide, value for money, becomes an issue because the learners are involved in determining that."	"It's another part of the job, I suppose, really, to help them judge whether what they're going to spend, as they see, spend £9000 on a year is actually going to give them value for money but also an outcome that is where they see their life going, and if that's a job or whatever, I don't know, a whole raft of different things. So you see that certainly in the current HE market".	"They talk very much about compensation about getting money back, about how much it's cost them and about how it's not value for money, that's one of the very first things they're asking for is compensation and you know they're not coming and saying can we have the, can you organise for us to have the time they're saying we haven't had, you know where's the compensation in this".
Students as consumers/customers	"There is that emphasis on the student as consumer, the student as customer, although I think we've actually been quite good at turning that into sensible direction".	"So whilst there has been an attempt to create a market, really there isn't one. Everyone's just gone at £9000. So how does the customer then distinguish, the student then distinguish between different offers?"	"I think as well, the university's been through the process of thinking about students as customers, and thinking about students as students. And I think we've gone back to that student terminology rather than the customer terminology".

Students Consumer behaviour	Applicants are therefore able to be and encouraged to be more and more discerning in the choices that they make, rather than perhaps taking a default position.	"I think now the provision of data is such that it's being manipulated, at political levels, to inform the consumer about a purchase decision".	"Students ... from student feedback level, students are increasingly, I wouldn't say making final decisions on the basis of the marketing but are certainly making decisions which are about more of a consumer-type relationship with universities, what is it that I will get? How many hours will I be taught for? What will my £8-9,000 worth of fees get me?"
Role of parents in the choice of university	"I know it increasingly does and I guess given that they or their parents are spending, you know twenty seven / thirty thousand pounds on an Undergrad Programme. It's the inevitability of that extension of marketisation but in our area where we are actually seeking the contracts, absolutely they are the customers".	"I think even at the level of your student and parents before they come to university, very often the question is not, "What would you like to study?", but the question is, "What job would you like to do?" And what's going to support that. So it means that the marketisation part is that people are saying, "Well, if I come to your university, I study for this degree, what am I going to get out of that? And what profession am I going to get?"	"And moreover than students, students' parents as probably more sophisticated and mature consumers, are certainly looking at some of those issues in terms of what makes a sensible choice of university for their son or daughter. So parental involvement in the marketplace has increased, I see those signs".
NSS and league tables pressures	"NSS scores are very much linking it now, league tables are very much driving the market force but also there is elements that it's coming down from higher management as well to make sure the degrees are the best they can be".	"Student experience, NSS, all these different things. These metrics to help us pay much more attention to how satisfied the student, effectively the customer of the product actually is".	"A very good one is the use of league tables, the use of data to be able to tell people what we do, and the success of our students. It's to do with KPIs, it's to do with slowly but surely not just peer observation of teaching, but management observation of teaching. It's to do with performance related pay, all these things affect that particular process, but also it's the expectations of our students".
Emphasis on marketing and image	"Increase of the importance is attached to marketing that we've constantly got to think about how we market ourselves".	"A large part of my job is around marketing and recruitment, that's a big part of my job. Yes it and in some ways I regret that because sometimes I think it's that's it's at the expense of my time and energy".	"I see an increasing agenda about just the outright marketing and positioning of universities and brands emerging which are that there are particular flavours to universities that you might choose them on which is not left to word of mouth anymore".
Importance of student recruitment	"My job is dependent on student numbers so that's where I'm driven and that's how I feel the universities that have a higher teaching focus are market driven".	"A large part of my role here is about recruitment and marketing and so on but even elsewhere a large part of my role was around third stream income generation".	"...that extends into recruitment strategy as well because you go into clearing and it's grab, grab, grab don't care what they like just grab them and then three weeks later it's like what have you take all these rubbish students for, you know these are never going to get a two-one what are you doing to do about them you know they've failed everything get rid of them. It's like you told us to take them ".

Table D2: Marketisation trends: differences across HE occupational groupings

Academics	Manager Academics	Non-Academics
"More accountability in teaching practices".	"We are very busy being marketised - it is done to us".	"There's not the same level perhaps of elitism as there perhaps once was".
"Teaching focus is market driven"	"You know, education has become mass and marketised. And there are few people now, sadly, that would see education as being for education's sake".	"You're seeing more and more universities investing in their infrastructure, their estate, all of those things that give that sort of wow factor to open days and, you know, trying to make that difference for students".
"Conflict between being an 'excellent teacher and excellent researcher".	"It's the commoditisation of higher education, I suppose, as being something that the discourse is increasingly about buying a product, a customer buying a product for a particular desired outcome, which is now articulated increasingly as just getting a job in a particular area. So you've got that sort of commoditisation of higher education, which is in the popular press, in the less popular press, but just in the general discourse around higher education".	"There are elements of the student experience, in particular, that are very much the student perceives as a contracted service. So anything to do with the administration, for example, they just expect to run smoothly. Anything do with their use of the estate, the library".
"Developing enticing programmes"	"The kind of behaviours that we all engage in as universities in competing with each other, and the language we use. Winning market share, etcetera".	"You're not buying your degree qualification, you're buying the opportunity, and you need to put the rest of the effort in. A bit like the gym. [laughs]"
"The role of the student and the role of the Lecturer and the position of the Lecturer as an authority in their subject".	"I think it's a particular point now in 2014 where we're really at that transition and the extent to which it goes even more market oriented or whether we stop at liberalisation, short of full market, is going to be an important policy agenda over the next 12 months".	"I see signs which are about the levels of feedback and satisfaction or lack of which is coming from students, which is a relationship with fees, so "I am not happy about ..." and "I am paying for ..." So not necessarily seeing overtly as a market but seeing it as a commercial transaction to a greater degree".
"The students coming in are more aware and that then gives that knock on effect from senior management coming down to us that we have to be more aware that we're, you know we have to be marketing we're selling a business to some extent".		"There's an increase in the sector within online learning, there was a time when the only online learning or the only distance learning was for the open university and that's changing so that's making it more of a market driven sector so that's it".
"We are in danger of hollowing their education. Their decision is they'll be hollowing it out because they, like us are being drawn into a discourse that is not necessarily their own".		

"Ah- marketisation. Well, certainly there's a more commercial edge, for sure, you know. I think the research away day, not just kind of brought it home to me, but it certainly was a classic example of that, where almost all the key speakers were talking about the commercial nature of doing research. And I remember, I didn't know the lady but I did congratulate her afterwards but I think she said, "What about the notion of social justice? What about doing research for that purpose?" And I went, "Yes". What about that? We forget that in all this trying to bring income in".		
"You know, education is about mutual challenge and we have got to be examples of the willingness to be challenged, you know by entering into our own studies and doing scary stuff and you know, that kind of stuff is really important and what I'd like to do with my students is a lot more kind of".		

APPENDIX E

Table E1: Currency of the student experience initiative in the context of HE sector and University of Middleworth

Academics	Manager Academics	Non-academics
"I think it's unavoidable in some senses given the marketisation and the cost of degrees; I think one way which I would agree with it is that we always have to have respect for our students. And you know particularly they're all individuals, so we should be providing the best that we can for them".	"I wholly and entirely approve of it in its roundest sense and its roundest terms. …. Where would any of us be without that formative experience and how many of us had our entire lives panned out, shaped by those three, four, five, whatever years you spend as a student and therefore understanding in totality the experience that a student has and therefore will take away with them, I think, is absolutely vital."	"I think in general I approve of it, I think we have a duty to make sure that students enjoy their time here and I don't think there's any reason for it to be anything other than an enjoyable experience. .....So I think student experience on the whole is something I approve of but I think sometimes we do get a little bit lost in it and we actually forget that at the end of the day they have to, they [students] have to take their part in it as well and I think that's probably tainted by the fact that I just deal with the students who aren't really engaging you know so I find that part of it frustrating the student experience part of it".
"In a way we could, if we're not careful, we could be tyrannised by students who say look I'm a customer. I'm paying this is what I want you to give me. And say ,well, actually, yes that's alright, but you know you've come here to do business or whatever. And actually I know a lot more than you, so I can give you some things that you don't even know about yet. So you can't be a perfect customer, because you don't have full knowledge. You can't say I want to choose from this, this, this and this because lecturers are saying well actually there's all these things you can choose from you don't even know about. So occasionally, I think we have to say to people well you know we can't always give you everything you want because actually that almost kind of conflicts with what an education is about".	"I approve. Because I think if you're going to be educated, you should get a great experience. I don't have a problem with that at all. You think as a parent, you want your children to have a great experience at school, primary school, secondary school, university. As an individual going through it, I want to have a great experience. As an employee, as a lecturer, I want the students in the classroom to have a great experience. As a manager, I want the people who come through my school, my division, as well as managing a division, as well as managing a school, I'm managing a faculty, a college, it doesn't matter. I want people to have a great experience. I don't have a problem with it at all. .... It's not like a holiday resort, we're having a great time, we're in the pool, all happy and shouting, but they're getting what they think they should get and it's delivered in such a way that they are satisfied with education. Yeah, certainly, I think it's really important actually".	"I think it's vital that we've got to listen to what students are telling us. I think we've not been you know over the years we've not been as clever about this as we could've been and we're learning more and more about the value of students as partners even towards you know co-creation and co-production of their experience, whatever that might mean. There's a thousand and one ways you can interpret that. But I think it's really important that we work with students to make sure that we're giving them what they want and need. Although you know, there's a little bit of a tension between some students sort of saying: well you know why should I help you develop this programme when I'm paying you all this money to give me this programme and teach me. I think there's a little bit about well we're trying to make it the best it can be and if we can actually get your input to help shape that then that's going to be a really important part of it as well, so I think that's really important".
"Because as Lecturer and a Teacher, it's my job to understand life worlds and conceptual worlds and experiential worlds of my students. If I don't do that, how can I create for them a meaningful, worthwhile experience and that is the way I see it. I see it as part of what a university is here to do. We're not just here, the reality is we're not just here to please ourselves. We're here to provide a hub, a forum, an environment where people can grow and where our students can leave us enhance different, ready to contribute to the world. Student experience has got a nicer, inclusive discourse associated with it and that's why I kind of sign up for it".	"I think the word – I'm more than happy for it. I think at a university like ours, the student experience is paramount, and that is because for good or bad we are largely a teaching university. I know of students, who have been in a very research oriented university, and the student experience for them, they have said, that the emphasis is so much on research that a) there is very little contact time, b) some of the contact time they have is not even with a professor or a senior lecturer but it's with PhD students and yet they're supposed to be studying for their degree .So I think we've got the focus on student experience here is I think is appropriate, I think it's the right thing to focus on , and that experience for me starts even when they're making their first enquiry about coming to the university, let's make that experience a good one. ..... The student experience emphasis I think is absolutely right, and I do feel that some universities do it well, and those who have a focus that's not on students and not on excellence in learning and teaching are probably not giving their students the best deal".	"I would say we've always done it, but we've called it lots of other things. And this is just the terminology we use now. If I think back to when I was a Programme Leader, I would say that most of my time was spent working out and developing ways to enhance the student experience. That's what my role was about. So I don't think it's changed as such, but what has changed, though, potentially, is where the focus or the locus of responsibility lies. And that's been a result of, particularly in this university, the *de-professionalisation* of Programme Leaders. I'm going to be open about it; I think that's what's happened. And the fact that the fact that the student experience has been taken out of their hands and is being done to them by a centralised unit that seems to know more about it than anybody else, but actually sort of … well, I won't say any more".

"I think I approve in principle….. Now the question, I think, is how best to do that. I think there's been a lot of sort of generally sort of, I think a lot of people are worried that improving the student experience for people it seems to mean giving the students what they want. That's maybe not always the case, maybe that's actually again a bit unambitious and doesn't actually really improve the student experience because it limits our role as lecturers and as teachers as well who sort of can provide some sort of life changing process for the students. I think for that you need to sometimes challenge the students and you might need to realise improving the student experience doesn't have to mean that students never moan, actually students moaning about things that they find hard can be part of improving the student experience".	"I completely approve of it [laugh]. Well because I think otherwise there's a tendency to overlook that still. You know and I think there's always been reasons for that and nowadays it's partly because of the marketisation. So university can get so enthralled with their, their their their development and their strategies for maintaining their position, that they forget the highly individual nature of student experience. The other thing that concerns me is, and has for a long time, is the student experience of the majority. What I see is universities investing tremendous resources at the edges that have, that that, of the student experience and not all students benefit from what, what I think it the majority of investment. So I think the quiet majority who just go, go quietly about their business and do okay, don't get the most of the resources and I think there's something not quite right there. I'd like to simplify at the edges and put more into the student experience for the majority".	"But it's done to, yes? And so the programme teams, the Programme Leaders have very little say, there's very little consultation with them to work out what would be the best student experience for their students. And there's this 'one size fits all' concept of the student experience. Rather than tailored to specific subjects".
"Personally, that's a hard one. To some extent, I disapprove because again it comes down to the fact that if the degree programme is good then that student experience is there. But obviously to be made aware of if it's good is important you don't need somebody that's been a programme leader or module leader for twenty five years and never change anything. So if there is aspects that the student experience becomes more realised within the academic mind to therefore make the programme better yes that's good. *But if it's being brought in as a negative the whole time of what can you do additionally to what you are doing already to improve student experience then I feel it's becoming, it's becoming perceived as a negative from the academics which means in that sense it's starting to get maybe a little bit of backs up as in well we are doing in what we feel a good job but actually we're still being asked to do more. ....Because it is being used as a bit of a stick I think at times, you know again when you have to go and talk about your programme health check and your NSS scores and why, why, well there's some elements of well as we always come back to well look at things like our student to staff ratios that's one of the reasons why but then that's not, yes and you do.* I mean obviously everybody looks back on their youth with rose tinted glasses but I do look back at my degree and go actually well I had a good degree experience but my god it was nowhere near as hand holding and supportive and student experience and employability led and PDP as it is now and I've done pretty well with my academic career and I think students are perhaps bamboozled with it a bit as well, *they get it forced down their throats.* That's it but then you never would have gone back and questioned your academic grades and that's where I'm starting, *that's when I think academic staff start to get cross with student experience because it's like well no we have to be there to be supportive, well there's an element that it's gone too far and it comes under that student experience umbrella".*		"I approve of it if it's going the right way. And if it's focussing on the right things, things that are meaningful and make a difference, because I think it's the sort of thing… who decides it's a good student experience. It should be students who decide that and I'm not sure that they are always given the opportunity to do that. We have groups around the university that are labelled student experience, project groups labelled student experience, who's decided that experience needs to be changed? And why and what the benefits are? Because have students been involved with that and sometimes they're not necessarily".

"I very much approve. Partly because of the changing nature of recruitment. It's some years since we had widening participation but I think the work that certainly Middleworth and many other institutions have done to think very carefully about encouraging first generation students into HE is entirely positive. My personal view is I don't think there's anybody that cannot benefit from a higher education experience but that ... we need to make sure that we make adjustments and the old cultural perspective that, if a student gets into university, they should only be allowed if they're able to be entirely autonomous learners from day one, is just not reasonable".		"I generally approve. What I don't like is that it is almost seen as a kind of separate discipline at times. So the student experience is something that those folk over there do or it's a specific strand of strategy that we've got to pursue for particular reasons, whatever they might be. So the focus on student experience is right because actually if we're not here in a *teaching-led university like this to be doing stuff that improves the experience that students have and enables them to take opportunities and grow and develop and achieve then we getting something wrong.* But there is a transference of responsibility around student experience, which says that people perhaps don't own as much of it as they can or should because *there is an agenda round student experience* so therefore it's legitimate for other folk to do some of those things. *So it's both helpful to provide focus but unhelpful because of that transference of responsibility issue as I would argue. And if it's not woven through what you do, then we have got a problem and therein lie some of the issues that we have, you know, we have this issue around the hotlist of programmes who have a lower student satisfaction*. ***Well that's not about NSS, that's not about a survey result, that's about what are you doing which is genuinely thinking about the experience that your student on your course have and how it is that they feel and you feel it ought to be different. Let's get on with those things, satisfaction will come as a result.*** And so the conversation shouldn't be about the university student experience, it's got to be more locally owned than that".
"Well it is a disaster, they should not do it in the sense that if I had the power I would argue against it, I am in the process of writing something which is based on student experience and don't do it".		"I approve of it, it is my job. … The way we learn is we learn if we are having a good experience, if we're having a good experience we'll be open to knowledge, if we're having a poor experience we close our minds to it".
		"Yes. We've talked about marketisation, and a lot of that is about student choice. Time at university, we've talked about the benefits and the opportunities that university gives, and that again has got to be about … it's a once in a lifetime opportunity and it should be a good one. So no, I'm very happy to give that student focus".